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I managed to keep Christopher and Zachary safe at the cost of Lyle's life. Holding the unconscious man in my arms, I continued recalling the last moments of his life since he had proven himself an affectionate man prior to his death.

Unwilling to embrace the fact he had passed on, I started wailing hysterically and asked those around me, including Christopher, to get the unconscious man a doctor. I wasn't even aware of the things going on as I continued repeating Lyle's name until I was unconscious.

I had a lucid dream when I was unconscious. Seated next to the pool, Lyle, who had brought me to the shore, introduced himself and assured me things would be fine.

We ended up engaging in a conversation in my dream. I introduced myself in return, "I-I'm Yvonne."

"Can I drop by and pay you a visit every once in a while in the future?"

I responded with a nod and assured him, "Of course!"

Halfway through the conversation, he collapsed to the ground in front of me as blood continued gushing out of his chest.

"Lyle!" I shrieked and roused myself from sleep.

Holding me in his arms, Christopher continued caressing my back, reassuring me we were in great hands, "Eve, it's fine! It's going to be fine! You're safe!"

Once I snapped out of confusion and figured out we had made it to the hospital, I asked with my eyes gleaming, "We finally made it out alive, hadn't we? It was nothing more than a nightmare, wasn't it? Where's Lyle? Is he fine?"

Christopher furrowed his brows and turned around instead of answering my queries. I repeated my questions and confronted him, "He's fine, isn't he? The horrifying scene was nothing more than a nightmare of mine, wasn't it?" "Calm down, Eve!" He wrapped his arms around me with all his might to stop me from getting overly worked up.

"I'm fine! Tell me if it was merely another one of my nightmares? There was no way the selfish Lyle would take the bullet on my behalf! If Crystal's life was the one at stake, he might change his mind, but that wasn't the case since I was the one on the verge of death!"

I forced a smile and brought up all sorts of things to deceive myself.

"The Smiths has sent someone to bring him back with them. I'm so sorry, Eve. You wouldn't have to go through any of these if it weren't because of me." Once again, he held me in his arms in an attempt to console me.

"What do you mean?" Once emotions came flooding out, I started trembling in angst. I tried to stop myself from weeping, but my effort was to no avail.

"Lyle!" I ended up wailing hysterically for a few minutes.

"Just take things out if it makes you feel better! Eve, I'll always be here for you!" Christopher muttered.

I ended up crying for a long time and fell into a deep slumber in his arms. It was already evening by the time I roused from my sleep. Slouching against the man's chest, I murmured, "Chris, I shouldn't have allowed him to tag along with me! I should've stopped him from making the trip!"

Christopher remained silent throughout the session since he knew I merely needed a pair of ears.

"He had always been an arrogant and self-centered man! The only one he cared about was himself! When we were in a relationship back in the day, he wouldn't stop getting on my nerves! As a result, I thought I was the one at fault! In the end, I gave up on him when I found out Crystal was the only one he had in mind!"

After pausing for a few seconds, I added, "With that being said, he wouldn't stop showing up in front of me as much as I tried getting rid of him! Ironically, I brought upon his demise at the end of the day! He should've stayed away from me since the affection we had for one another wasn't mutual!" Halfway through the orated speech, I burst out laughing due to extreme frustration, remarking in a sarcastic manner, "He did a great job since I have to keep him in mind and spend the rest of my life in guilt."

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"You need to stay strong since he has sacrificed himself just to keep you safe. We need to spend the rest of our lives together in spite of the challenges awaiting us."

I nodded since I was of the same idea. "You're right! We need to stay strong!"

After stabbing myself in the arm more than once, I had sustained quite a serious injury. It took me a few days until I could move my arms around again.

On the day of Lyle's funeral, Christopher told me everything and brought me to the cemetery to send Lyle off for one last time.

I stood afar since I was afraid of approaching the rest of his family, including Sharon. She was the first to show me some mercy throughout the years. Although it was part of a greater scheme, she was the first who truly made me feel safe.

It must be tough for her to send the sole successor of the family, her grandson, off when her son had long passed on years ago due to an accident. Lyle was the only one she had in mind throughout the years.

"What am I supposed to do, Christopher? I'm afraid to join them! I'm afraid Grandma is going to take things out on me since I had brought upon Lyle's demise!" I stood next to Christopher in fear of startling the rest.

Christopher grasped my hand and suggested, "You need to send him off since you were the only one he had in mind during his last breath. You don't have to worry since I'm right next to you."

I mustered my courage and marched in the direction of Lyle's resting ground. When I was a few feet away from the resting ground, I heard Wendy wailing hysterically as if she couldn't care less about others' opinions.

"Lyle! How could you leave me? What am I supposed to do without you?"

All of a sudden, I was overwhelmed with guilt. The vicious woman who wouldn't stop picking on me throughout the years was no longer my irritating mother-in-law. At that point in time, she was just another heartbroken and sorrowful mother who couldn't help but mourn her son's passing.

Instead of bawling her eyes out, Sharon had her eyes glued to Lyle's resting ground in silence. She seemed to have aged over the night since she couldn't even maneuver around without her wheelchair. Josephine brought her around in an attempt to pay her final tribute to her grandson.

"Yvonne, how dare you show up in front of us? You were the reason Lyle was dead!" Crystal yelled at me since she was quite far away from the rest of the Smith family. They were against the idea of having her around as well. I would've returned the favor and yelled at her back in the day! However, am I in a position to pick on her when I'm the one at fault? She's merely repeating the truth!

In the end, I lowered my head in guilt and heard the commotion coming from the rest of the attendees while marching ahead to pay my last tribute to Lyle. I got the man his favorite lily bouquet and thought he would've loved it.

Staring at the weeping Wendy, I expressed my utmost apology with a bow, "I'm so sorry for your loss!"

"You're the one who has brought upon his demise! You're a murderer!" Wendy rushed to my side and launched a powerful slap in my face.

I felt a tingling sensation coming from my cheek, but those were nothing as compared to the heart-wrenching sensation I felt.

"Where's my son? Stop expressing your apology because it won't bring him back to me! I want you to bring him back to me!" Wendy let loose of her emotions and started beating me to a pulp.

Instead of evading her brutal punches, I braced myself through the blows and thought it was not a big deal if those were the things it would take to bring Lyle back to life.

Holding me in his arms, Christopher turned around and took the serious blow from Wendy on my behalf.

"Yvonne, you're just a good-for-nothing! I hate you so much! I want you to bring him back to life!" Wendy stepped aside to throw a punch at me.

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Grandma turned around and looked at me in the eyes. A few seconds later, she instructed, "That's enough! Stop making a fuss when we've gathered around to send Lyle off for one last time!"

"Boohoo—" Wendy unfastened her grip and collapsed to the ground, wailing at the top of her lungs.

Standing in front of Lyle's resting ground, we were the only ones left apart from the members of the Tanner family. It started drizzling shortly after a flurry.

The bouquets in front of Lyle's grave were all over the place due to the squall. It felt as if God was equally disheartened by Lyle's passing.

As guilt slowly caught up to me, I couldn't even catch my breath when we were on our way out of the cemetery.

"Yvonne!" Nathan and the rest of the Tanner family were next to the car when we were out from the cemetery. It was evident they were there for me.

I couldn't stand against the pent-up fatigue anymore, but I pulled myself together and greeted them, "Uncle Nathan, what brings you to me today?"

Nathan asked in a hushed voice when he saw my bandaged arms, "Are you okay?"

Actually, I couldn't even recall the last time he expressed concerns over me. Nonetheless, I assured him with a nod, "It's nothing serious."

"Why don't you hurry up and get into the car? Otherwise, you're going to catch a cold again."

Unable to get used to the affectionate side of his, my eyes started brimming with tears. "Thank you so much, Uncle Nathan."

Things were hectic for the Tanner family ever since my trip to Yorksland. Others wouldn't stop talking about the financial predicament of the Tanner family as we were on the way to the cemetery.

I knew Nathan was there to acquire my aid to stop Isabelle from going after him, but he couldn't bear to bring up his request when he found out I wasn't in good shape. "I'm so sorry for the delay, Uncle Nathan. I'll get Mom to stop causing you troubles as soon as possible. It's the least I can do to repay your favor for taking care of me over the years." I was eighteen when I left the Tanner family. Although I had a miserable life in the first two decades of my life, things weren't unbearable since I had a place to call home. Otherwise, I might've ended up in the orphanage.

"Thank you so much!" Nathan was sincere when he expressed his gratitude.

I forced a smile and assured him, "I'm just trying to return the favor."

Christopher rushed me to the hospital once we wrapped up the conversation. He got the doctor to check on my wounds since there was a drizzle when we were at the cemetery.

I wasn't even drenched since he was next to me, keeping me sheltered from the rain. Holding his hand, I assured him, "I'm fine!"

Christopher tucked me in and suggested, "Why don't you go ahead and take a short nap? I'm sure things will turn out fine by the time you wake up!"

I fell asleep with him next to me. He was there to keep me company until Isabelle was here to pick me up on the day I was discharged from the hospital.

She seemed as if she had just figured out I was involved in an accident when I was there over the past few days. Her face scrunched up the moment she saw Christopher next to me.

"Mom!" I got in her way to stop them from starting another fight. I couldn't stand them picking on one another anymore.

Isabelle resisted the urge to reprimand me and asked in a callous tone, "What's wrong with you? Why have you been rushed to the hospital? Why were you caught up in an accident again? Can you do me a favor and stop giving me the shock of my life?"

Huh? What is she talking about? What sort of accident was it? Is it something the special force has made up to keep others in the dark? Well, apart from Grandma, no one, not including Wendy, was aware of the truth of Lyle's demise since it was a confidential mission.

"I'm so sorry for the troubles I have caused you." I couldn't think of anything else to tell her as I didn't feel comfortable opening up to her. Similarly, it felt as if she couldn't care less about me.

I hope I'm merely overthinking things, but it feels like we're growing apart from one another when she's my mother. "Shall we return home? I have asked others to get our meal ready." She brought me out of the hospital with her without allowing me to bid farewell to Christopher.