

# Loving You In Secret by Debbie Meza

## C 711-720

C 711

"Yeah. It's me."

The look in Tyler's eyes darkened when he saw the handcuffs on Vicky's wrists.

He grabbed onto the cuffs and snapped them open before laying his jacket onto Vicky's shoulders as her clothes were all torn by the whip.

The warmth on his jacket chased away the cold, and his arrival felt like heaven-sent.

Vicky had never wished to see him so desperately, and all the despair she felt exploded.

She threw herself into his arms and broke down in tears.

Instead of pushing her away, he tapped her gently on the back in consolation.

The two men wailed and whimpered on the ground.

"Help. It hurts..."

Vicky snapped out of it and tugged at Tyler's shirt. "Let's just go."

She did not want to stay for another moment. There was no way that they could call the police as Jonathan was looking for her.

Tyler nodded and lifted Vicky in his arms. In the process, however, he accidentally grazed her wounds, and she paled in pain.

He immediately paused. "Does it hurt badly?"

She gritted her teeth and endured the pain. "I'm fine." Out of concern that the two men had other partners, she urged, "Let's leave."

Without another word, Tyler turned to leave with her in his arms but stilled when he walked past the two men on the ground.

He gazed down at them and narrowed his eyes viciously.

"What's wrong?" Vicky asked in confusion.

"Letting them go like this is far too kind," Tyler said. "Hold onto me."

Vicky was confused but obeyed nonetheless, wrapping her arms around his neck.

Tyler pulled out a gun, and before she had the chance to register what was happening, he fired two shots.

Bang! Bang!

Two bullets were fired straight at the men's crotch, and they instantly fainted before they had the chance to wail.

With that, Tyler put the gun away and left coldly.

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He glanced at Vicky on the passenger's seat and reached to fasten her seatbelt for her, to which Vicky flinched.

Tyler stilled.

Vicky tried to explain herself. "I—"

"Let's go home first," he interjected.

Vicky fell into silence.

An hour later, the car stopped before the residential building where Tyler lived.

Since the conflict with Jonathan had not been resolved, Tyler could not send Vicky to a hospital.

Upon returning to the apartment, he said, "I'll get the first-aid kit."

Suddenly, she grabbed him by the sleeve, and he turned around to look at her. "What's wrong?"

"Just now..." Vicky looked up and explained, "I didn't flinch because of you. I was just caught by surprise...and was a little scared."

He chuckled. "I know."

C 712

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He chuckled. "I know."

Tyler brought the first-aid kit, two towels, and an ice pack.

Vicky's cheeks were swollen at this moment as she had been slapped multiple times.

He wrapped a towel around the ice pack and handed it to her. "Put it over your face to see if you can get the swelling to go down."

"Okay. Thank you." She reached out to grab the ice pack, but Tyler remained still, so she shot him a confused look. "What's wrong?"

He lowered his gaze and said, "I need to treat the wounds on your back as well."

Her breath caught in her throat as realization dawned on her.

She had been whipped so many times that she felt numb, and though she did not know the level of severity of her wounds, she knew that her wounds would get infected.

Since most of her wounds were on her back, she could not possibly treat them herself. Tyler was the only one who could help her.

She clenched her jaw to suppress her embarrassment. "... I'll leave it to you, then."

Tyler had seen her naked in the past, so she knew there was no point in her refusing his help. She thus took a deep breath and removed Tyler's jacket from herself before reaching for the buttons on her shirt with trembling hands.

She kept telling herself that she should not be shy, but she was an innocent woman who struggled to undress in front of a man. Hence, despite her effort, she failed to take off her clothes.

She stole a glance at the man who stood his ground and thought, 'Can't you at least look away so that I can take my clothes off before you apply medicine on me? How am I supposed to undress if you just stand there?'

When Vicky struggled to undress, realization dawned on Tyler, and he stared at her. "Are you...in too much pain to undress?"

"..." Vicky froze, wondering just how rigid Tyler was to not know that girls could be flustered.

When she did not respond, Tyler took it as a sign that he was right and took a few steps forward. "I'll help."

He swiftly unbuttoned her clothes and took them off. When his long fingers came into contact with her skin, it felt cooling, unlike how it felt the night before.

She glanced at him gingerly and noticed that there were no emotions in his dark eyes. He did not look at her the way he did the night before, and she could not help but wonder if she was overthinking things.

'Maybe he mistook me for another woman. Maybe that's why he kissed me,' she thought. 'Judging from how he's treating me now, it's almost like he's treating me like a guy friend. Besides, judging from how dull he is, all he knows is to give me money, so it's probably not likely that he is in love with me.'

As she was absorbed in her thoughts, all of her clothes had been removed.

The wounds on her body were not as severe as they had originally pictured.

The two men were sadists, and the whip they used was specifically made to hurt without injuring their target. Still, there were countless red marks across her body, and if not treated properly, the wounds could get infected.

Tyler started sanitizing her wounds and she shivered in pain, so he stopped and looked at her intently.

C 713

“Does that hurt?”

Vicky nodded. “A little.”

“Oh. I guess you’ll be hurting for a while, then.”

“..” Vicky realized that she was foolish for expecting him to offer a few words of consolation.

However, the atmosphere was no longer as awkward after what he said.

Tyler tended to her wounds carefully and seriously without a trace of lust in his eyes, so Vicky slowly began to react.

Sometime later, Tyler said, “It’s done.”

He grabbed her jacket and placed it on her. “Don’t shower for the time being until the bruises go down.”

She lowered her gaze. “Okay.”

“Which hotel did you live in? I’ll go and retrieve your belongings.”

She looked at Tyler and asked, “How did you find me? I don’t recall telling you where I went.”

“I hired a hacker to locate your phone and found where you were when you called me.”

“You know a hacker?”

“There’s nothing much you can’t do with money,” Tyler said calmly.

Vicky felt like she had asked a foolish question but could not suppress her curiosity. “How did you find the warehouse, then?”

“The surveillance footage showed the direction of where you were last seen, and it’s a remote area with little to no place for hiding. That warehouse is the only possible place where I can find you in the area.”

Vicky felt guilty for the trouble she caused. “I’m sorry for causing you trouble again.”

He shot her a side-long glance without any comment to her apology. “I’ll go get your belongings.”

"Maybe we should just leave them," she said hesitantly. "Those two were severely injured, so will they come after you for revenge? Maybe they'll have their friends waiting at the motel for you."

"They won't," Tyler said casually. "They're unconscious right now, and it's unknown if they even have any medical attention. They're in no shape to retaliate."

Vicky did not know what to say as Tyler's method of stalling seemed to be severe mutilation; it was violent but effective.

...

The night was quiet, and Vicky had a nightmare that night.

In her dream, she was locked in a cage while Jonathan was whipping her.

She dodged and soon noticed that the cage was not locked, so she darted out frantically. Just as she was about to get away, however, the two men who attacked her appeared before her, while Jonathan caught up to her with a devilish sneer on his face.

The two men in front of her lunged at her ferociously and she jolted awake, screaming.

"Aah!"

The darkness around her made it challenging to distinguish dream from reality, and she held herself while shivering.

It was so quiet that she could hear her heartbeat, and she felt as though she was about to be swallowed by the darkness.

Just as she was on the brink of a mental breakdown, the lights in the room were turned on.

C 714

The light chased away the darkness, and a divine-looking man came into her sight.

"Nightmares?" Tyler asked, his voice husky.

Vicky slowly regained her composure. "Nightmares... Yes, it was a nightmare," she mumbled. "I had a horrible nightmare when Jonathan locked me up in a cage, and when I tried to escape, those two men stood in my way..."

Everything that had happened was more than what a woman, who was not even 20 years old, could take.

He studied the pale look on her face and said, "It's okay. It was just a dream."

Though it was only a nightmare, what she had experienced continued to haunt her.

"I'll leave the lights on." He got up and was about to leave. "It's still hours before sunrise. Get some more sleep."

He was about to walk out of the bedroom when Vicky whispered, "Can you...not go?"

He stilled and turned to look at her. "What did you just say?"

Vicky was as pale as a ghost as her eyes darted around, fearing that something might leap out of the darkness. "Can you stay with me tonight?"

She was overwhelmed by fear, and as soon as she closed her eyes, she would be swarmed by the memories of all the horrible things people did to her. Even if she was only dreaming of them, she could no longer withstand it.

Tyler stood still. "Do you know what you're asking for?"

Her fingers twitched and trembled. "I—I know."

Though he might not have any ulterior motive when he treated her wounds, he was still a man and she would never know what might happen, but she could no longer bring herself to worry about that. Even if Tyler might initiate any form of intimacy, she did not wish to be alone.

He stared at her for a while before walking back to sit down on a chair near the bed. "Sleep. I'll stay here with you."

The fact that he did not take advantage of her weakness filled her with warmth. "Thank you."

With that, she fell back to sleep and had yet another nightmare. However, when she woke up to find the lights on and Tyler on the chair, she instantly relaxed.

Eventually, the nightmares were gone.

...

Vicky knew that having Tyler stay with her for one night was already asking for too much, so she did not ask Tyler to do the same when she woke up screaming again the next night.

Tyler needed to work and therefore needed sleep.

For the following week, Vicky had not been able to sleep well, and it became hard to grasp reality. She would forget about what she wanted to do and sit alone in her bedroom, staring into the distance blankly. [ninjanovel.com](http://ninjanovel.com)

Tyler was busy and would be gone most of the time except for when he tended to her wounds.

By the time he noticed the state Vicky was in, it was too late.

One night, a thunderstorm raged outside and Tyler woke up to the deafening sound of thunder. He got up to close the window in the living room and heard a gasp when he walked past Vicky's room.

It was barely noticeable and he might not have heard it had he not walked past the room.

C 715

Tyler knocked on the door, but there was no response.

He thought Vicky might be having a nightmare, so he turned the doorknob and walked in to check on her.

When he switched on the lamp beside the bed, he noticed that her face was covered in tears.

She tensed and was trembling uncontrollably as she panted.

Tyler tried to wake her up, but no matter how hard he tried, she just could not wake up as if she was trapped in a nightmare.

“Vicky. Vicky...” He pushed her gently, but she did not respond.

Tyler’s pupils contracted, and he realized that something was wrong when he could not wake Vicky up. He picked her up and was about to take her to a hospital when he noticed that she had lost weight.

She had always been slim, but it became clear that she had lost even more weight.

She was still trembling, and her weightless body felt almost as light as a tiny, helpless kitten.

For some reason, his heart sank. All emotions faded, leaving only remorse and guilt behind.

He should not have ignored her, and he knew that it was done deliberately on his part.

He was very busy, but not to the extent that he did not have time to see her.

He was used to being alone and did not want to break his habit, so he decided to correct the change in his life when he realized he had invested too much time and energy in Vicky.

He stopped checking the time when he was about to leave work; he stopped having inexplicable anticipation every time he opened the door when he arrived home.

He stopped waiting for the smile on her face, the light she kept on while waiting for him, or her familiar figure on the couch.

If he had not lost control of his emotions, he would never be angry when she was harmed or come close to forcing himself on her.

Alcohol was men’s best excuse for their actions, but all it did was magnify the desires buried deep in his heart.

He noticed the change in his behavior and hated himself for being out of control, so he began to treat her coldly.

He had forgotten about what she experienced in a short period and that she needed companionship, so he left her alone at home without even checking on her.

As he carried Vicky out of the living room, her eyelashes fluttered slightly, and she slowly opened her eyes.

Those eyes, washed by tears, were bright and clean, reflecting his cold expression.

After a brief moment of confusion, Vicky realized that she had a nightmare again.

“Mister Hart.” Her voice was slightly hoarse. “When did you come back?”

Tyler had been out until late as of late and would rarely return home before she went to bed. By the time she woke up, he would usually be gone.



Vicky suspected that he was truly busy.

She was plagued by nightmares, often unable to distinguish reality from dream, and she lost track of when he came home each night. Hence, she was surprised to see Tyler at this moment.

“Have you eaten yet? Do you want me to make some late supper for you?”

The nightmares that had been bothering her were completely forgotten, and she shifted her attention to him.

Vicky struggled out of his embrace and was about to prepare supper for him like usual.

Tyler looked down at her to meet her clear eyes that were devoid of any resentment.

He had not been drinking but swiftly lost control of his emotions.

In a swift motion, he bowed his head and pressed his lips against hers.

C 716

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In a swift motion, he bowed his head and pressed his lips against hers.

Tyler's kiss was more skillful and restrained compared to the time before, and Vicky froze in shock.

By the time she registered what was happening and tried to dodge, he had deepened the kiss and as oxygen began to run thin, her mind went blank like a person who was drowning.

She was not at all appalled by his kiss, but her fear of men left her shaking like a leaf.

Vicky did not push his way and thought to herself, 'Let it be, then. Instead of being defiled by those horrible men, I might as well give myself to him. At least I don't hate him. Besides, he has helped me so many times, and it's about time I return the favor.'

Sensing her obedience, Tyler's kiss became even more intense.

Just as she thought that she would be offering her innocence to Tyler, he stopped and gazed down upon her with lust burning in his eyes. His breath was ragged as he stared at her possessively.

Vicky felt butterflies in her stomach and lowered her gaze to avoid his eyes.

Sometime later, he finally regained his composure and reached out to touch her swollen lips before muttering in a seductive voice, "I'm sorry."

She bowed her head and shook her head.

Instead of resisting him, she had been extremely tamed and obedient, and Tyler's heart melted as he studied how she leaned against him weakly.

He kissed her on the cheek. "Another nightmare?"

His voice was husky and pleasant, laced with gentleness.

She felt moved and confused at the same time but nodded regardless.

She could not understand Tyler's intention. It was understandable that he kissed her when he was drunk, but he kissed her again when he was sober.

'Does this mean he wants me? But why would he stop if that's the case? Is the thunder ruining his mood?' she thought.

"How long has it been?" he asked.

She hesitated in silence, and he immediately came to a realization. He frowned and asked, "You've been having nightmares for the past few days?"

"It'll pass in a few days." She forced a smile. "Mister Hart, it's getting late..."

Before she could finish, he interrupted her. "Don't call me Mister Hart from now on."

She shot him a confused look.

He met her eyes and muttered, "Call me by my name."

She had called him by his name several times in the past, and since it was just a way of addressing him, she had no issue addressing him however he liked, so she nodded. "Okay."

Tyler carried her back to her room and retrieved his pillow from his bedroom to place it next to hers.

Realization dawned on Vicky as she watched him. She tensed and started trembling.

C 717

Despite Vicky's decision, she still felt nervous.

Sensing that she was shivering, Tyler assumed that she was terrified of the nightmares and pulled her closer into his arms. "Sleep. I'll stay with you."

She opened her mouth to speak but decided against it in the end, and she took a deep breath before laying down.

Click! The lights were turned off, and darkness returned to the room.

Vicky tensed and breathed heavily.

In the dark, Tyler carefully wrapped his arms around her. When she flinched, his movement became more gentle as though she was made of glass.

Vicky was amused by that and wanted to tell him that she was not that fragile, but she knew better than to say it out loud.

His body was burning, and his heat radiating through his body to hers.

She waited for his next move quietly in his arms, but Tyler did not do anything apart from holding her.

Even as she drifted off to sleep, he simply held her reassuringly.

After some time, Vicky fell into a deep slumber.

...

The next day, she opened her eyes to find the sun shining bright.

She sat up slowly and felt energized after the best sleep she had for the past week.

She washed up and prepared to make herself some food before stilling when she saw Tyler in the kitchen.

Sensing her presence, he turned around to look at her. "Head to the dining room. I'm almost done."

Shocked, Vicky headed to the dining room obediently.

10 minutes later, Tyler brought oatmeal and a few dishes over.

Vicky studied his face and asked, "Are you not going to work today?"

"Yeah," Tyler said. "I'm taking a break."

After working so hard for days on end, it seemed normal for Tyler to rest, so Vicky did not question his response.

The two ate quietly, and Vicky came to a sudden realization that it had been some time since Tyler cooked or had breakfast with her.

After breakfast, Vicky was about to return to her room when Tyler called out to her, "Wait."

She shot him a confused look. "What is it, Mister Hart?"

He frowned. "I thought I told you to call me by my name."

She snapped out of it and corrected herself, "T—Tyler... What is it?"

Vicky found it hard to adjust to the change.

Tyler was displeased by how rigid she sounded but did not protest as there was more than enough time for her to adjust.

“I’ve contacted a doctor that can help with your nightmare.”

Her eyes lit up. “Really?”

“Yeah.” He glanced at the clock. “She’ll be here in about half an hour.”

Touched by his effort, Vicky said, “Thank you.”

He walked over and kissed her on the forehead. “You don’t have to thank me.”

C 718

Vicky’s body stiffened at his action as she was still struggling to be so close to a man. However, since she decided to move back in, she knew she would eventually have to pay the price for it.

She nodded. “Okay.”

...

Half an hour later, the doctor Tyler had hired came to the building.

It was a Zendonian woman in her forties, and she had a warm smile that made her look pleasantly approachable.

“Mister Hart. Miss Shaw. Greetings.” The woman bowed at them and proceeded to introduce herself, “You can call me Doctor Jenny.”

Tyler nodded. “Thank you for coming, Doctor Jenny.”

Doctor Jenny smiled. “You’re most welcome. I’m just doing my job.” She then turned to look at Vicky and asked gently, “Miss Shaw, can you tell me what you’re going through?”

Vicky did not want to have any more nightmares and cooperated. “For the past week, I’ve had nightmares as soon as I fall asleep. Once I jolt awake, I’d either struggle to fall back asleep or continue to have more nightmares...”

“And that has been going on for a week?”

Vicky nodded.

“What symptoms are you experiencing during the day?” Doctor Jenny asked.

“During the day?”

“Yes. When you’re awake.”

“I don’t get much sleep at night, so I tend to feel dizzy and exhausted during the day... That’s about it.”

“How about your mood?”

Confused, Vicky said, "Mood... I'm not in a good mood but not in a bad one either. I've just been so out of it that I can't even remember."

"Have you gone outside for a stroll lately?"

Vicky hesitated.

Tyler sat down next to Vicky. "Don't worry. You can trust Doctor Jenny."

Vicky glanced at Tyler and nodded. "I've been in a bit of trouble lately, so I can't go outside..."

Doctor Jenny pressed on. "What kind of trouble? Can you tell me more about it?"

Doctor Jenny needed to know every detail about what the patient was going through to treat them, and since Tyler had reassured Vicky, Vicky let her guard down and began to describe the recent events.

Doctor Jenny's scowl deepened as she listened, and in the end, she asked, "If all those troubles are to go away, will you be willing to go outside?"

Vicky had not thought about it before and stiffened at the question.

After a few minutes of silence, she shook her head. "I don't want to go outside."

It was such a dangerous world out there that she found herself in trouble at every corner she turned, so she would prefer to stay inside.

After getting a general idea of Vicky's situation, Doctor Jenny looked at Tyler.

C 719

"Mister Hart, can I have a moment with you alone?"

"Doctor Jenny, what is it that you can't discuss in front of me?" Vicky asked.

Doctor Jenny smiled. "Of course, I'll talk to you about your condition, but I need to learn more about what Mister Hart sees from his perspective as well. What you can describe is how you subjectively feel, and I want to know what Mister Hart thinks. As for why I'd like to speak with him alone, that's because there might be things that he finds difficult to talk about in front of you or that he might not be able to describe objectively... Do you understand?"

Vicky nodded. "Alright, then. I'll head back to my room."

Doctor Jenny and Tyler did not talk in the living room and instead did so in his study.

As soon as the door closed behind them, Doctor Jenny deadpanned, "Mister Hart, I'm afraid Miss Shaw isn't just having nightmares. She's suffering from depression."

He narrowed his eyes darkly. "What?"

"According to my experience, she's suffering from depression, a form of mental illness. The trigger for the nightmares was the series of events that had happened recently, and she can't process them mentally." Doctor Jenny sighed. "Indeed, Miss Shaw has gone through something a woman her age should've never gone through. If we don't treat it as soon as possible, she

might start to live in her world and refuse any form of contact with the outside world. If it gets worse, she'll develop a more severe mental condition."

Tyler pursed his lips. "How do we treat it?"

"My advice is that Miss Shaw needs to get out of her room. Staying home all the time will only make her more depressed and more fearful of the world outside. At the moment, she's in desperate need of company." Doctor Jenny shot him a stern look. "She feels insecure about the whole world now, and if she's left alone, she'll instinctively become paranoid out of fear. If you're busy, it's best to get her family or friends to stay by her side to minimize the fear she feels." After a pause, she added, "Of course, it'll be best if you can stay with her, Mister Hart. I can tell that Miss Shaw trusts and relies on you."

After prescribing Vicky some medication, Doctor Jenny left.

...

Vicky realized that Tyler was not as busy as he had not gone to work for three days in a row.

Worried that he might be staying home for what he did to the two foreign men, she asked him about it, and he would often brush it off by saying that he wanted to rest for a few days.

It was normal for him to rest, but she felt confused about how he had been treating her.

He would kiss her, act intimate and sleep with her in his arms every day. There were a few times when she was ready to offer him her first time, but his action had not escalated so far.

Vicky could no longer tell what Tyler wanted.

One day, Vicky was watering the plants on the balcony.

Tyler lived in a great apartment but looked dull without any decoration.

When Vicky mentioned it a few days ago, Tyler immediately ordered flowers and plants from a florist.

With some greenery in the apartment, she was in a lighter mood, and with Tyler by her side every night, she no longer had as many nightmares. She would still have nightmares but would find herself in his arms whenever she opened her eyes.

As time went by, she was no longer as frightened.

She knew that Tyler stayed home to keep her company, and she felt increasingly guilty as she could not repay the favor.

Just then, she heard the familiar sound of footsteps approaching. Without turning her head, she already knew who it was.

She set the water jug down and turned to flash him a smile.

She was just about to say something when he silenced her with a smile.

Vicky almost forgot about how experienced Tyler had become in kissing after staying home for the past few days.

She leaned into his arms helplessly and wrapped her arms around his neck as he kissed her.

She used to not understand why people enjoyed kissing, but she finally realized how addictive it was after experiencing it herself.

Vicky was not appalled by Tyler's kisses and was even falling in love with the feeling.

Occasionally, she would feel confused as she wondered what their relationship was.

'Are we a couple?' she thought. 'We never said we're one, and he never said that he loves me or asked me to be his girlfriend. Are we friends with benefits? But we haven't slept together, so what are we?'

Sensing her distraction, he nibbled on her lip, and she snapped out of it with the realization that people might see them as they were standing on the balcony.

She shoved at him gently. "... Back to the room."

Tyler chuckled and lifted her. Instead of carrying her back to her room, he returned to his room.

Tyler would always carry her into his room whenever he wanted to be intimate with her, like a predator bringing its prey to its territory before devouring it.

The sound of them breathing heavily echoed in the quiet room, and Vicky lay in bed with her clothes ruffled as Tyler left a trail of kisses on her face and body.

After a while, Tyler got up, and she shuddered at the cold from the distance between them.

Having gotten used to it, she opened her eyes.

Tyler's chest was heaving, and when he met her eyes, he looked away awkwardly before turning to head to the bathroom.

Tyler and Vicky had done everything there was except for the final step, and she could not understand why he was running away.

Just as he was about to leave, she grabbed him by the hand, and he turned to look at her.

This was the first time she stopped him from leaving.

"What's wrong?" he asked hoarsely.

Her lashes fluttered, and she whispered, "Don't go."

They were both adults and both knew what Vicky meant.

Tyler lifted an eyebrow in disbelief. "What did you say?"

She lowered her gaze to hide the emotions in her eyes. "Don't go. I... I'm okay with it."

Once he realized that he heard her correctly, he held her closer and planted another passionate kiss on her lips.

His kiss had grown fierce to the point that it was almost hurting.



Sometime later, he asked huskily, "Vicky, are you really okay with this?"

She was still shivering and closed her eyes before nodding. "You've helped so much, and I don't have anything worthy to offer in return...so I want to offer you my most precious possession...in return for all that you've done for me."

The air froze, and the temperature seemed to drop around them.

Tyler remained still for a long while after that, and Vicky could not help but open her eyes, only to find Tyler staring at her coldly as though he was trying to look into her soul through her eyes.

The originally romantic atmosphere transformed into a cold one, and Vicky began to feel anxious from how long he was staring at her, not knowing what was happening.