

## Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 451-460

Posted by **chapter novel**, 72 Views, Released on July 13, 2022

Crystal had a smug grin on her face as she hugged Benson, seemingly satisfied with her plans. The lower half of the screen had mostly been censored, but their trembling voices made it obvious what they were doing.

“Is it true that Yvonne was the one who rescued us back then? She looks as cowardly as a chicken!”

“Of course, it’s true! I was actually conscious when she came to rescue us, but I pretended to be unconscious and let her carry me outside before knocking her out with a rock. You should’ve seen the look on her face when she came to and realized I took all the credit!” Crystal’s eyes glazed over as she let out a moan.

She then cocked her head back and burst out laughing as she continued, “Benjamin is being so nice to me because he thought I saved his life! Isn’t he the stupidest person ever?”

“Yeah, he’s really dumb and naïve.”

With their bodies fully censored, the two of them rolled onto the floor while Crystal giggled coquettishly. “Do you know what I like most about you, Benson? I like how much of a bad boy you are! You’re so good at being bad! Hahahaha!”

“What about Lyle?”

“Aww, are you jealous? He’s just a tool I’m using to defeat Yvonne! You can think of him as a trophy of sorts.”

Crystal’s coquettish voice, slutty expression, and nasty words formed a huge contrast with her usual gentle and meek appearance. She looked like a completely different person, and everyone was so shocked by what they saw that they forgot about the wedding.

“Turn it off, Crystal!” Yvette shouted from the crowd.

“R-Right! Turn it off! Turn it off now!” Having been snapped out of her daze, Crystal began looking for the remote in a state of panic.

“Where’s the assistant? Hurry up and cut the power! What the hell am I even paying you guys for?” Natalie ran toward the corner of the stage and hammered on the power button, but it did nothing to stop the video on the screen.

“So... I’m a trophy, a tool, and an idiot wrapped around your finger, huh?” Lyle was mumbling to himself, but everyone heard him as he was standing in front of the microphone.

“No, Lyle! This isn’t real! Someone must be trying to set me up!” Crystal was freaking out at that point. She lifted the hem of her wedding gown and began running toward the DJ, only to have someone from the crowd stumble and knock the flower stand over, hitting her hard with it.

Despite it being made of plastic, the stand was very heavy and had Crystal pinned helplessly on the floor. “Help me, Lyle!” she screamed with her arm outstretched and her face all pale.

However, Lyle simply stood rooted to the spot as he stared coldly at everything that was happening before him.

Benson was the one who had knocked the flower stand over, and Benjamin had the look of a raging beast on his face as he stood in the center of the crowd. He looked so terrifying that the people around him quickly dispersed in all directions for fear of being caught in his wrath.

The journalists, on the other hand, were having a field day snapping away in a corner. They even made sure to turn off the camera flashes so no one would notice them.

The journalists were planning on getting some gossip material and then spicing it up by twisting the facts, but they had received a huge treat instead.

“You’re still pregnant, you horny little sl\*t. I don’t think it’s a good idea to move around so much.”

“It’s fine, I wasn’t planning on keeping the baby anyway! I wouldn’t even have gotten pregnant if Lyle had remembered to use a condom! Given how stupid he is, I bet his child would turn out just as dumb! Wouldn’t want a child like him, would I?”

“Get an abortion, then. I’ll go with you. We can make a baby of our own once we’ve achieved our goals.”

“Nah, it’d be a huge waste to abort the baby. Given the damage Monica has done to Yvonne, all I need to do is make it look like she caused my miscarriage. That ought to ruin her reputation in Avenport completely! Even with Christopher’s protection, she’ll still be forced to hide at home every day! I’m going to destroy her career and her life so she can spend the rest of it in regret! This is payback for her calling my paintings ugly in the past!”

“Oh, my... Aren’t you a cruel one? As if stealing her painting and claiming it as your own wasn’t bad enough, you’re going to ruin her life forever too?”

“Hehe... I don’t recall you hesitating when you put my name on the painting! We’re a match made in heaven!”

Crystal had a smug grin on her face as she hugged Benson, seemingly satisfied with her plans. The lower half of the screen had mostly been censored, but their trembling voices made it obvious what they were doing. “Is it true that Yvonne was the one who rescued us back then? She looks as cowardly as a chicken!” “Of course, it’s true! I was actually conscious when she came to rescue us, but I pretended to be unconscious and let her carry me outside before knocking her out with a rock. You should’ve seen the look on her face when she came to and realized I took all the credit!” Crystal’s eyes glazed over as she let out a moan. She then cocked her head back and burst out laughing as she continued, “Benjamin is being so nice to me because he thought I saved his life! Isn’t he the stupidest person ever?” “Yeah, he’s really dumb and naïve.” With their bodies fully censored, the two of them rolled onto the floor while Crystal giggled coquettishly. “Do you know what I like most about you, Benson? I like how much of a bad boy you are! You’re so good at being bad! Hahahaha!” “What about Lyle?” “Aww, are you jealous? He’s just a tool I’m using to defeat Yvonne! You can think of him as a trophy of sorts.” Crystal’s coquettish voice, slutty expression, and nasty words formed a huge contrast with her usual gentle and meek appearance. She looked like a completely different person, and everyone was so shocked by what they saw that they forgot about the wedding. “Turn it off, Crystal!” Yvette shouted from the crowd. “R-Right! Turn it off! Turn it off now!” Having been snapped out of her daze, Crystal began looking for the remote in a state of panic. “Where’s the assistant? Hurry up and cut the power! What the hell am I even paying you guys for?” Natalie ran toward the corner of the stage and hammered on the power button, but it did nothing to stop the video on the screen. “So... I’m a trophy, a tool, and an idiot wrapped around your finger, huh?” Lyle was

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"Hmph! I can't believe we called a heartless impostor like you an artist! You're a disgrace to art!" Julian shouted angrily as he got up from his chair.

Hmm... That sounds familiar... Oh, that's right! They said the exact same thing to me when my painting was rejected! Da\*n, I didn't even realize Crystal had invited this many artists to her wedding...

Spencer was shocked as well and stared at both of us in disbelief. "She has been faking it the whole time? But... That's impossible, right?"

"Oh, god... Why is this happening?" Wendy slumped weakly against the chair and stared blankly into space.

Sharon chuckled in disdain as she said, "This is the precious daughter-in-law you've always wanted. Make sure you take a good long look at her now!"

For some reason, I couldn't help but feel a little depressed when I saw Nathan and the others running about frantically like a bunch of headless chickens.

I've never seen him panic this much before... He sure loves Crystal a lot, huh? She's just a niece to him, and yet he's treating her like his own daughter. In fact, even Yvette doesn't receive such treatment!

Although I had gotten my revenge on Crystal like I wanted, it didn't make me feel better in the slightest.

I was in too much shock when Sharon pushed me at the stairs the other day, so I didn't really give the incident much thought. However, having heard Crystal's words in the video, I slowly recalled the details of what happened.

There was quite a bit of distance between Sharon and me; moreover, there was no way someone of her age would be able to push me that hard anyway. Crystal went tumbling down the stairs even though I had barely even touched her, so that means... she was the one who killed her own baby!

The screen eventually faded to black amid the continued chaos, much to everyone's relief as it felt really wrong watching a pornographic video in public like that.

Having gotten the flower stand off her with help from Yvette and Scarlett, Crystal looked at Lyle with panic in her eyes. "This video must be fake, Lyle! You mustn't believe it! I'm sure we'll be able to find evidence to prove my innocence!"

As if he had already anticipated everything that happened, Lyle seemed surprisingly calm and simply glared coldly at her in response. I wasn't sure if it was due to him being hurt by her words or shocked by the things she did to Sharon behind his back.

Perhaps he had already seen Crystal's true nature on the island when she refused to give him water and pushed him away while getting on the boat all by herself. Unable to accept the fact that he couldn't save his relationship with me, he chose to marry Crystal out of spite.

Lyle then turned to look at Sharon and asked calmly, "You knew this all along, Grandma? Is this why you objected to our marriage?"

"Yes, I've been telling you since you were eighteen that Crystal isn't a good match for you, but you never listened," Sharon said weakly as she sat there and looked at the wedding that she had thrown into chaos.

"Is that why you sent Crystal away and asked me to marry Yvonne? You did that to stop us from being together? Why didn't you tell me about it sooner?" Lyle asked coldly.

"Would you have believed me if I did? I just feel bad for Yvonne. She got herself into such a mess because of your relationship with Crystal..." Sharon exclaimed with a sigh.

Consumed by rage, Benjamin threw himself at Benson and began beating him up in front of everyone. He was a lot stronger and well-trained in comparison to the nerdy Benson, and the pain of seeing his beloved woman having sex with another man fueled his punches even further.

Unable to watch the scene before him, the head of the Miller family ordered for his bodyguards to separate the two before turning toward Nathan. "So, she's been playing the entire Miller family like fools, huh? Your niece sure is something, Mr. Tanner! We may not be as powerful as the Lanes or the Goldsteins, but we are still a prominent family in Avenport! How dare you mess with us like this?"

"This is a misunderstanding, Mr. Miller!" Nathan attempted to explain his way out of it.

"Hmph! I can't believe we called a heartless impostor like you an artist! You're a disgrace to art!" Julian shouted angrily as he got up from his chair. Hmm... That sounds familiar... Oh, that's right! They said the exact same thing to me when my painting was rejected! Da\*n, I didn't even realize Crystal had invited this many artists to her wedding... Spencer was shocked as well and stared at both of us in disbelief. "She has been faking it the whole time? But... That's impossible, right?" "Oh, god... Why is this happening?" Wendy slumped

weakly against the chair and stared blankly into space. Sharon chuckled in disdain as she said, "This is the precious daughter-in-law you've always wanted. Make sure you take a good long look at her now!" For some reason, I couldn't help but feel a little depressed when I saw Nathan and the others running about frantically like a bunch of headless chickens. I've never seen him panic this much before... He sure loves Crystal a lot, huh? She's just a niece to him, and yet he's treating her like his own daughter. In fact, even Yvette doesn't receive such treatment! Although I had gotten my revenge on Crystal like I wanted, it didn't make me feel better in the slightest. I was in too much shock when Sharon pushed me at the stairs the other day, so I didn't really give the incident much thought. However, having heard Crystal's words in the video, I slowly recalled the details of what happened. There was quite a bit of distance between Sharon and me; moreover, there was no way someone of her age would be able to push me that hard anyway. Crystal went tumbling down the stairs even though I had barely even touched her, so that means... she was the one who killed her own baby! The screen eventually faded to black amid the continued chaos, much to everyone's relief as it felt really wrong watching a pornographic video in public like that. Having gotten the flower stand off her with help from Yvette and Scarlett, Crystal looked at Lyle with panic in her eyes. "This video must be fake, Lyle! You mustn't believe it! I'm sure we'll be able to find evidence to prove my innocence!" As if he had already anticipated everything that happened, Lyle seemed surprisingly calm and simply glared coldly at her in response. I wasn't sure if it was due to him being hurt by her words or shocked by the things she did to Sharon behind his back. Perhaps he had already seen Crystal's true nature on the island when she refused to give him water and pushed him away while getting on the boat all by herself. Unable to accept the fact that he couldn't save his relationship with me, he chose to marry Crystal out of spite. Lyle then turned to look at Sharon and asked calmly, "You knew this all along, Grandma? Is this why you objected to our marriage?" "Yes, I've been telling you since you were eighteen that Crystal isn't a good match for you, but you never listened," Sharon said weakly as she sat there and looked at the wedding that she had thrown into chaos. "Is that why you sent Crystal away and asked me to marry Yvonne? You did that to stop us from being together? Why didn't you tell me about it sooner?" Lyle asked coldly. "Would you have believed me if I did? I just feel bad for Yvonne. She got herself into such a mess because of your relationship with Crystal..." Sharon exclaimed with a sigh. Consumed by rage, Benjamin threw himself at Benson and began beating him up in front of everyone. He was a lot stronger and well-trained in comparison to the nerdy Benson, and the pain of seeing his beloved woman having sex with another man fueled his punches even further. Unable to



watch the scene before him, the head of the Miller family ordered for his bodyguards to separate the two before turning toward Nathan. "So, she's been playing the entire Miller family like fools, huh? Your niece sure is something, Mr. Tanner! We may not be as powerful as the Lanes or the Goldsteins, but we are still a prominent family in Avenport! How dare you mess with us like this?" "This is a misunderstanding, Mr. Miller!" Nathan attempted to explain his way out of it.

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"Do you call this a misunderstanding? I'm telling you now, Nathan, I will make you pay for this," the patriarch of the Miller family roared.

I couldn't help but get a little worried because the Millers were not one to be messed with. And if they were to take action, the Tanners would definitely be crippled by it.

Someone started to back out and was about to leave when suddenly Crystal appeared on the screen again.

She placed a pile of banknotes on the table as Benson watched. Stack upon stack of banknotes worth more than a billion was in full view. "Here you go. This one billion is the ransom money from Lyle. I'm using all of it to invest in the Millers."

"That's a billion. How generous of you," Benson said.

"That's easy money, anyway. And it's an IOU. All it takes is a little trick from me, and Lyle was dumb enough to come up with the one billion. Had I known it's that easy for him to get a billion, I would have asked him to redeem Yvonne with that money. But I can't let him do that because I want to get my hands on Yvonne," Crystal remonstrated.

"Why do you hate that woman so much? I think she'll be screwed over by you soon enough. Why go through all the trouble to get rid of her?" Benson chuckled.

"Funny you should say that. Are you interested in that woman, Benson? Do you want me to get her to sleep with you? She must be good in bed. Otherwise, why would a man like Christopher be so protective of her?" Crystal said with a sly smile.



“No. We’re not the Lane family’s rival. Unless you’re capable of getting Lucas to submit to you.”

Lyle stared at the screen and sneered, “Is this a lie too? Is there anything else that’s true, Crystal?”

“No, Lyle. Listen to me. These are all lies. I’m being framed. It’s impossible that I would do something like this. Check it out yourself, and don’t listen to the baseless claims of others.”

Crystal was in a panic, and she no longer had the confident smile on her face. She knew that she would be doomed if she did not get herself out of this mess.

With a broken relationship and her career destroyed, that would be the end of her.

“Enough with the excuses and come clean. Is it also a lie that you slept with Benson?” Lyle raised his hand and slapped her hard across her face.

This was the first time he had ever struck her. Apart from sorrow, there wasn’t much anger left in his heart. Perhaps, this was incomparable to the heartbreak and disappointment he felt when Crystal left him back then.

Nothing could be compared to that time when he felt utterly desolated and miserable.

“You b\*tch! How dare you lie to us? I even treated you like my own daughter. You shameless woman. You...” Wendy stormed up to Crystal and yanked on her hair so hard that her hair ornaments fell off her hair. Her long hair that was done up came loose. Crystal stood there in embarrassment at her disheveled state.

“Let go of me, you old hag,” Crystal cursed out loud. In return, Wendy battered Crystal with all the strength latter could muster.

“Wendy, please calm down. Crystal must have been framed. Don’t be blind-sided by others. Think about it, Crystal has always been a good person, and no one has ever said anything bad about her before. Someone must have done this out of jealousy,” Natalie reasoned as she rushed forward and tried to pull Wendy away from Crystal.

"Framed? Do you think that we are blind?" In Wendy's eyes, Crystal was nothing but an evil witch.

"It's true. Look, it must be Yvonne. She did all these because she's jealous of Crystal for marrying Lyle," Natalie roared at me when she saw me smiling with my eyes fixed on the stage.

With that said, all eyes turned to me again. I was not surprised to be dragged into the drama that unfolded in front of everyone. I remained silent and calm under everyone's scrutiny. If they still choose to believe Crystal, then there's not much left for me to say. Oh, how the tables have turned.

"Do you call this a misunderstanding? I'm telling you now, Nathan, I will make you pay for this," the patriarch of the Miller family roared. I couldn't help but get a little worried because the Millers were not one to be messed with. And if they were to take action, the Tanners would definitely be crippled by it. Someone started to back out and was about to leave when suddenly Crystal appeared on the screen again. She placed a pile of banknotes on the table as Benson watched. Stack upon stack of banknotes worth more than a billion was in full view. "Here you go. This one billion is the ransom money from Lyle. I'm using all of it to invest in the Millers." "That's a billion. How generous of you," Benson said. "That's easy money, anyway. And it's an IOU. All it takes is a little trick from me, and Lyle was dumb enough to come up with the one billion. Had I known it's that easy for him to get a billion, I would have asked him to redeem Yvonne with that money. But I can't let him do that because I want to get my hands on Yvonne," Crystal remonstrated. "Why do you hate that woman so much? I think she'll be screwed over by you soon enough. Why go through all the trouble to get rid of her?" Benson chuckled. "Funny you should say that. Are you interested in that woman, Benson? Do you want me to get her to sleep with you? She must be good in bed. Otherwise, why would a man like Christopher be so protective of her?" Crystal said with a sly smile. "No. We're not the Lane family's rival. Unless you're capable of getting Lucas to submit to you." Lyle stared at the screen and sneered, "Is this a lie too? Is there anything else that's true, Crystal?" "No, Lyle. Listen to me. These are all lies. I'm being framed. It's impossible that I would do something like this. Check it out yourself, and don't listen to the baseless claims of others." Crystal was in a panic, and she no longer had the confident smile on her face. She knew that she would be doomed if she did not get herself out of this mess. With a broken relationship and her career destroyed, that would be the end of her. "Enough with the excuses and come clean. Is it also a lie that you slept with Benson?" Lyle raised his hand and slapped her hard across her face. This was the first time he had ever struck her. Apart from sorrow, there

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"Bullsh\*t! I've got to hand it to you Tanners. How dare you deceive us and treat us like fools? And now you're looking for a scapegoat? I'm going to kill you all." Wendy picked up the stage's sound system and flung it at Crystal.

If Yvette had not pulled Wendy away from Crystal, Wendy definitely would have caused Crystal great bodily harm.

"Mrs. Smith, please stay calm and don't do anything rash," Nathan forced out those words. He had done terrible things for the sake of Crystal. At this point, he was powerless and hung his head despondently.

"I would have stabbed you all one by one to death if I have a knife with me."

Not wanting to see Nathan in this state again, I took a deep breath before I turned around and held Christopher's hand in mine and whispered, "Let's get out of here, shall we?"

"You can't bear to watch this?" Christopher asked with a frown.

He must have thought that I was too kind-hearted to have such emotions after being bullied by Crystal. I turned my gaze to the middle-aged man on the stage for a moment, then I closed my eyes and said, "He's still my father."

"Crystal is from the Yates family, and she's not part of the Tanners. This won't affect the Tanner family. Only Crystal will have this to answer for. Don't you worry, I've got your back."

I began to relax again after hearing Christopher's reassurance.

I thought that would be the end of it. To my surprise, there was a change of scene on the projector screen, and it seemed to be recorded at a foreign place. After listening to the language spoken in the video, it was obvious that those people were Jetroinians.

I looked at Christopher in surprise and asked, "Isn't this a bit too much?"

"Serves her right for being a promiscuous woman. It turns out my private investigator dug up more than I expected." Christopher pursed his lips and gestured in the direction of Sharon and said, "Sharon is really the backbone of the Smith family, and she shows no mercy to her enemies."

It suddenly dawned on me that these videos were all pre-selected by Sharon. It seemed to me that Sharon did this out of her guilty-conscious to wholly exonerate my name.

In the video, Crystal was wearing a revealing dress, and she was drinking and chatting among a group of men. Someone asked bluntly, "Miss, are you sure it's okay to leave your boyfriend stranded on the island?"

"Mr. Banno, weren't you just in my bed last night? Don't mention another man when you're with me." Crystal pounced on him and pressed her ample bosom against his chest. "As the saying goes, a wise man submits to fate. He's about to die. I can't possibly die together with him, can I?"

"You're right, Ms. Yates. Let's revel all night, shall we? I can guarantee that you will be thoroughly satisfied with us. I'll send you home once this is over. I promise you that this will be the last time." One of the men reached into Crystal's top and groped her.

"Let's have fun together. Don't make me wait any longer. I want to be with two of the most handsome men," Crystal said with a sensual smile.

"We are all handsome. After you're done with us, you just have to say the word, and we'll take you back." One of the men picked her up and spun her around in the air a few times before he placed her on the couch. Another man went over to her and slid his hand up her skirt while a third man deliberately spilled wine on her white skirt.

Clothes were discarded, followed by shoes... In that instant, the video got cut off. What happened next in the video was not aired.

I was so shocked by what I saw that I choked on my drink, and water spurted out of my mouth. Fortunately, Gordon and Julia had left earlier. Otherwise, I would have accidentally spat on Julia, who was seated on my left.

Did Crystal engage herself in lewd acts just so that she could get home? That was just preposterous. No wonder I felt that those men were no-good the moment I saw them on the ship.

"Bullsh\*t! I've got to hand it to you Tanners. How dare you deceive us and treat us like fools? And now you're looking for a scapegoat? I'm going to kill you all." Wendy picked up the stage's sound system and flung it at Crystal. If Yvette had not pulled Wendy away from Crystal, Wendy definitely would have caused Crystal great bodily harm. "Mrs. Smith, please stay calm and don't do anything rash," Nathan forced out those words. He had done terrible things for the sake of Crystal. At this point, he was powerless and hung his head despondently. "I would have stabbed you all one by one to death if I have a knife with me." Not wanting to see Nathan in this state again, I took a deep breath before I turned around and held Christopher's hand in mine and whispered, "Let's get out of here, shall we?" "You can't bear to watch this?" Christopher asked with a frown. He must have thought that I was too kind-hearted to have such emotions after being bullied by Crystal. I turned my gaze to the middle-aged man on the stage for a moment, then I closed my eyes and said, "He's still my father." "Crystal is from the Yates family, and she's not part of the Tanners. This won't affect the Tanner family. Only Crystal will have this to answer for. Don't you worry, I've got your back." I began to relax again after hearing Christopher's reassurance. I thought that would be the end of it. To my surprise, there was a change of scene on the projector screen, and it seemed to be recorded at a foreign place. After listening to the language spoken in the video, it was obvious that those people were Jetroinians. I looked at Christopher in surprise and asked, "Isn't this a bit too much?" "Serves her right for being a promiscuous woman. It turns out my private investigator dug up more than I expected." Christopher pursed his lips and gestured in the direction of Sharon and said, "Sharon is really the backbone of

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Crystal had agreed to several unfair terms, all for the sake of returning safely from Jetroina.

Everyone fell into silence after watching the video. No one would have thought that Crystal was a woman with such easy virtue. It was horrendous!

It was a long silence, and it was so quiet in the hall that one could hear a pin drop. Suddenly, Crystal let out a scream before she picked up the sound system that Wendy had just hit her with. Then, she lifted it over her head and hurled it at the screen.

With a loud crash, several cracks appeared on the screen. But the footage had been imprinted on everyone's memory. Crystal slumped to the ground, and her spirit was in shambles.

Benjamin walked up to Crystal, and then he crouched down to be at eye level with her. The adoration he had for her was gone. "I've always thought of you as a goddess. I thought you were an untouchable woman, only to be admired from afar. It turns out that you're nothing but a promiscuous woman."

"No... no... hear me out, Benjamin. Don't turn your back on me too. I had no choice. Your brother made me do it. If he had not threatened to expose my secrets about my plagiarized paintings, I wouldn't have helped him. Don't look at me like that, please..." Crystal sobbed as she reached out for his hand.

Benjamin twisted her hand and tossed it aside. Then, he wiped his hand on a tissue and said, "You're a filthy woman."

It was as though he had landed a sucker punch on Crystal. She stared at him in disbelief and said, "This is unlike you, Benjamin. Do you really believe all that? Don't you know me as a person? Benjamin..."

"I've always respected you. And I respected your decision when you told me that you love Lyle. You could have been mine. After you got drunk and slept in my arms, I couldn't bear to touch you because I wanted you to be happy with Lyle. Come to think of it, I made a wise choice that night. I would have been utterly disgusted if I had sex with a woman who slept around with countless men."

"Benjamin... you can't treat me like this..." Suddenly, Crystal stood up and glared at me. She gritted her teeth and snarled, "Yvonne, you planned this, didn't you? I'll make you pay for this. I'm going to kill you."

As soon as she said that, she rushed down from the stage and rushed towards me. I quickly got up from my seat and stared at her cautiously. Just then, Christopher kicked the chair in front of him away from the table. Crystal was running so fast that she couldn't stop herself in time and collided with the chair. She landed heavily on the ground and burst into tears.

This was my first time seeing Crystal in such distress and misery. For a moment there, I recalled the first time Crystal came to our house. I remembered how she hid behind Natalie as she craned her neck to look at me and said to Natalie, "Yvonne is so beautiful. She's just like a princess."



At that time, I had an instant liking for this cousin of mine. Oh, how things have changed. Despite all that, I had no vindictive feeling. There was nothing but calmness in the depths of my heart. Eventually, I broke out of that and began to live a carefree life. And the cousin who adored me back in those years had turned into someone else.

At that moment, Sharon, with the help of Josephine, made her way onto the stage slowly. She said firmly into the microphone, "I'm sorry, everyone. But the wedding is canceled. We can't have someone like that marry into the Smith family."

The grand wedding had turned into a humiliating event. It would be the talk of the town for a very long time. Crystal had disguised herself as a perfect woman all too well. Other than Monica, no one else in Avenport was as popular and highly praised as Crystal.

The crowd gradually dispersed and soon, there were only a few people left in the hall.

"Grandma, you orchestrated this today, didn't you? You've known all along. Why didn't you tell me?"

Crystal had agreed to several unfair terms, all for the sake of returning safely from Jetrouina. Everyone fell into silence after watching the video. No one would have thought that Crystal was a woman with such easy virtue. It was horrendous! It was a long silence, and it was so quiet in the hall that one could hear a pin drop. Suddenly, Crystal let out a scream before she picked up the sound system that Wendy had just hit her with. Then, she lifted it over her head and hurled it at the screen. With a loud crash, several cracks appeared on the screen. But the footage had been imprinted on everyone's memory. Crystal slumped to the ground, and her spirit was in shambles. Benjamin walked up to Crystal, and then he crouched down to be at eye level with her. The adoration he had for her was gone. "I've always thought of you as a goddess. I thought you were an untouchable woman, only to be admired from afar. It turns out that you're nothing but a promiscuous woman." "No... no... hear me out, Benjamin. Don't turn your back on me too. I had no choice. Your brother made me do it. If he had not threatened to expose my secrets about my plagiarized paintings, I wouldn't have helped him. Don't look at me like that, please..." Crystal sobbed as she reached out for his hand. Benjamin twisted her hand and tossed it aside. Then, he wiped his hand on a tissue and said, "You're a filthy woman." It was as though he had landed a sucker punch on Crystal. She stared at him in disbelief and said, "This is unlike you,

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"Yes, I'm the one behind it. Didn't I tell you that you shouldn't have any regrets? You have to live your life without regrets. I'm getting old, and I don't have many years to live. Ever since you were eighteen years old, I've told you that Crystal is no angel, but you never listened."

As Sharon spoke, she stopped a few times to catch her breath. It was obvious that today's event had taken a toll on her.

“Why do you think I took down Yvonne’s painting and gave it to Crystal to get her to leave? I knew she was up to no good and that her love for you was not real. I was happy when you married Yvonne, but your marriage was short-lived. You never even cherished her as your wife in those two short years. I wouldn’t have done this if you had not insisted on marrying that woman.”

Lyle was shocked. He let out a quiet laugh that sounded like a sob. “I thought I knew what kind of woman she was. I was wronged. Why didn’t you tell me, Grandma? You shouldn’t have kept it from me.”

“I knew from the start that she was messing around with the youngest son of the Miller family. She has played you out. What more can I say to you? Do you remember what I said to you when I tried to stop you from marrying Yvonne? You made me a promise, but then you divorced her not long after you married her. I always want what’s best for you. Too bad you didn’t listen to me.”

“Grandma...”

“Suck it up. Don’t cry. You’ve always had things easy, and it’s partly my fault for taking care of everything for you. Now you know how painful it is to fall...”

Their conversation began to fade away, and by the time I reached the entrance, I couldn’t hear them anymore. Tears welled in my eyes when I saw Nathan pull Crystal to his side before both of them bowed before Sharon.

That night, Christopher did not come home together with me. Instead, he spent the night at the Lane residence. I lay in bed alone, and for a long time, I had trouble falling asleep. When I woke up in the morning, I received a call from Christopher. He told me he missed me, and that brought a smile to my face.

When Sabrina came to see me, she tossed a newspaper in front of me as we sat at the table. She grabbed the toast from me and took a bite before saying, “It’s unbelievable. Do you have any idea how hot the news is, Eve? All the newspapers are sold out, and I had to spend a small fortune to buy a copy of the newspaper from someone else. Take a look. You’ll be so happy once you read it. Oh, how the tables have turned. Congratulations! You’re finally free from all that toxicity. Come on, let’s go out today. Let’s treat ourselves to a nice meal to celebrate.”

I quickly scanned through the newspaper. The main photo at the top of the news was a close-up of Crystal in a state of panic at the wedding. The news article on Crystal's disclosure was tactful, but it was enough to garner attention.

"Yes, I should be happy. I'm finally free from all the emotional baggage," I said as I forced out a smile.

Sabrina talked elatedly as she recounted how Crystal was surrounded by the reporters when she left the hotel, and that she was holed up in the Tanner residence. Word on the street was that her paintings had been removed from the art exhibition. When Sabrina realized that I had not spoken, she asked, "Why don't you look happy, Eve? Don't tell me you're sympathizing with Crystal."

I shook my head. "I don't sympathize with her. If she had not done those things, she wouldn't end up like this. She has what's coming. But I don't feel happy. Instead, I feel rather bothered by it."

"You put too much importance on your family. They treated you like dirt, and yet you worry about them at times like this. Don't worry. As Christopher said before, with the backings of the Lane family, the Tanners will be fine."

Sabrina patted me on the shoulder as she reassured me. When she saw that I was still in a daze, she rubbed her hands on my cheek. I slapped her hands away and asked, "What about the Smith family? Considering Sharon's old age, all this stress will be too much for her to handle."

"Yes, I'm the one behind it. Didn't I tell you that you shouldn't have any regrets? You have to live your life without regrets. I'm getting old, and I don't have many years to live. Ever since you were eighteen years old, I've told you that Crystal is no angel, but you never listened." As Sharon spoke, she stopped a few times to catch her breath. It was obvious that today's event had taken a toll on her. "Why do you think I took down Yvonne's painting and gave it to Crystal to get her to leave? I knew she was up to no good and that her love for you was not real. I was happy when you married Yvonne, but your marriage was short-lived. You never even cherished her as your wife in those two short years. I wouldn't have done this if you had not insisted on marrying that woman." Lyle was shocked. He let out a quiet laugh that sounded like a sob. "I thought I knew what kind of woman she was. I was wronged. Why didn't you tell me, Grandma? You shouldn't have kept it from me." "I knew from the start that she was messing around with the youngest son of the Miller

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“When such negative news was reported, business would definitely be affected, but it was not a big deal. You don’t understand old Mrs. Smith’s skills. Don’t think that when she talks to you gently, she is treating you as her own family. She is very tactful and plays her game well. If it weren’t for her getting older and lacking motivation, the Smith family would definitely not be in its current position. Come, let’s go shopping and have a breath of fresh air.”

“No, thanks, I’m not going. You can get Zach to go with you.” I turned Sabrina down and got a scolding from her for being a spoilsport but I did not take it to heart.

I was not being a spoilsport but I just could not cheer myself up. I was not sure why but it could be that my dad bowed to somebody. Men should be strong and not easily bowed to beg anyone but Dad did that for Crystal.

On TV, I saw a lot of news about Crystal, as expected. Stories about her were getting viral all over Avenport. Those newspapers and dailies were flooding the streets like snowflakes.

Of course, I was being overlooked. Crystal was being recognized by Avenport as the most well-known drama queen with a charming exterior, but no inner beauty to match.

Suddenly the doorbell rang. Thinking it was Christopher, I turned off the TV and walked over to the door. Christopher would always call me and tell me that he had to go somewhere to work. But, when I opened the door, I would find him standing right in front of me, smiling and handing me a bunch of roses saying that he wanted to give me a surprise. I was used to it.

This time the surprise was different. Standing outside the door was Benjamin, and his eyes were bloodshot. Obviously, he had not slept. There were bruises on his face which must have been the result of fighting with Benson.

Seeing him, I was surprised and wary. My hand reached for the door with the intention of closing it. The traps he set for me were still vivid in my mind. The most horrifying was when he ganged up with Crystal, spiked my drink and then put me in bed with a man while getting a crowd to witness and photograph me in the act of adultery.

“Wait, Yvonne, I have something to tell you.” Benjamin stuck his foot in the door and said urgently.

Impatiently, I glared at him and asked in a low voice, "What is it?"

Carefully, Benjamin took out a pink object from a pocket of his close-fitting clothes and held it in his palm. It was my hairpin, the last thing given to me by my mother, which I had always cherished before. Even though I said I did not want to have anything to do with her anymore, I miss actually her very much.

A pink hairpin is, after all, a child's belonging. I thought Benjamin wanted to return it, so I stretched out my hand to him and said plainly, "Thank you for returning it to me."

Very quickly, Benjamin took out another hairpin. It was the one that I had lost for many years. It was well preserved and the color did not fade at all. On the contrary, the color of the one in my possession, which is often used, is faded. The look in his eyes was very complicated, his throat seemed taut, and he asked in a low voice, "So this is really your hairpin."

"Yes, it is mine. They are a pair. Why is it with you?" I have no idea why Benjamin wanted to see me. Strictly speaking, we have no relationship at all, it was more mutual dislike.

As Benjamin held the hairpin, a look of nostalgia flashed across his eyes. His expression became tender. "I got this hairpin when we were abducted by kidnappers. I was drifting in and out of consciousness. I felt that I was being rescued when I saw this pink object, I held on to it and have been keeping it all these years."

I blinked and laughed softly. I was quite silly at that time. Even though I was feeling so afraid, I had saved so many people. I took the hairpin from him. "This is the only thing I have to remember my mother by. I'm really glad you have brought it back for me. Thank you."

Seeing that I had taken the hairpin, Benjamin seemed agitated. Quickly, he took it from me. I was puzzled about what he was trying to do.

"Why didn't you tell me before that you were the one who saved me years ago. If you had told me, I would not... I would not have done those things to harm you so badly." Benjamin's voice became softer and softer as if realizing that what he had done to me was totally unacceptable.

"When such negative news was reported, business would definitely be affected, but it was not a big deal. You don't understand old Mrs. Smith's



skills. Don't think that when she talks to you gently, she is treating you as her own family. She is very tactful and plays her game well. If it weren't for her getting older and lacking motivation, the Smith family would definitely not be in its current position. Come, let's go shopping and have a breath of fresh air."

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I smiled wryly. "I guess, even if I had told you that I was the one who rescued you, you would not have believed me. Possibly, you would have joined forces with Crystal again and done something worse to humiliate me.

In the past, they had done too much harm to me and I had suffered so much. At that time, Crystal was so precious to Benjamin that he believed every word she said.

Benjamin laughed bitterly. "It's true. You're right. Even if you had told me, I would not have believed you." He gave me the hairpin again. "I'm returning it to you. At that time, I gave it to Crystal but she nonchalantly gifted it to me. Since they belong to you, I should give it back."

"Thank you!" Politely, I took the hairpin from him. After more than ten years, the other hairpin had finally returned to me.

"I'm sorry... for what happened in the past... I did not know that it was you. I'm sorry," Benjamin spoke hesitantly, sounding very emotional. His face was red as he had certainly never thought that one day, he would be apologizing to me.

"It doesn't matter. Those were not something important." I was telling the truth. I really did not want to think about them as it would be pointless. Now, I had Christopher who was such a good man, to look after me. Why should I wallow in those burdensome memories?

“You... Yvonne... I...” Benjamin started speaking but could not finish one sentence. He looked away and avoided my eyes. Then, he spoke slowly in a low tone.

“Those abductors beat me up because I tried to escape. My head was bleeding and I was barely conscious. I was so afraid and I felt hopeless. I was only fourteen and facing the threat of death, I had no hope. In the darkness, I waited for someone from home to save me. After waiting for so long, no one came. That type of hopelessness was like waiting for death. I was so terrified that I could not breathe.”

“Then, someone said in my ear, ‘Don’t cry, I’ll save you,’ and the voice was so sweet. I swear, it’s the most beautiful voice I’ve ever heard in my life. Truly, everything in front of me was blurry but I seemed to see some light and hope. At that time, I swore that I will look after the owner of this voice for the rest of my life. Yvonne, do you understand?”

I have wondered why Benjamin unconditionally indulged Crystal, but I was still shocked. It was only because I rescued him and Crystal took all the credit.

Suddenly, I felt that he was very foolish too. Just because he was saved by her once, he had unconditionally accepted someone. I laughed. “I understand what you mean. Let bygones be bygones. You’ve returned the hairpin to me. It’s a very good way of repayment.”

“Then... in the future, can we be friends?” Benjamin looked at me tentatively, with a glimmer of hope in his eyes; yet, fearing that I would reject him.

I do not know his thoughts, so after a moment, I nodded. “It happened a long time ago. You should not take it too hard.”

Benjamin’s expression was a mix of emotions as he stood rooted there for some time before he left. I rubbed my eyes as I had never expected such an outcome. It was simply unbelievable.

I picked up the paintbrush and put a few strokes on the blank paper. My feelings were complicated and my painting was strange, reflecting my emotions when inspiration came upon me. Before I realized it, the sun was already setting in the west. I rubbed my sore arms and gyrated my stiff neck. Then, I opened the refrigerator to think of what I should cook for Christopher today.

I discovered that I had nothing in the fridge, so I had to make a trip to the supermarket. After tidying up and putting away my paintbrushes and palette, I went downstairs. Suddenly, I heard a familiar voice calling my name.

“Yvonne, wait up!”

When I heard the voice, I felt rather bothered. After what had happened, it was rather strange that Lyle would still want to see me. Shouldn't he be back at the Smith family home to take care of the stuff that Crystal has used against them?

“Is there anything I can do for you?” I asked plainly.

“Where are you heading? I can give you a lift,” Lyle said.

I smiled wryly. “I guess, even if I had told you that I was the one who rescued you, you would not have believed me. Possibly, you would have joined forces with Crystal again and done something worse to humiliate me. In the past, they had done too much harm to me and I had suffered so much. At that time, Crystal was so precious to Benjamin that he believed every word she said. Benjamin laughed bitterly. “It's true. You're right. Even if you had told me, I would not have believed you.” He gave me the hairpin again. “I'm returning it to you. At that time, I gave it to Crystal but she nonchalantly gifted it to me. Since they belong to you, I should give it back.” “Thank you!” Politely, I took the hairpin from him. After more than ten years, the other hairpin had finally returned to me. “I'm sorry... for what happened in the past... I did not know that it was you. I'm sorry,” Benjamin spoke hesitantly, sounding very emotional. His face was red as he had certainly never thought that one day, he would be apologizing to me. “It doesn't matter. Those were not something important.” I was telling the truth. I really did not want to think about them as it would be pointless. Now, I had Christopher who was such a good man, to look after me. Why should I wallow in those burdensome memories? “You... Yvonne... I...” Benjamin started speaking but could not finish one sentence. He looked away and avoided my eyes. Then, he spoke slowly in a low tone. “Those abductors beat me up because I tried to escape. My head was bleeding and I was barely conscious. I was so afraid and I felt hopeless. I was only fourteen and facing the threat of death, I had no hope. In the darkness, I waited for someone from home to save me. After waiting for so long, no one came. That type of hopelessness was like waiting for death. I was so terrified that I could not breathe.” “Then, someone said in my ear, 'Don't cry, I'll save you,' and the voice was so sweet. I swear, it's the most beautiful voice I've ever heard in my life. Truly, everything in front of me was blurry but I seemed

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"There's no need. I'm just crossing the road to do some shopping at the supermarket on the other side. It's too near for a drive," I shook my head and replied to him simply.

Lyle was silent for a moment. Then, he said, "Yvonne, you know what I meant was I would like to talk with you."

I dropped my shoulders wearily and smiled. "Do you want to talk about starting anew? It's pointless. It will do no one any good if I piss you off with what I say. You should know that there's no way we can reconcile."

"I know I did not treat you well before. I can change. I really can. Yvonne, I..." Lyle said all that in a rush but seeing my cold expression, he stopped.

I looked at the time. It was already half-past four and Christopher would be home by five-thirty. I really had to hurry or I would not be able to get dinner ready. So, I told Lyle, "I need to go to the supermarket or I won't make it."

I walked off on my own. Lyle did not try to hold me back, but he followed me, instead. The supermarket was rather crowded. I stood in front of the counter, looked for a while, and picked some spare rib. I bought some crabs too. The crabs looked big, so they should be tender and taste great.

"I remember that you don't like crabs," Lyle stood nearby, trying to make conversation.

I smiled, answering softly, "Chris likes crabs, so I learned a few ways of cooking them. Though he doesn't like ribs, he enjoys eating them with me. So, I often cook these two dishes."

Lyle stopped talking and just followed me around patiently. I browsed around in the supermarket for a while and bought a lot of things. When I held them in my hands, Lyle offered to help me but I declined.

When we returned to the apartment, I did not rush to go up but lingered near the lift entrance. I turned around and told Lyle, "You should get going. If Chris sees us, he won't be pleased. Even though he will not suspect me, I don't like displeasing him."

"Yvonne!" Lyle gazed at me with eyes full of sorrow. Perhaps, I was mistaken but I thought I saw the glint of tears in them.

"Life is like a journey, there are many stretches of scenic beauty. If you missed a parking spot, there is another where one can park and enjoy the scenery. However, there are some spots where one cannot turn back as someone else has taken the spot and enjoying the beauty."

After saying this, I chided myself again for being overly melancholic. When I entered the elevator and pressed the 'door close' button, Lyle wanted to come in; but for some unknown reason, he changed his mind.

From outside the elevator, he yelled to me, "If I had chosen you during the kidnapping, you would not have left me, would you?"

"You would not have chosen me, would you?" I smiled. The elevator door closed and Lyle was shut out.

Christopher opened the door punctually at half-past five. I had just finished cooking dinner. "Good timing. The meal is just ready. Go and change your clothes, and we shall eat together."

Christopher came over and gave me a long passionate kiss before letting go of me. When he came to the dinner table and saw his favorite dishes, he laughed happily. "Such a lavish meal. Did you win the lottery?"

"Yes, and the grand prize is sitting right in front of me. Let's dig in." I held the crab right next to his lips. For me, Christopher was the grand prize. If not for those turbulent times, I really did not know if we would have met.

I did not think it was necessary to tell Christopher about Lyle, but I did tell him about Benjamin visiting me and what happened between us. "This is so extraordinary. Benjamin treasured Crystal and indulged her just because of that incident. When he told me that, I really could not understand why. Don't you think it's strange?"

"What's so strange about that? When someone finds hope and life at the time when they are most desperate, that moment is unforgettable." Christopher smiled very mysteriously as if he was hiding some secret.

"That's totally logical. Like when I met you. Don't I treasure you and indulge you? I winked and praised myself.

"There's no need. I'm just crossing the road to do some shopping at the supermarket on the other side. It's too near for a drive," I shook my head and replied to him simply. Lyle was silent for a moment. Then, he said, "Yvonne, you know what I meant was I would like to talk with you." I dropped my shoulders wearily and smiled. "Do you want to talk about starting anew? It's pointless. It will do no one any good if I piss you off with what I say. You should know that there's no way we can reconcile." "I know I did not treat you well before. I can change. I really can. Yvonne, I..." Lyle said all that in a rush but seeing my cold expression, he stopped. I looked at the time. It was already half-past four and Christopher would be home by five-thirty. I really had to hurry or I would not be able to get dinner ready. So, I told Lyle, "I need to go to the supermarket or I won't make it." I walked off on my own. Lyle did not try to hold me back, but he followed me, instead. The supermarket was rather crowded. I stood in front of the counter, looked for a while, and picked some spare rib. I bought some crabs too. The crabs looked big, so they should be tender and taste great. "I remember that you don't like crabs," Lyle stood nearby, trying to make conversation. I smiled, answering softly, "Chris



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"Hmmm, you are my precious." Christopher put me on his lap and tried to feed me. We did this often and I had never refused him. He fed me caramelized pork ribs and I took care of his crabs.

As we went on eating, a thought came to me. Christopher had told me before that he had known me a long time ago and he never forgot me. He was also involved in the abduction case at that time. I wonder if he knew that I was the one who played a part in the escape.

I avoided the food he gave to me and asked, "Have you known all along that Crystal pretended to be me? If not, why have you never gotten along with her? I remember that she had helped you before."

"What is your guess? If you guess correctly, there's a prize." Christopher wiped my mouth and then continued to feed me.

After turning it in my mind a few times, I began to remember what he had said about those incidents. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that was the case. I slapped my head and said seriously, "That must be the case. Otherwise, you will never say that you've known me a long time ago and still paying attention to me, right?"

Christopher smiled and pinched the tip of my nose. "That's right. I knew about it a long time ago. When it happened, I was conscious. I just inhaled too much ether and felt very weak. I pretended to be knocked out so I would not be beaten up like that idiot Benjamin. I saw everything that you did."

"After that, you took notice of me?" I asked.

"Yes, I started to pay attention to you after that. I was curious. Every time at banquets and various public places, you would make a fool of yourself and be looked down upon by others and bully others as well. Where did you get this kind of courage? Then, I discovered your secret." Christopher dipped the peeled shrimp into the sauce and fed it to me.

"You discovered that I could paint and you used the nickname Key to contact me." It was getting more and more mysterious. I winked and said, "Were you interested in me back then? You say you've liked me for a long time."

I was pleased with this conclusion which made me proud. "So, the damsel saved the knight in shining armor who gave himself to her and served her for the rest of his life."

"I will serve you for the rest of your life. Is this payment sufficient?" Christopher pressed himself close to my ear and blew a gust of air.

I was rather startled as I did not expect him to admit to this so honestly. Suddenly I held his face and kissed him hard as that seemed the only right thing to do.

He responded by holding my head and kissing me passionately until we both gasped for breath.

“Have you eaten your fill?” he asked me.

“Yes, I’m full. How about you?”

“I’m not. So you must satisfy me. I want a full meal, the whole course.”

“What whole course... Oh...” I was wondering what he meant by the whole course when he suddenly bent over and carried me around the room a few times and then, laughing, brought me right into the bedroom and put me on the bed.

He skillfully opened the cabinet and searched for the special items I had bought in the adult store and kept them hidden. I hugged the quilt and mumbled, “You haven’t finished dinner.”

“I’m getting ready.” Christopher opened the bag, looking for what he needed, and stroked my face. “Be good. I’ll come right back, so don’t hurry. Hot meals must not be eaten in a hurry.”

This guy was deliberately misinterpreting my words. I glared at him and wondered if I should be more reserved and wait for him or start preparing myself.

After a short while, I made a bold decision. I crept under the quilt, and started looking for the zipper on my skirt. When Christopher got into bed, he found that I was nude. There was a look of surprise in his eyes. Then, a broad smile appeared on his face.

When he entered me, I hugged him high and synchronized with his movements. This man had loved me for many years. How lucky I was to have such a man, silently giving his all for me.

The so-called big meal, of course, was Christopher’s favorite. So, I was treated to the utmost, ending up begging for mercy. I wondered why the physical strength of everyone from the special forces was so unusual.

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