

## Ex-Wife 1971

### Chapter 1971

Xavier glared at Justin and demanded, "How can you say that? You were so close to Stefan just now, whispering to each other. What did you guys talk about? Don't tell me that your final goal is actually to win Stefan over." Xavier hadn't expected to see Stefan and Justin take a photo together, and he was jealous that his buddy had been snatched away.

"You're crazy!" Leia's eyes widened as she sized Xavier up. "Do you have... feelings for Stefan? Don't tell me you're

"What about me?" Xavier looked at the others in confusion.

"You know what I mean." Leia took a step back, shaking her head as if she had just realized something. "I knew it! Why else would you always defend Stefan? It has to be because you have feelings for him. As expected, people in love are blind. It must have been hard for you to keep it a secret for so many years."

Xavier still looked puzzled.

Renee laughed and chimed in, "Okay, stop teasing him. He's had so many scandals that I'm sure he's straight!" "So, you thought I was..." Xavier spluttered indignantly. He was angry at Renee too for pointing out his scandals. You should know better than anyone that I'm straight!" Xavier looked at Leia expectantly.

Leia shrugged, angering him further. "Who knows? Some men are bisexual, and some hide their preferences. Just admit it-the person you love most is Stefan!"

"No, that's not it" Furious, Xavier stomped his foot. Since he couldn't argue with Leia, he started attacking Justin instead. "You're the one who isn't straight. Have you been in love with Stefan for a while? You whispered to him for so long when you both were taking photos, and that kind of intimacy proves that you're not new to this. It doesn't seem like you were acting either.

"We talked about something only we could understand, Justin said evasively.

'See! I knew there was something off with him!" Xavier blurted out, turning to Renee. "Renee, you should stop seeing him. Maybe he wants to get close to Stefan through you. Things will get messy if this continues."

"I'm okay with it." Renee shrugged casually. "I'll give them my blessings if they become a couple."

Justin immediately explained himself, not wanting Renee to misunderstand him, "There's nobody else we'd talk about except you." After a pause, he laughed disdainfully. "He said some harsh words and claimed that he would protect you forever. What a scumbag! He doesn't want you to forget him even though he left. How ridiculous!"

### Chapter 1972

Renee was pretty tired after the escape room. She didn't want to talk about romance-all she wanted to do was rest.

When she reached Everheart Manor, she ran into Quinton. It was midnight, but he was not sleeping. He sat alone in the pavilion in the garden, looking up at the moon. Renee could tell he was feeling lonely. She didn't want to disturb him, but before she could leave, he turned and saw her.

"Ren!" Quinton's face lit up in delight. "I heard you went on a date with Justin again today. Did you have fun?"

"It wasn't bad." Renee walked to Quinton and sat down gently beside him. "What did you do today? Did you go out for some fun?"

"I'm old, so there's nothing fun out there for me. I just stayed home. It's pretty relaxing, Quinton said casually, but he sounded tired.

"Quinton, you're wrong..." Renee smiled and continued, "You said you're old, but you're just a few minutes older than me. Don't tell me I'm old too."

"You're different from me." Quinton looked at Renee lovingly. "You're the treasure of our family, and you'll always be young and cute. I hope you can live like a child, and just be happy." He had soldiered through many hardships, so he felt older than his actual age. Renee was so different-she was pure, kind, energetic, and passionate. He always wanted to protect her.

"I know you're good to me, but... I hope you can be happy too." A sigh escaped Renee, and she looked at Quinton sympathetically. "If we weren't targeted, you wouldn't have been kidnapped, and we could have grown up together. You wouldn't have had to face those misfortunes, and you'd be a rich heir like Stefan and Xavier. You would have lived a good life, away from all those nasty people... That person should have kidnapped me instead!" She sobbed as if she was guilty of snatching away his perfect life.

'Silly woman, what kind of logic is that? Don't blame yourself!" Quinton rubbed her hair and said tenderly, "I told you not to blame yourself. I just want you to know that you're my treasure, and I want to protect you. I'll be happy if you are. If you're sad, I'll be sad too."

"That's what I want to say to you too." Renee's eyes were watery as she looked at Quinton. "You want to protect me, but I want to do the same for you too. My life is getting better, but yours isn't. If you want to reassure me, open up your heart and seriously look for a wife. This moon will look better if someone is enjoying it with you."

## Chapter 1973

Renee didn't want to pressure Quinton to get married, but she could tell that he was lonely. He needed someone who could understand him and stay with him. The longer he stayed like this, the more he would regret it. The first half of his life had been torturous, and Renee didn't want to see him spend the rest of his life alone.

"It's nice to have a companion, but the problem is..." Quinton shook his head helplessly. "I'm mentally ill and flawed, so I'd better not burden others. It's fine if I enjoy the moonlight alone. I don't think it's sad." He had gotten used to being lonely, and had anticipated spending his life alone.

"How could you say that about yourself?" Renee frowned. "I think everyone is mentally sick one way or another, and sickness can be cured. You were living a gloomy life in the past, but you've left that behind now. Once you face the sunlight, you'll naturally become brighter. You're not mentally ill or flawed!" Renee hated Quinton's pessimism. His life was still long. Since Renee could give up

that torturous romance and try to pursue a new one, she believed that Quinton could do it too. After a brief pause, she confessed, "Actually, I met someone a few days ago. I think she's special to you."

"Who was it?" Quinton's calm facade cracked a little. He could roughly guess who she had met, but he felt it was unlikely given how much she hated him. She would have never met his sister.

"I think you must have guessed it. It was Joanne," Renee whispered.

Quinton flexed his fingers but tried to keep his expression nonchalant. "Why would she meet you?"

"She was reluctant at first, but I waited until she came." Renee smiled fondly. She sincerely liked Joanne. "She's an elementary school teacher at the moment, leading a calm and peaceful life."

"Really?" Quinton added coldly, "It looks like Stefan takes good care of her. No wonder she's so loyal to him."

"There you go again, Quinton! It's not like that between them. I can vouch for it!" Renee sighed. Every time she asked Stefan, he would firmly deny it. She knew Stefan well-if he was seeing Joanne, he would openly admit to it.

\*Joanne sought refuge with Stefan and betrayed you because of something else." Renee saw the change in Quinton's expression, and added meaningfully, "I think you should know that. If not... why don't you ask her about it?"

#### Chapter 1974

Renee could tell that Quinton had not forgotten about Joanne, and his feelings for her ran deep. That was why he refused to open up or get close to other women. Hence, Renee hoped that Quinton and Joanne could at least talk so they could let go of their past and start their new lives.

Unfortunately, Quinton kept avoiding the subject. "Don't worry about my affairs, especially my love life. Just take care of yourself and get along well with Justin; that's what I really wish for." He had no intention to date anyone for now-he just wanted to restore his family's image and protect Renee well. He knew that he had a lot of trauma, and if he dated someone, he would subconsciously hurt that person.

"I'm not trying to force you to go on a date or make peace with Joanne. I just hope that you can let go of your past and open your heart to new things. Then, you can truly live your life." Renee sounded urgent as she sighed. "I feel like a doctor. I know the reason for your illness and watch you suffer because of it every day. I want you to get better, so I tell you how to cure it, but you stubbornly don't want to get better and embrace the pain. Do you think! enjoy seeing you like this?"

"The reason for my illness?" Quinton looked up at Renee and smiled helplessly. "You think it's because of her?" "Yes!" Renee added firmly. "The reason for your sadness is your bad past, and Joanne is a part of it. You need to face your past bravely; that's how we Everhearts always do things."

"I'm not sad because of her. She's in the past, and the past is over. Why would it affect me?" Quinton avoided Renee's gaze and said stubbornly.

"Ugh, whatever! This is pissing me off!" Renee realized that she could not persuade him, and got to her feet angrily. She told him Joanne's work address, then said firmly, "I've given you the address;

whether you go or not is up to you. You can't keep waiting for others to save you-you've got to do it on your own!" Then, she left the garden and returned to her bedroom to sleep.

Taking a deep breath, Quinton looked up at the crescent moon.

Lone Pine Elementary was one of the very best elementary schools in Beach City. The teachers working there had exceptionally high academic qualifications, with all of them at least having a master's degree. Joanne, however, was the only one without dazzling academic qualifications or teaching experience. She was gloomy and not as energetic as the other teachers, which was why she eventually became a target of scorn of the teachers there.

It was the new students' first day in the school, and the school's principal appointed Joanne as the class teacher of the third class of first graders. She was responsible for teaching the Cienna language. Another teacher, Gina Cadigo, was responsible for teaching the Filansier Language. She graduated from Coral Coast University in Eliwern and was young and fashionable. Gina had wanted to get chosen as a class teacher because that was a prerequisite to getting a promotion.

Chapter 1975

Gina had to have enough experience as a class teacher if she wanted to get a management position. One needed a rich resume to be the class teacher. Since Gina graduated from Coral Coast University, she was confident that the principal would appoint her as the class teacher. To her displeasure, the principal had picked Joanne instead, who was unqualified in all aspects.

"Ms. Garcia, it's going to be tiring receiving the new students today. What would you like to talk about during the parent-teacher meeting later?" After helping the students settle down, Gina came to the office and spoke to Joanne.

"I'll talk about my teaching methods," Joanne replied coolly. She had an innate aloofness, which was why she wasn't close to the other teachers there even though six months had passed. Additionally, all the teachers there shared Gina's thoughts in thinking Joanne was inferior and did not deserve to be working there.

"Gina, you don't know since you just came, but Ms. Garcia is awesome. She just graduated from high school but is now an outstanding teacher here. She puts insignificant people like us, who graduated from famous colleges and hold postgraduate degrees, to shame." Another class teacher, Ashton Quillen, sat behind Joanne and spoke to Gina sarcastically. Instantly, the other teachers joined in.

"Ah, you guys know nothing. Academic qualifications aren't important compared to your teaching methods. Maybe Ms. Garcia is good at teaching."

"If she's so good at teaching, why is her class the worst in the Cienna language? I think her teaching methods are problematic. She shouldn't be lowering our school's level like this, or we'll feel burdened too!"

"Agreed! Not everyone can be a teacher. Some people should just give up if they aren't suited for it, instead of stubbornly staying in that position and refusing to do well. Isn't that just a waste of resources?"

At first, they just mocked Joanne, but later, they criticized her openly. She never responded when they made fun of her, and none of the higher ups defended her, so it seemed like she didn't come from a powerful background. Not having to face any consequences, they enjoyed bullying Joanne.

"Hey, don't say that. She's now a class teacher, so give her some respect." Gina smiled brightly.

"Ms. Garcia might not have any good academic qualifications or experience... but she's pretty. She can get what she wants thanks to her looks. You can't do that even if you want to!"

"What do you mean?" Joanne had been keeping her head bowed quietly, but she looked up at Gina sharply when she heard that.

Chapter 1976

Gina looked at Joanne and blinked, then grinned coyly and said, "Don't be upset, Ms. Garcia... I was just joking. After all, it's rather odd that you were hired here despite your academic qualifications and experiences. I know for a fact that all teachers here are curious about it."

"Can you accuse someone like that just because you're curious?" Hostility gleamed in Joanne's eyes. "If that's the case, can I assume that it's because of your looks that you became the deputy class teacher of the primary school at such a young age?"

"How can you say that, Joanne? I graduated with a master's degree from Coral Coast University. I worked hard to get here!" Gina immediately stood up and said rudely, "I must have guessed right that you got into this school by relying on a man-you wouldn't be this upset otherwise!"

"Well, you also overreacted, so I must have hit the nail on the head too," Joanne sneered.

Gina's eyes widened in rage. "How dare you..."

Ainsley Terrell, the teaching director, immediately stepped forward to mediate the situation. "Ladies, stop arguing. Both of you are young and pretty, and you both hold good positions. You two need to guide this class together, but you're fighting before you can even start work. Do you want to quit your jobs?"

Although Gina was young, she was smart and observant. She smiled and grabbed Ainsley's arm.

"Mr. Terrell, you're mistaken. I wasn't arguing with Ms. Garcia-I was just chatting with her. It's just that she can't take a joke, and she humiliated me. Aren't I allowed to fight back?"

"There's an extent to telling jokes. She was upset, but you kept going. It's very rude," Ainsley said crossly, then warned, "If you do it again, there'll be repercussions."

"Fine, Mr. Terrell, I was wrong. I won't talk to Ms. Garcia again, okay?" Gina angrily sat down, feeling like Ainsley was biased towards Joanne.

\*Ms. Garcia, are you okay?" Ainsley looked at Joanne in concern.

"I'm fine." Joanne's head was lowered as she tidied up her table. "The parent-teacher meeting will start soon, so I'm going to the washroom now." Joanne got up and left for the washroom. The teaching director sighed unhappily, then left the office.

'Hmph! What's Joanne's background like? Why does the teaching director always let her have her way?' Gina snapped, slamming her fist on the office desk unhappily. From elementary school until college, she had always been favoured. If she got into an argument with someone, the adults would always take her side. However, her charms didn't seem to work in this shabby school. Not only was

she given the position of deputy instead of head, the teaching director had scolded her instead of Joanne. Ainsley didn't dare upset Joanne, and it made Gina even more resentful of her.

Calista Jude, another class teacher, turned to Gina once the others left. "Girl, there's no point in making a fuss. You'll be the only one losing. She got in by pulling strings, so you'll have to be sneaky if you want to go after her!"

"What do you mean?" Gina asked Calista curiously.

"Ms. Garcia has no academic qualifications or background, so I'm sure she slept with a superior to get in. Isn't she going to hold a parent-teacher meeting soon? You can add something to her presentation slides to let the parents know just what kind of person is teaching their kids..." Calista lowered her voice and glanced at the laptop that Joanne had left on.

"You're saying..."

Chapter 1977

Gina looked at the laptop reluctantly. "But saying she has no academic qualifications or experience won't affect her much."

"Well, maybe you can spice it up a little," Calista suggested slyly. "Let me give you an idea... Do you know why Joanne always wears long-sleeved shirts and long pants? It's 104 Fahrenheit now, but she still doesn't dare to show skin."

"I don't know... Is she conservative?"

"Of course not!" Calista peered outside, and when she saw that Joanne hadn't come back yet, she whispered to Gina, "I'm guessing her body is either really scarred or covered in tattoos. Think about it... No parent would want someone like that teaching their kids."

"Is that true?" Gina swallowed and took a deep breath. "Thanks for the advice, Ms. Jude. I know what to do now." Joanne stayed in the washroom for a long time because her stomach was cramping. She thought it was because her period was coming soon, but when she checked her notes, that didn't seem to be the case. After thinking about it, she figured it was the sickness she got back when she lived alone in the red-light district at Pinebell in Cyndiogo.

Since it was almost time for the parent-teacher meeting, Joanne braced herself and got up. She splashed some water on her face and patted her cheeks, trying to look energetic for the parents. She had escaped hell and suffered so much back then, and at one point, she felt like she had nothing to live for. However, Joanne sincerely loved her students. She realized she had a soft spot for children, especially babies and toddlers. Stefan knew her character and had pulled some strings to get her a job at Lone Pine Elementary.

At first, she was reluctant to accept the offer. Her colleagues were right-she had no academic qualifications or experience, and she had a lot of trauma. She felt she wasn't fit to teach others, but Stefan encouraged her to try it out. He told her if she didn't like the job, she could resign. Finally, Joanne gathered the courage to try teaching the Cienna language. Although her academic qualifications were not great, she had always gotten good grades, especially in the Cienna language. She was very talented, and the knowledge she had was more than enough to teach elementary children. After having a trial class, Joanne's heart was softened by the children's innocence, kindness, and enthusiasm. She loved spending time with them, so she shamelessly accepted Stefan's

offer. She usually wouldn't bother when her colleagues taunted her because they spoke the truth-she had pulled strings to get a job there. However, she couldn't stand Gina saying she got the job using her looks because it made Stefan look bad. Feeling guilty for getting angry, she apologized to Gina when she returned to the office. "I'm sorry for losing my temper earlier, I hope you won't take it to heart. Let's work together to make the third class better."

"Ah..." Gina stared at Joanne, stunned.

"I need to go to the parent-teacher meeting now." Joanne took her laptop and walked to the third class. She had no idea what trouble was awaiting her...

## Chapter 1978

Joanne arrived at her class to hold a parent-teacher meeting with the new students' parents. The parents were very curious about the people who taught their children, especially the class teacher. They were very concerned about that.

Joanne stood at the door for a while, taking a few deep breaths before striding into the class. "Hello, everyone, welcome to the first parent-teacher meeting for the third first grader class." Joanne was wearing a professional white shirt and pants, with her hair up in a ponytail and a pair of rimless glasses on. She looked elegant and proper, and the parents looked at her in admiration.

'Let me introduce myself-I'm the class teacher, and my name is Joanne Garcia. Although I'm not very experienced in teaching, I'm well-versed in various teaching methods. Now, I'll explain my plans for the class." Joanne smoothly redirected the topic, emphasizing her strengths. She inserted her USB drive into the computer to open the detailed presentation she had prepared. "First, my teaching concepts are based on four different areas: virtue, politeness, diligence, and love. The first area concerns morality." Joanne placed her hand on the podium and confidently explained her teaching methods.

The parents listened attentively, impressed by Joanne's concept.

'Ladies and gentlemen, excuse me." At that moment, Gina walked in and stood beside Joanne.

"Allow me to introduce myself. I'm the deputy class teacher, and I teach the Filansier language for this class. I graduated from Coral Coast University with a master's degree in Multilingualism and Languages Education. I received band eight in the Filansier language and was picked as one of the top ten youths in Beach City... Gina introduced herself quickly, trying to snatch the limelight from Joanne. Lone Pine Elementary was a public primary school, but it was one of the best schools in Beach City. Many parents did whatever they could to send their children to that school, even spending a lot of money so their child could study there. It was clear the students' parents were powerful and influential people.

"Wow, she has great qualifications! Why didn't the class teacher tell us her qualifications too? Ms. Garcia, can you tell us about your academic qualifications?" A smartly-dressed man waved dismissively at Gina and turned to Joanne.

"..." Joanne flexed her fingers, lowering her head because she had no idea how to respond. "My qualifications aren't great... but I can promise you that my teaching concepts are advanced. All my students love me, and I've also helped improve their writing skills..."

"Stop beating around the bush and tell us where you graduated from! Explain your qualifications and honors like the Filansier teacher. We have the right to know," the man demanded.

"Yeah, we need to know. Just telling us your teaching methods isn't enough; we need to look at your qualifications and experience!" The other parents agreed with the man.

## Chapter 1979

They felt that Joanne looked sophisticated and had good teaching methods, but Gina's outstanding academic qualifications were hard to beat. They felt Joanne's qualifications had to be better since she was the class teacher.

"Honestly, I don't really have any academic qualifications, and I've only been teaching for less than six months," Joanne confessed, knowing the parents wouldn't let her off the hook.

"What? No academic qualifications and you've only been teaching for six months?" The parents were shocked and furious, and wanted to change the class teacher. At that moment, words started appearing on Joanne's presentation slides.

[Here's a gentle reminder-Joanne has never been to college. Her life is troubled and messy, and she's hiding something on her body... That's why she always wears long-sleeved shirts and long pants!]

"What's happening? Is it true? The class teacher of our kids has never been to college?"

"What is she hiding? No wonder she put on a shirt with long sleeves on such a hot day!" "That's preposterous!"

Joanne didn't know what was going on, and watched in confusion as the parents pointed at her slides and whispered to each other. "Ladies and gentlemen, what's wrong..." She turned around, and the blood drained from her face when she saw the words on the screen..

Gina laughed and smugly patted Joanne's shoulder. "Why do you look so pale, Ms. Garcia? Is it true? Do you have a messy life? Why are you wearing long sleeves on a hot summer day? Is there something weird on your skin? I heard that people with filthy diseases will get ulcerated skin. Are you suffering from some kind of infectious disease? If that's the case, I don't think you should be teaching children..."

Hearing that, the parents turned to Joanne in horror and disgust. "What's wrong with this school? It has such a good reputation, but how could they hire someone like this as a teacher?"

"She must be suffering from some kind of disease... That's why she's not showing us her arms!"

"Yeah, she can just roll up her sleeves and prove her innocence if it's not true!"

"Roll up your sleeves now. If you don't, we'll report you to the Ministry of Education!"

Tears welled up in Joanne's eyes as she shook her head, wrapping her arms around herself tightly.

"No, I'm not suffering from any disease. I just like children and sincerely want to teach them..." Her body trembled as her trauma returned, and she felt like running away.

"Don't leave, Ms. Garcia. If you go now, you'll prove them right. Shouldn't you give them an explanation for the sake of Lone Pine Elementary's reputation?" Gina blocked Joanne's path and grabbed her arms. She sneered and said, "Why don't you roll up your sleeves and show us your arms? It'll only take a few seconds. Don't tell me you can't even do that."

## Chapter 1980

"Let me go!" Joanne didn't like people touching her, and tried to shake Gina off.



Her reaction only made the parents more suspicious, and they wondered if the accusations were true. "We just asked you to roll up your sleeves. What's so difficult about that?"

"There must be something wrong. We can't let her go. Where's the principal... He has to come here and explain this."

"I think we should just tear off her clothes and see if she really has a disease." Some parents even ran to the door to block Joanne from leaving.

"Yeah, Ms. Garcia. What are you afraid of? We just asked you to roll up your sleeves; it won't hurt you." Gina steadied herself and grabbed Joanne's arms again, then roughly pulled the sleeves of Joanne's shirt, tearing them off.

The people there gasped in horror when they saw Joanne's skin.

"What's wrong with her?"

"How horrible... Who is she? What did she go through?"

Joanne's exposed arms were full of scars and marks. There were burn marks, scratches, and discolored bruises all over her arms, and it was shocking. The area leading to her wrists had countless overlapping knife cuts, displaying her mental trauma and desperate attempts to end her life.

"It's terrible. How could such a person be the class teacher of our kids? Does the principal think we're stupid?" The parents were bewildered and angry, and tried to drag Joanne to the principal's office to demand an explanation.

"Let go of me!" Joanne felt like a monster who was being exposed to light after years of living in the dark. She covered her arms, wanting desperately to leave. She pushed past the parents and staggered out of the class, and the parents quickly pursued her.

"Go away! Don't come near me! Leave me be!" Joanne screamed and sobbed, running out of the building. When she turned the corner to the stairs, she bumped into somebody. She grabbed their arms to steady herself, then looked up to apologize. However, when she saw the person, her eyes widened and her face paled. "You... You..."

Quinton looked down at Joanne and frowned icily. "It's been a while, my dear sister."

"You're... You demon!" Joanne's body shuddered violently. She tried her best to push him away, but he gripped her arms tighter so she couldn't escape.