

## A new kind of love

(Olivia)

Three months later...

I still couldn't believe how much had changed in the past few months. Derek and I had been inseparable since that day in my apartment.

He was everything I didn't know I needed. Patient, caring, and understanding.

He didn't rush me, didn't push me. We took things at my pace, and it was refreshing to have someone like that in my life. Someone who actually saw me and didn't try to control me.

I had also been taking steps to move forward from my past. I cut ties with my family.

Aaron, Lila, my so-called sister, they were no longer a part of my life, and I was okay with that.

It was good, honestly. The betrayal still hurt, but each day, it hurt a little less, and with Derek by my side, I was learning to feel whole again.

Today was just another normal Saturday afternoon. Derek was out of town on business, so I decided to head to the local store to pick up a few things. I liked being able to do things on my own, not needing anyone to help me.

It was one of the few ways I reminded myself that I was stronger than I gave myself credit for.

I wandered through the aisles, throwing a couple of things into my basket. Coffee, eggs, bread, and a couple of other random things that caught my eye. I was just about to head to the checkout when I saw her.

Lila.

My stomach dropped. She hadn't changed a bit, still aunting herself like she was better than everyone.

Her blonde hair was styled perfectly, and she had that arrogant, self-satisfied smirk on her face that I used to ignore, back when I still thought we were sisters, back when I still trusted her.

I thought I could just walk past her and pretend she wasn't there, but of course, she had to notice me. Her sharp, blue eyes locked onto mine, and the second she recognized me, that smirk of hers turned venomous.

"Well, well, well," she sneered, stepping closer with a hand on her hip.

"If it isn't the pathetic little divorcee. I'm surprised you even show your face around here after everything." I swallowed the lump in my throat, trying not to let her get to me.

She didn't deserve my attention. Not after everything she'd done. But still, her words stung, reopening old wounds that, I thought, had begun to heal.

"Lila, I'm not in the mood." I said, trying to keep my voice calm.

"Oh, please." She rolled her eyes, giving me a once-over.

"I mean, look at you. Pretending like you've got it all together. But I know the truth, Olivia. You're still that weak, pitiful woman who let her husband walk all over her. You'll never be anything more than that." Her words hit harder than I wanted to admit.

She was mistaken. Of course, she was mistaken, but the doubt crept in, just like it always did when it came to her. Lila had a way of making me feel small, like nothing I did would ever be good enough.

I clenched my fists at my sides, willing myself not to react the way she wanted me to. I wasn't going to give her that satisfaction.

"You don't know anything about me, Lila," I said, trying to act strong in front of her.

"Not anymore." She laughed, sounding sharp and cold.

"Oh, sweetie, I know exactly who you are. And so does everyone else. You're a joke, Olivia. Always have been, always will be." I felt my heart pound in my chest, but instead of letting her words dig deeper, I took a deep breath.

I wasn't the same person I was three months ago. I had learned to stand on my own to rebuild myself after being torn apart.

"You can say whatever you want, Lila," I replied, keeping my chin up.

"But your opinion doesn't matter to me anymore." For a moment, she seemed surprised, as if she hadn't expected me to stand up for myself.

Her smirk faltered, just slightly, before she recovered, her eyes narrowing in frustration.

"You're pathetic," she snapped.

"And you'll always be alone." I didn't let her words get to me this time. I stood tall, refusing to back down, refusing to give her any more power over me.

"I'm not alone," I said, trying to defend myself. But why was I even wasting my time on her? I had bigger and better things to think about.

"I've got people who care about me. People who love me. And I'm not going to waste another second thinking about people like you." Lila glared at me, clearly not expecting this new side of me.

For once, I felt a sense of pride rise within me. I wasn't the broken, vulnerable person she thought I was. I had grown, and I had no intention of letting her bring me back down.

Without another word, I turned on my heel and walked away, leaving her standing there, fuming. I didn't need to win an argument with her, didn't need to prove anything. I knew my worth now, and nothing she said could change that.

As I left the store, I felt lighter and stronger. Derek had helped me see that I wasn't defined by my past or by the people who had hurt me. I was my own person, and I was finally starting to believe that.

For the first time in a long time, I realized that I was going to be just me.

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While I was cooking, my phone rang, and I noticed that it was Derek calling me, so I placed it on the loudspeaker and rested it on the counter in front of me.

"Hey, sweet girl, how are you?" Derek said, making me smile.

"I'm doing good. How's work?" I asked in return. I knew that he was busy. Lately, it seems as if he wasn't getting any break soon.

"Kicking my ass. About done with the properties, though, and I will get a nice commission. Once I'm home, I'm going to take you out. How does that sound?" I was anxious and couldn't wait for him to get back.

"Sounds perfect." I replied.

We spent at least five minutes talking, which made me forget about what happened at the store.

For now, Derek was the only one who mattered to me.