

Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 561-570

Posted by **chapter novel**, 48 Views, Released on July 13, 2022

I don't know what happened. I had just arrived at Yorksland and was immediately stuck in this situation, despite not having done anything yet. Still in a daze, I could only hear some muffled voices but was not able to make out what they were saying.

Besides feeling afraid, I was sad that I was so helpless. I didn't even manage to find Christopher. Rumor had it that Yorksland was a mess. Did I encounter human traffickers, or maybe organ traffickers?

I got more scared the more I thought about it. When I finally woke up, I saw that I was in an abandoned warehouse. A group of men was playing cards together when one of them noticed that I was awake. He then tossed a bottle of water and a piece of bread at me.

I took the food and studied them as I ate. "Who are you guys. Why did you kidnap me?"

"For the money, of course. You're the famous new school artist, after all. Tsk, tsk. You're an artsy young woman too," someone said and laughed. "Luck is on our side. We were at a loss originally. But now that we have you, it seems like there's an eighty percent chance that we'll succeed."

I was confused about the situation when he mentioned money. Unsure of how to react, I said, "You kidnapped me for money, but we're in Yorksland now. I don't seem to recall that I'm famous in Yorksland. Who are you going to ask for money here? Are you telling me that you want my family to come all the way from Avenport to send you money? Or do you want them to send you the money online? These options aren't realistic at all."

"Hehe. I heard that you're Lyle Smith's ex-wife. He still hasn't gotten over you, you know? I wonder how much you're worth," a man said with narrowed eyes as he scrutinized me.

"Lyle?" I was even more confused now. "You must have been mistaken. He has nothing to do with me now. If you're going to threaten Lyle, shouldn't you be looking for the woman he loves? Do you really think he'd give his money because of me? Back then when I was kidnapped, the kidnappers demanded one billion but he didn't give them a single cent. He just left me to rot there."

“What?” Not many people knew about this incident anyway. Upon hearing my words, the kidnappers started to panic. One of the men kicked me and scolded, “You should just die if you’re not worth anything, then.”

I felt a shiver down my spine in an instant. This really was an unexpected disaster. I haven’t even done anything in Yorksland but was met with something like this all because of Lyle. Is he the bane of my life?

The man who threw the bottle of water at me snatched it back right then. He threw it on the ground, and water spilled everywhere. It was such a pity as I was actually feeling thirsty and had only gotten to take a sip of it.

“Don’t worry, boss. It’s rumored that Lyle’s woman cheated on him. Now, he regrets it and has been pestering his ex-wife. He must have a thing for her again.”

I sighed and curled up in the corner. I didn’t dare to say anything else, afraid that those men would do something to me if they were to find out that I was of no use to them.

As if there weren’t enough miseries in my life, this was the most serious one yet. If I were to meet Lyle, I wanted so much to give him a slap across his face and then kick him on his shins. Why did I have to come across so many unfortunate events?

I didn’t know how much time had passed, but I was hungry and thirsty. It was unbearable. So I shouted at the people playing cards, “Can you please give me some food and water? Even if I’m a hostage, you can’t possibly leave me here to starve to death before you meet Lyle, right?”

“What’s with the noise? Shut up or we’ll sell you off.”

Right then, the man, who seemed to be the boss, received a phone call. He walked over to me and gave me a cup of water and a piece of bread. I instantly gobbled down the bread and drank the water. However, I started to feel dizzy a moment later.

I lost consciousness a while later. They had added drugs into the water. I thought that I would still see the kidnappers when I open my eyes again, but I saw Lyle instead. I was shocked to see him. He really is in Yorksland.

“Lyle?” My eyes widened, and I continued to stare at him. What on earth is happening?

Then, I realized that he and I weren't the only ones in the dark room. There were a bunch of other people whom I didn't know. Lyle was standing in the middle of the room, and everything else was just like when I was kidnapped back then. The only difference was that Crystal wasn't with me now.

I don't know what happened. I had just arrived at Yorksland and was immediately stuck in this situation, despite not having done anything yet. Still in a daze, I could only hear some muffled voices but was not able to make out what they were saying. Besides feeling afraid, I was sad that I was so helpless. I didn't even manage to find Christopher. Rumor had it that Yorksland was a mess. Did I encounter human traffickers, or maybe organ traffickers? I got more scared the more I thought about it. When I finally woke up, I saw that I was in an abandoned warehouse. A group of men was playing cards together when one of them noticed that I was awake. He then tossed a bottle of water and a piece of bread at me. I took the food and studied them as I ate. “Who are you guys. Why did you kidnap me?” “For the money, of course. You're the famous new school artist, after all. Tsk, tsk. You're an artsy young woman too,” someone said and laughed. “Luck is on our side. We were at a loss originally. But now that we have you, it seems like there's an eighty percent chance that we'll succeed.” I was confused about the situation when he mentioned money. Unsure of how to react, I said, “You kidnapped me for money, but we're in Yorksland now. I don't seem to recall that I'm famous in Yorksland. Who are you going to ask for money here? Are you telling me that you want my family to come all the way from Avenport to send you money? Or do you want them to send you the money online? These options aren't realistic at all.” “Hehe. I heard that you're Lyle Smith's ex-wife. He still hasn't gotten over you, you know? I wonder how much you're worth,” a man said with narrowed eyes as he scrutinized me. “Lyle?” I was even more confused now. “You must have been mistaken. He has nothing to do with me now. If you're going to threaten Lyle, shouldn't you be looking for the woman he loves? Do you really think he'd give his money because of me? Back then when I was kidnapped, the kidnapers demanded one billion but he didn't give them a single cent. He just left me to rot there.” “What?” Not many people knew about this incident anyway. Upon hearing my words, the kidnapers started to panic. One of the men kicked me and scolded, “You should just die if you're not worth anything, then.” I felt a shiver down my spine in an instant. This really was an unexpected disaster. I haven't even done anything in Yorksland but was met with something like this all because of Lyle. Is he the

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"You're awake? Are you okay?" Lyle asked worriedly. He was about to walk towards me but was stopped by someone.

"We haven't agreed on the terms yet, Mr. Smith. It's best if you don't step forward now. Your ex-wife is doing okay. I didn't lie to you, did I?" the person said plainly as he blocked the former.

"Terms?" I glanced at Lyle, and then at the rest in the room. Suddenly, I realized that because of my bad luck, I encountered people who were competing with Lyle to get contracts or investors. However, they were unsuccessful, so they turned their attention to me.

But am I really unlucky?

Back then, the incident with Lyle, Crystal, and I caused such a huge commotion in Avenport. It wasn't a secret that I was Lyle's ex-wife. However, these people seemed to have mistaken something. Where did they get the confidence that this man would give up on his benefits for me? After all, the person he always loved was Crystal.

If Crystal hadn't made so many mistakes, tricked Lyle, and even tried to take over the Smith family's assets, it wouldn't have been my place to speak.

"Just say what you want." He took a glance at me, a guilty look on his face. He must have never expected me to be dragged into his mess.

"It's simple. We were the ones who were supposed to have the project. If it wasn't for you getting in our way and taking it away from us, we wouldn't have lost such a great opportunity. As long as you sign the contract that says that you'll give me the project, I'll let go of your ex-wife," someone answered.

"For no other conditions?" Lyle scoffed. "I've already spent fifty thousand just for this project, and I finally got my hands on it. Why should I give it to you just like that?"

His words were cold, and it didn't seem like he had any intentions of backing down.

"What? Are you going to be so cruel that you won't even care about your ex-wife anymore?" The scrawny man standing next to me became frantic and started to wave the knife he was holding before me. "What's the point? It's just fifty thousand. The Smith family is powerful and wealthy. You can't possibly tell me that you can't pay fifty thousand, can you?"

"What if I say no?" Lyle questioned scornfully. "If you're going to kidnap someone, shouldn't you have stopped to think first? If you had kidnapped Crystal, I would agree to whatever condition you propose. But as for Yvonne, do you really think fifty thousand is worth it? She's the daughter-in-law of the Lane family. Do you think Christopher Lane's woman has anything to do with me? Or are you implying that I should give him a call to let him know that his woman has been kidnapped and that he would have to pay compensation to let her go? Do you need me to talk through the conditions with him?"

My heart sank, and I got more worried upon hearing his words. Even though I was dragged into this mess because of Lyle, his words were still true. In the

past, as he stood before Crystal and me, he didn't even want to save me. That was why it wasn't much of a surprise that he wasn't willing to save me now.

Will I die here in Yorksland if he doesn't save me? My only regret is that I didn't manage to find Christopher.

"Are you really not going to care, Lyle? I could kill her right now," the scrawny man said. He had already put the knife by my throat. I could feel that it was extremely sharp even though it had only slightly grazed my skin.

Lyle remained nonchalant. He swept a glance at me before saying, "I don't mind. However, you'll be the ones ending up in misery if you touch her. The Lane family isn't as easy to handle as the Smith family. Let's not talk about Mr. Darius for now. Old Mr. Lane was an important person back when he used to be a governor. And as for Christopher, do you think he'd feed you to the dogs if he found out what you did?"

"You-"

My heart felt empty having heard his words. Not only was he not going to save me, but he was also adding fuel to the fire. These men were already angered, and I could feel the man beside me bringing the knife closer to my neck. Am I really going to die here?

"You're awake? Are you okay?" Lyle asked worriedly. He was about to walk towards me but was stopped by someone. "We haven't agreed on the terms yet, Mr. Smith. It's best if you don't step forward now. Your ex-wife is doing okay. I didn't lie to you, did I?" the person said plainly as he blocked the former. "Terms?" I glanced at Lyle, and then at the rest in the room. Suddenly, I realized that because of my bad luck, I encountered people who were competing with Lyle to get contracts or investors. However, they were unsuccessful, so they turned their attention to me. But am I really unlucky? Back then, the incident with Lyle, Crystal, and I caused such a huge commotion in Avenport. It wasn't a secret that I was Lyle's ex-wife. However, these people seemed to have mistaken something. Where did they get the confidence that this man would give up on his benefits for me? After all, the person he always loved was Crystal. If Crystal hadn't made so many mistakes, tricked Lyle, and even tried to take over the Smith family's assets, it wouldn't have been my place to speak. "Just say what you want." He took a glance at me, a guilty look on his face. He must have never expected me to be dragged into his mess. "It's simple. We were the ones who were supposed to have the project. If it wasn't for you getting in our way and taking it away

from us, we wouldn't have lost such a great opportunity. As long as you sign the contract that says that you'll give me the project, I'll let go of your ex-wife," someone answered. "For no other conditions?" Lyle scoffed. "I've already spent fifty thousand just for this project, and I finally got my hands on it. Why should I give it to you just like that?" His words were cold, and it didn't seem like he had any intentions of backing down. "What? Are you going to be so cruel that you won't even care about your ex-wife anymore?" The scrawny man standing next to me became frantic and started to wave the knife he was holding before me. "What's the point? It's just fifty thousand. The Smith family is powerful and wealthy. You can't possibly tell me that you can't pay fifty thousand, can you?" "What if I say no?" Lyle questioned scornfully. "If you're going to kidnap someone, shouldn't you have stopped to think first? If you had kidnapped Crystal, I would agree to whatever condition you propose. But as for Yvonne, do you really think fifty thousand is worth it? She's the daughter-in-law of the Lane family. Do you think Christopher Lane's woman has anything to do with me? Or are you implying that I should give him a call to let him know that his woman has been kidnapped and that he would have to pay compensation to let her go? Do you need me to talk through the conditions with him?" My heart sank, and I got more worried upon hearing his words. Even though I was dragged into this mess because of Lyle, his words were still true. In the past, as he stood before Crystal and me, he didn't even want to save me. That was why it wasn't much of a surprise that he wasn't willing to save me now. Will I die here in Yorksland if he doesn't save me? My only regret is that I didn't manage to find Christopher. "Are you really not going to care, Lyle? I could kill her right now," the scrawny man said. He had already put the knife by my throat. I could feel that it was extremely sharp even though it had only slightly grazed my skin. Lyle remained nonchalant. He swept a glance at me before saying, "I don't mind. However, you'll be the ones ending up in misery if you touch her. The Lane family isn't as easy to handle as the Smith family. Let's not talk about Mr. Darius for now. Old Mr. Lane was an important person back when he used to be a governor. And as for Christopher, do you think he'd feed you to the dogs if he found out what you did?" "You-" My heart felt empty having heard his words. Not only was he not going to save me, but he was also adding fuel to the fire. These men were already angered, and I could feel the man beside me bringing the knife closer to my neck. Am I really going to die here?

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I lifted my head to look at Lyle, only to see him gazing at me indifferently as if my death had nothing to do with him. I thought I should say something to save

my own life. However, right when I was about to open my mouth, he moved his fingers and gestured me an okay sign.

I was surprised at first but quickly hid my true emotion. I remember that action very well. In fact, it was something I would never forget. That was his favorite little gesture, which he often used with Crystal, to demonstrate their affection for each other.

Back then, I spent a lot of time and effort on Lyle. Hence, I could easily tell from his actions, whatever both of them had up their sleeves. If Crystal wanted to bully me, he would make that gesture to assure her that he would take care of it.

What does it mean when he showed me that sign? Is he dropping a hint that he's going to save me?

I debated about it, but I was still clueless if I should believe him. There was hardly any trust displayed between us.

While I was still stuck in the quandary, Lyle said, "Why don't I offer everyone a piece of advice? I'll let you participate in this project. In return, you should release her. This is a win-win situation for all of us. In addition, you don't need to live in fear nor worry about offending the Lane family. Consider half of the profit a favor from Christopher. What do you think?"

The kidnapers said nothing as they were probably weighing the pros and cons of Lyle's offer. At that moment, there was pin-drop silence in the room. Feeling the intense pressure all around me, I was having ants in my pants and could not sit still.

"It's best not to be so greedy. If you accept the offer, a bright future awaits you. We both know what the consequences are if you choose to reject it. Ms. Tanner is a very special person. Do you really think that as a member of the special forces, Christopher doesn't know your hiding place? Can you guarantee that you'll still stay alive when the authorities, as well as the underground societies, come after you?"

Chuckling, he continued, "We do this for the money, but it's a pity to lose your life before even getting a chance to spend the hard-earned money. I don't think I want to do that."

Lyle negotiated with those people strategically. He was very logical and convincing in his words. I could not help but take a glance at him. I haven't seen him in a while. He seems to have matured a lot and is becoming more dependable. He's totally changed from the reckless guy that I used to know. Had he always been this sensible, things would have been very different between us.

The kidnappers finally agreed to go with Lyle's suggestion after a vigorous discussion. "Fine, Smith. I'll do this on your account, but don't you dare to play any tricks with me. Half of the profit is mine!"

Lyle tossed the agreement over. "This is what I've prepared. If you're okay with it, sign it now."

In the end, Lyle led me out of the underground basement. What a relief! I did not realize how terrified I was until I was staggering back and forth to get into the car. My legs felt like jelly, and I was almost paralyzed by fear at one point. Fortunately, Lyle gave me a hand when I was about to stumble and trip over.

Taking a deep breath, I pushed him away and tried to regain my footing. Using both my hands and feet, I crawled into the car, took a seat, and calmed myself down.

"It's over. Have some water." Lyle handed a bottle to me. When he saw that I refused to take it, he arched his brow and slid it into my hand.

"Did you assume that I'd leave you just like last time?"

Since my inner thoughts were exposed, I nodded and replied admittedly, "Precisely. Anyway, you're right. We are just two strangers."

Lyle let out a wry smile. He leaned against the car seat and heaved a sigh. "I always think about that incident. If I had chosen to save you first, would I still lose you? Every time I think about it, I'd undoubtedly curse myself for being a fool. I bet you think the same, right?"

I did not answer him. To me, it was all a coincidence to run into Lyle here. It was also an accident when he held my hand and ran.

"Why are you in Yorksland? I can't recall if there's any famous painter here that needs to be visited. Remington and the others are in Summerbank."

I lifted my head to look at Lyle, only to see him gazing at me indifferently as if my death had nothing to do with him. I thought I should say something to save my own life. However, right when I was about to open my mouth, he moved his fingers and gestured me an okay sign. I was surprised at first but quickly hid my true emotion. I remember that action very well. In fact, it was something I would never forget. That was his favorite little gesture, which he often used with Crystal, to demonstrate their affection for each other. Back then, I spent a lot of time and effort on Lyle. Hence, I could easily tell from his actions, whatever both of them had up their sleeves. If Crystal wanted to bully me, he would make that gesture to assure her that he would take care of it. What does it mean when he showed me that sign? Is he dropping a hint that he's going to save me? I debated about it, but I was still clueless if I should believe him. There was hardly any trust displayed between us. While I was still stuck in the quandary, Lyle said, "Why don't I offer everyone a piece of advice? I'll let you participate in this project. In return, you should release her. This is a win-win situation for all of us. In addition, you don't need to live in fear nor worry about offending the Lane family. Consider half of the profit a favor from Christopher. What do you think?" The kidnappers said nothing as they were probably weighing the pros and cons of Lyle's offer. At that moment, there was pin-drop silence in the room. Feeling the intense pressure all around me, I was having ants in my pants and could not sit still. "It's best not to be so greedy. If you accept the offer, a bright future awaits you. We both know what the consequences are if you choose to reject it. Ms. Tanner is a very special person. Do you really think that as a member of the special forces, Christopher doesn't know your hiding place? Can you guarantee that you'll still stay alive when the authorities, as well as the underground societies, come after you?" Chuckling, he continued, "We do this for the money, but it's a pity to lose your life before even getting a chance to spend the hard-earned money. I don't think I want to do that." Lyle negotiated with those people strategically. He was very logical and convincing in his words. I could not help but take a glance at him. I haven't seen him in a while. He seems to have matured a lot and is becoming more dependable. He's totally changed from the reckless guy that I used to know. Had he always been this sensible, things would have been very different between us. The kidnappers finally agreed to go with Lyle's suggestion after a vigorous discussion. "Fine, Smith. I'll do this on your account, but don't you dare to play any tricks with me. Half of the profit is mine!" Lyle tossed the agreement over. "This is what I've prepared. If you're okay with it, sign it now." In the end, Lyle led me out of the underground basement. What a relief! I did not realize how terrified I was until I was staggering back and forth to get into the car. My legs felt like jelly, and I was almost paralyzed by fear at one point. Fortunately, Lyle gave me a hand when

I was about to stumble and trip over. Taking a deep breath, I pushed him away and tried to regain my footing. Using both my hands and feet, I crawled into the car, took a seat, and calmed myself down. "It's over. Have some water." Lyle handed a bottle to me. When he saw that I refused to take it, he arched his brow and slid it into my hand. "Did you assume that I'd leave you just like last time?" Since my inner thoughts were exposed, I nodded and replied admittedly, "Precisely. Anyway, you're right. We are just two strangers." Lyle let out a wry smile. He leaned against the car seat and heaved a sigh. "I always think about that incident. If I had chosen to save you first, would I still lose you? Every time I think about it, I'd undoubtedly curse myself for being a fool. I bet you think the same, right?" I did not answer him. To me, it was all a coincidence to run into Lyle here. It was also an accident when he held my hand and ran. "Why are you in Yorksland? I can't recall if there's any famous painter here that needs to be visited. Remington and the others are in Summerbank."

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I was not sure if I should update Lyle that Christopher had gone missing. Seeing that I looked rather uneasy, he did not pursue the matter, but accelerated on the pedal and sped off. Shortly after, we arrived at a hotel, but I did not get off of the car. Suddenly, he turned around and asked, "Did you come here to find Christopher?"

He knew that he guessed it right when he noticed my lack of response and the surprised look on my face. "The police has been patrolling very often lately. Obviously, something massive is going on. It didn't register with me because the safety in this place is always an issue. Now that I think about it, the constant monitoring of the police is most likely related to Christopher."

There was no reason for me to hide from him since he had already connected the dots. Hence, I came clean with him about the purpose of my traveling here. "I'm here to look for Christopher. No matter what happens, I'll stay by his side."

"It's too dangerous. Whatever Christopher does has its risks. What can you do even if you linger around? Let me take you back to Avenport. Stay home and look after yourself. The Lanes will take care of the rest."

Lyle could not comprehend my decision. He looked at me, flabbergasted. "Mind your own business, Lyle. I must search for Christopher, and I'll never give up." I went straight to the point.

“What can you do? Cause trouble?”

“At the least, I’ll contribute to the search. I will find him. An extra pair of hands is better than none.” I muttered, “I don’t have peace when I stay home. Each moment of waiting is tremendous torture to me. It’s unbearable!”

Lyle was shocked to the wits. “Will you risk it all for Christopher’s sake?”

“Yes, even if it means I’ll lose my life. Haven’t I proved my determination through the incident on the island? Don’t try to stop me, Lyle.”

He fell silent for a long while. Then, he stated, “Okay, I’ll help you.” He was resolute as if he had thought things through and made up his mind.

This time, I was the one who was astounded because he was never the type of person who would sacrifice himself for others. Perhaps there’s a person whom he’s willing to risk his life for, and that’s Crystal. Not me.

I wondered what method Lyle used, that he was able to contact Sean the following morning. When I met up with Sean, he looked terrible and haggard, with bandages all over his body as if he had just escaped death from the battlefield. Yet, he acted like he was well and fine.

There were police everywhere in the yard. Each of them was armed with weapons, filled with murderous intent, and was ever ready to fire away. When we were near, someone pointed the gun at us and yelled, “Who are you? Leave this place at once.”

“Please let me enter. I’m here to look for someone. Is Christopher Lane here?”

“Take another step forward, and I’ll shoot you.”

“Hold on.” I was three feet away from the entrance when I saw Sean with an injured arm walking out. Without hesitating, I called out loudly, “Sean, it’s me. I’m over here.”

“Yvonne!” Sean was stunned. “How did you get here?” he came forward and asked.

“This isn’t important. Where’s Christopher? Is he inside?” I queried anxiously.

“This... Um... Sir is occupied at the moment. He’s not available to see you.” Sean felt bad. “Yvonne, you should leave quickly. This isn’t the place where you should be. I’m sure Sir will contact you in two days’ time.”

Upon hearing his words, I fretted even more. It did not comfort me one bit. From his expression, I could tell that something had befallen Christopher.

I shut my eyes for a moment to calm myself down. Then, I questioned him solemnly, “Is it true that Christopher is not inside? He’s gone missing during a task performed with Zachary, and you guys haven’t located them yet.”

Sean was at a loss for words. Subsequently, he tried to make me feel better. “Don’t overthink things, Yvonne. Sir is absolutely fine. We’re carrying out a secret duty. It’s a policy not to share any details with others, including you.”

“Don’t lie to me. I know everything. I know that he’s missing in action, and no one has found him yet. Tell me, are there any clues? Can we please go together?” I pleaded with Sean.

I was not sure if I should update Lyle that Christopher had gone missing. Seeing that I looked rather uneasy, he did not pursue the matter, but accelerated on the pedal and sped off. Shortly after, we arrived at a hotel, but I did not get off of the car. Suddenly, he turned around and asked, “Did you come here to find Christopher?” He knew that he guessed it right when he noticed my lack of response and the surprised look on my face. “The police has been patrolling very often lately. Obviously, something massive is going on. It didn’t register with me because the safety in this place is always an issue. Now that I think about it, the constant monitoring of the police is most likely related to Christopher.” There was no reason for me to hide from him since he had already connected the dots. Hence, I came clean with him about the purpose of my traveling here. “I’m here to look for Christopher. No matter what happens, I’ll stay by his side.” “It’s too dangerous. Whatever Christopher does has its risks. What can you do even if you linger around? Let me take you back to Avenport. Stay home and look after yourself. The Lanes will take care of the rest.” Lyle could not comprehend my decision. He looked at me, flabbergasted. “Mind your own business, Lyle. I must search for Christopher, and I’ll never give up.” I went straight to the point. “What can you do? Cause trouble?” “At the least, I’ll contribute to the search. I will find him. An extra pair of hands is better than none.” I muttered, “I don’t have peace when I stay home. Each moment of waiting is tremendous torture to me. It’s unbearable!” Lyle was shocked to the wits. “Will you risk it all for Christopher’s sake?” “Yes, even if it means I’ll lose my life. Haven’t I proved my determination through the

incident on the island? Don't try to stop me, Lyle.” He fell silent for a long while. Then, he stated, “Okay, I'll help you.” He was resolute as if he had thought things through and made up his mind. This time, I was the one who was astounded because he was never the type of person who would sacrifice himself for others. Perhaps there's a person whom he's willing to risk his life for, and that's Crystal. Not me. I wondered what method Lyle used, that he was able to contact Sean the following morning. When I met up with Sean, he looked terrible and haggard, with bandages all over his body as if he had just escaped death from the battlefield. Yet, he acted like he was well and fine. There were police everywhere in the yard. Each of them was armed with weapons, filled with murderous intent, and was ever ready to fire away. When we were near, someone pointed the gun at us and yelled, “Who are you? Leave this place at once.” “Please let me enter. I'm here to look for someone. Is Christopher Lane here?” “Take another step forward, and I'll shoot you.” “Hold on.” I was three feet away from the entrance when I saw Sean with an injured arm walking out. Without hesitating, I called out loudly, “Sean, it's me. I'm over here.” “Yvonne!” Sean was stunned. “How did you get here?” he came forward and asked. “This isn't important. Where's Christopher? Is he inside?” I queried anxiously. “This... Um... Sir is occupied at the moment. He's not available to see you.” Sean felt bad. “Yvonne, you should leave quickly. This isn't the place where you should be. I'm sure Sir will contact you in two days' time.” Upon hearing his words, I fretted even more. It did not comfort me one bit. From his expression, I could tell that something had befallen Christopher. I shut my eyes for a moment to calm myself down. Then, I questioned him solemnly, “Is it true that Christopher is not inside? He's gone missing during a task performed with Zachary, and you guys haven't located them yet.” Sean was at a loss for words. Subsequently, he tried to make me feel better. “Don't overthink things, Yvonne. Sir is absolutely fine. We're carrying out a secret duty. It's a policy not to share any details with others, including you.” “Don't lie to me. I know everything. I know that he's missing in action, and no one has found him yet. Tell me, are there any clues? Can we please go together?” I pleaded with Sean.

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

“Well, Yvonne, you... Forget it, come inside first. I'll tell you all about it.”

Sean led me into the big yard and to the dorm inside. He said something to the guards at the entrance and left in a hurry. Initially, I did not suspect anything. After waiting for a very long time, it suddenly dawned on me that Sean had no intention to tell me anything about Christopher. He actually wanted to keep me here, refusing to let me take the risk.

Everyone was baffled at my desire to come here, especially because I did not possess any special capability that would be of any help. They probably felt that I was just creating more trouble for them. What they did not know was how terrified I was whenever I thought about Christopher being left alone somewhere. He was probably injured and had no way to call for help. Death might have crossed his mind multiple times.

At night, I took a peek outside. There was a group of soldiers gathering at a spot nearby, but they dispersed soon after. Did they leave to go find Christopher? I was so frustrated.

“Lyle, I can’t stay here and keep waiting. Time is running out,” I said under my breath.

Lyle was here to bring me dinner. He felt so helpless at my remark. “The police is everywhere. Sean has instructed us not to leave. There’s no use to fret. With the number of people searching for him, I’m certain we’ll receive good news soon.”

I sighed as I picked up the utensils, but I had no appetite at all.

At midnight, I got up discreetly and strode toward the living room. When I was about to go out, I heard some noises behind me. I turned around only to realize that Lyle was sitting on the couch in the living room.

Frowning, I asked, “Are you going to stop me.”

“I knew you’d sure find a way to escape.” Lyle glared at me while pointing outside. “The guards here are on an hourly rotation. They will take a fifteen-minute rest during the changing of guards. Half an hour has passed. Hang on for a while more until the next rotation. Then, we shall have fifteen minutes to leave this place.”

I paused before saying, “Thank you, Lyle. I really appreciate it.”

It was my first time expressing my earnest gratitude toward him. His understanding made me feel more confident as a divorced woman in distress.

During the changing of the guards, we sneaked out of the room. When we were on the second floor, I heard a faint conversation from one of the rooms. Quietly, I leaned further to eavesdrop.

“Sir went missing at the borders without any solid signs or clues. It’s ultra-dangerous in the desert, with no food or water... Still being chased by John? We should get rid of John and ensure that there’s nothing else that bothers Sir...” I recognized that it was Sean’s voice.

The bits and pieces of information picked up were sufficient to make me panic. Nonetheless, those were very precious clues. I exchanged glances with Lyle. In a flash, I made up my mind to go look for Christopher in the desert.

Escaping the premises was easier than I had imagined. The soldiers probably did not expect us to do so, so they let their guards down. We left the town in total darkness. Along the way, I went to get some food and water. The town was located at the border, so it was not a challenge to get out of it.

I whipped out the map and studied it. Then, I said to Lyle, “I’m really thankful that you helped me so much. I’m heading to the desert now, and you should go back.”

He did not answer me. Conversely, he marched forward and went ahead of me. When I called out to him, he replied placidly, “Start walking now. Otherwise, they will locate you in the morning and bring you back.”

Stamping my foot, I dropped the topic.

The desert was ready to devour any living souls at all times. During the day, it was scorching hot. The heat rising from the burning sand made it feel like an oven, and anything could practically be cooked when placed under the sun.

During the night, the temperature decreased drastically. The prevailing wind blew from all directions, resulting in a cold climate. Our hands were stiffened as if we had experienced frostbites. Indeed, nature is our greatest enemy.

Under the unforgiving sun, two figures arched their backs as they moved forward with great difficulty at snail’s pace. Upon completing quite a distance, the person in front suddenly collapsed.

“Zach!” Christopher bent down to lift Zachary. Seeing his cracked lips and bleary eyes, he hurriedly reached for a bottle of water and fed him with the last drop.

“Well, Yvonne, you... Forget it, come inside first. I’ll tell you all about it.” Sean led me into the big yard and to the dorm inside. He said something to the

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"No... Sir, please keep this for yourself. I... I can't hang on any... longer. We can't both be dead here..." Zachary shut his mouth tight, refusing to drink.

"Darn it, Zach. Your wife has just delivered a child. You can't die yet. Are you that cruel to let Sabrina and the baby live by themselves? Hurry up and drink it!" Christopher insisted while pouring the water into Zachary.

The latter was afraid that the precious drops would go to waste. He had no choice but to open up his mouth and drink the water. Once his lips were moisturized, he cleared his throat, and said in a clearer voice, "Sir, are we going to die here?"

"That's impossible. I still want to return to Eve and keep my promise to give her an extravagant wedding. Until then, I won't die so easily," Christopher said confidently. Then, he propped Zachary up. "Come on, let's keep walking forward. I remember seeing an oasis on the map. It should be ahead of us. Once we get there, we'll find a way to contact Sean."

"I can't move anymore. Sir, you should go ahead. In case John catches up with us, I'll distract them." Zachary pushed Christopher away and slumped on the ground. The hem of his pants was torn, revealing a horrifying wound that was filled with pus. The stench of blood and the putrid smell of rotting flesh permeated the air. It was absolutely awful under the hot weather.

“Shut up. We shall leave together if you think of me as your own. Otherwise, I’ll ask Sabrina to remarry when I get back.” Christopher dragged him up again. Unfortunately, he could only take one step forward before collapsing once more. His physical strength had seemingly reached his limit.

In fact, it was considered a miracle that he could sustain for that long without food and water. Moreover, he was badly injured.

Clenching his teeth, Christopher took a knife and cut off the rotten flesh from Zachary’s leg. Subsequently, he applied some medicine from Yorksland on it. However, it did not have much impact due to the medicine being too mild and generic.

While he was bandaging Zachary’s wound, Christopher heard someone talking nearby. “The two fellows are hurt, so I bet they’re not far off. Go get them without any further delay!”

“Boss, why must we chase them? It doesn’t affect our business after all.”

“What do you fool know? Christopher, that jerk killed so many of our men. I managed to escape him, and I swore that I’ll avenge for our people,” John bellowed.

Christopher’s expression dimmed as he heard some of the dialogues indistinctly. “Zach, let’s go. They’re here.”

As no response was received, Christopher nudged Zachary a few times, only to realize that he had passed out. Using all of his might, he carried Zachary on his back, quickened his steps, and fled.

Had Zachary not saved me in the nick of time, the wounded one would have been me. Regardless of what happens, I’ll never give up on him. I must ensure that he survives the desert, for the sake of Sabrina and their newborn. I must bring him back to his beloved family safely.

The experience of entering the desert for the first time was beyond my worst nightmare. I had never been to any highlands, let alone places with extreme weather. Avenport was by the sea, so it was very humid all year long. It was definitely nothing close to a desert climate.

Upon walking around the desert for one day, the severe heat had completely drowned my enthusiasm. My only source of motivation to keep on searching was none other than Christopher.

Three days later, I still had no news about him. It made me feel so dejected. I had been to the two oases indicated on the map, but he was still nowhere to be found. There was only one more oasis yet to be visited; my last strand of hope. I was uncertain what to expect if Christopher was not there.

In the vast desert that had no end, there was no guarantee that one's corpse could be located if anything untoward happened.

I sat on a huge rock, munching some tasteless dried food. Lyle passed me a bottle of mineral water and saw that I was utterly downcast. He commented, "I see that you can be fearless when it concerns Christopher. Sandstorms can happen anytime here. We may face danger before we could find him."

"No... Sir, please keep this for yourself. I... I can't hang on any... longer. We can't both be dead here..." Zachary shut his mouth tight, refusing to drink. "Darn it, Zach. Your wife has just delivered a child. You can't die yet. Are you that cruel to let Sabrina and the baby live by themselves? Hurry up and drink it!" Christopher insisted while pouring the water into Zachary. The latter was afraid that the precious drops would go to waste. He had no choice but to open up his mouth and drink the water. Once his lips were moisturized, he cleared his throat, and said in a clearer voice, "Sir, are we going to die here?" "That's impossible. I still want to return to Eve and keep my promise to give her an extravagant wedding. Until then, I won't die so easily," Christopher said confidently. Then, he propped Zachary up. "Come on, let's keep walking forward. I remember seeing an oasis on the map. It should be ahead of us. Once we get there, we'll find a way to contact Sean." "I can't move anymore. Sir, you should go ahead. In case John catches up with us, I'll distract them." Zachary pushed Christopher away and slumped on the ground. The hem of his pants was torn, revealing a horrifying wound that was filled with pus. The stench of blood and the putrid smell of rotting flesh permeated the air. It was absolutely awful under the hot weather. "Shut up. We shall leave together if you think of me as your own. Otherwise, I'll ask Sabrina to remarry when I get back." Christopher dragged him up again. Unfortunately, he could only take one step forward before collapsing once more. His physical strength had seemingly reached his limit. In fact, it was considered a miracle that he could sustain for that long without food and water. Moreover, he was badly injured. Clenching his teeth, Christopher took a knife and cut off the rotten flesh from Zachary's leg. Subsequently, he applied some medicine from Yorksland on it.

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"You're right. I can do anything for Christopher." I placed my hand on my heart and cast a gentle gaze downward. My eyes were smiling. "Having met Christopher is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to me. He's the one who made me realize the purpose of this life. He's my source of hope, my motivation. Come what may, I'm not afraid. I'll do anything for him."

Lyle was astounded. He guffawed at my expression. "I'm jealous of Christopher. Maybe you'll find this amusing, but I really envy him. Yvonne, would you do the same if it was me who had gone missing?"

Why is he asking another hypothetical question? If he had asked me the same question back then, I'd refute him without any hesitation. However, he has helped me tremendously this time. Christopher and I owe him one. I changed my tone of voice and answered politely, "You don't understand. You probably have never tried to get to know the real me."

I added, "I'm kind to whoever that's kind to me. Just like how you saved me when I was pushed into the pool. At that time, I told myself that I'll treat you with utmost gratitude because you saved me when I hit rock bottom."

I continued, "When Crystal set me up, resulting in me being abducted, Christopher was the one who saved me right before I was assaulted by the thugs. Without him, I don't exist. I won't get to be a new school artist nor have the chance to produce the Autumnal Panorama. Lyle, thanks for everything. Let's continue to be friends henceforth."

Lyle looked up and gulped down a bottle of water. He held the back of his head and chuckled. Moments later, he said, "Forget about being friends. Let's do something more practical. Once we get Christopher out of here, you can get him to offer the Smiths more profitable projects as a way to repay me. It's nice to be a businessman. One can do anything that benefits him."

Lyle probably doesn't want to befriend me for I've seen him at his worst. Oh well, let it be. This may be the best for both of us. I nodded. "Sure. You're Christopher's savior. I bet the Lane family will undoubtedly give you a satisfactory response."

"What about you?" Looking at me, he suddenly changed the topic.

I froze and frowned at the same time. "You know how much I have. What else can I give you? List it all down."

He fixed his gaze at me. "Paint me a portrait. Didn't you paint one for Christopher at the National Youth Art Exhibition and Contest? I want one too. His was entitled 'Hope'. Mine shall be called 'Surreal'."

"Okay!"

The remaining journey was extremely challenging. We had to walk on uneven ground; some were hard whereas the others were soft sand. Each step required a lot of effort, especially when night fell. I had lost count of how long I had been walking.

Before arriving at the last oasis, I heard a few gunshots. I stopped in my tracks. I recalled Sean mentioned something about Christopher being chased by a rival, but the latter was like a headless chicken in the desert.

Our luck was much better, and our direction was accurate. Yes, Christopher must be there at the oasis! I ran toward it as fast as I could, but Lyle stopped me at once. "Hang on. You're going to get killed if you act rashly. Let's wait and see."

I was so anxious. I could not wait another second! Anyhow, Lyle was right. I took a peek at the situation far ahead and strode a few steps forward. The gunshots were no longer heard, so I presumed the fight had ended.

Shortly after, I saw a few loud men retreat from the hill. They were speaking in a dialect that I did not understand. Hence, I had no idea what was going on. I decided to hide behind a huge rock. Right when I stuck my head out to check my surrounding, a gun was aimed at my forehead. The cold muzzle then moved to my temple. As I looked up, I was met with a pair of ferocious eyes.

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My mind was all over the place when the man showed up with a gun in my face. I couldn't figure out the reason he was aware of my presence when I had sneaked my way through the isolated desert. The moment the man saw me, he got down on his knees and announced with a hushed voice, "Yvonne, hurry up and check on Christopher! He has passed out due to dehydration!"

"Huh?" Upon another glimpse at the man in front of me, I found out he was none other than Zachary. Thus, I urged, "Lyle, hurry up and come over here!"

The moment I rushed to the giant boulder, I saw an unconscious Christopher on the ground. I couldn't stop my heart from racing as I yelled, "Christopher, wake up!"

I placed his head on my thighs and tried getting him to finish the water I brought along with me. As he was unconscious, I ended up feeding him to

ensure he would remain hydrated. Once I ensured he had enough, I started sprinkling water all over him.

When Lyle returned to us with Zachary, I found out Zachary was heavily injured. We were merely apart from one another for a fortnight, but the initial muscular man had turned into a scrawny figure.

Unable to remain calm, I asked, "What are we supposed to do? We need to rush all of you to the hospital since the antibiotics I have with me aren't going to work!"

"He wouldn't have passed out had he not left the water to me!" Zachary started blaming himself and ended up falling to the ground.

"You need to stop getting worked up since you're also heavily injured!" I handed Zachary the antibiotic pills I brought along with me and crushed another two to sprinkle them all over the wound on his leg.

Once Lyle craned over and surveyed the surroundings, he suggested, "We're not far away from the oasis! I'm sure we can get ourselves the medical attention we require once we reach there!"

Without a second thought, Zachary rebuked, "No, John has brought along a lot of men with him since he's determined to take us out! I'm sure he's waiting for us there! We're done the moment we show up and dance to their tune!"

I took a peek at Christopher and found out he wasn't as frail as he was a few minutes ago. Thus, I asked in a hushed voice, "Shall we return to our initial location?"

Zachary remarked, "I'm afraid that's impossible as well since he must've dispatched his men to stop us. Christopher's exceptional marksmanship is the only reason they're not here."

Once I finished inspecting the resources we have, I asked, "If that's the case, what are we supposed to do when the supplies we have won't even last us for more than two days!"

Upon another inspection of the possible alternatives using the map, Lyle announced with a frown, "I'm afraid we're trapped since we're also going to lose our way if we continue venturing into the inland desert."

In a final attempt to get the party rescued, I reached for my phone to try out my luck with getting in touch with others. Unfortunately, we were out of range of the reception towers.

When I thought it was the end of our party, Zachary announced with his eyes gleaming, "As long as we have a phone, Christopher can deliver a message to our comrades!"

Halfway through his orated speech, he let out a long sigh when he recalled Christopher was unconscious at the moment.

All hell broke loose since we couldn't think of anything to get ourselves out of the nasty situation. The only combatants of the party were heavily injured when we were surrounded by a bunch of villains.

I'm just glad they're not trying anything rash at the moment since Christopher has put on quite a fight and proven himself a formidable foe!

I let Christopher spend the night in the sleeping bag I brought along to prevent him from catching a cold. Out of nowhere, I saw someone flashing a beam of light in our direction from afar.

Immediately, I asked in a hushed voice, "What are they trying to do?"

Zachary announced with his face scrunched up, "They're closing in to trap us!"

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"Actually, it's not even necessary since there's no way we're making it out alive when we can't even put on much of a fight!" Once Zachary finished

remarking sarcastically, he turned around and asked, "How have you made your way here? Is Sabby aware of the things going on?"

Shaking my head, I shared the bad news with him, "Sabby was the one who told me of the things going on! Otherwise, I wouldn't even be here!"

Colors started draining from his face. He seemed as if he was about to pass out soon. The fact he was still conscious was a miracle since he could barely carry on with the conversation.

"I can't believe I have been away from home for a fortnight. Are the little ones doing fine?"

"They're doing fine! In fact, they're in great hands with Sabby since she's exceptionally patient with the little ones. Your safety is her sole concern as of now."

"Nothing else matters as long as they're doing fine!" Zachary repeated himself over and over again as if he couldn't care less about himself.

Seated next to the boulder, Lyle remained silent throughout the session, but his disappointment was written all over his face. Initially, I thought he was nothing more than a burden when he insisted on tagging along for the trip to Yorksland. After all, he was the reason I was abducted the moment we reached.

However, I started appreciating his effort since he had put his life at stake when he could've returned and left me alone. To begin with, it had nothing to do with him at all.

I inched over and handed him a military ration, expressing my utmost apology, "I'm so sorry for getting you involved. I should've stopped you when you insisted on tagging along with me."

He had a mouthful of the ration and asked, "Are you going to make fun of me again if I say I'm also regretting my decisions?"

Chuckling, I remarked in return, "There's no way I'm going to make fun of you when I'm equally afraid of dying. It's just human's nature."

“E-Eve—” When I heard someone calling my name, I turned around and rushed in the direction of Christopher without a second thought. The moment he regained consciousness, he reprimanded me, “What are you doing here?”

I was certain he would lose his cool as soon as he found out I was there for him. In the end, I made something up to deceive him. “I-I just happened to be here!”

“Are you kidding me? You’re not supposed to be here!” Christopher sat upright and was about to launch a powerful slap in my face. However, he stopped himself in the nick of time.

I was certain the intelligent man had figured out it was nothing more than a lie the moment I brought it up. Instead of carrying on with the conversation, I brought him another bottle of water and urged, “You need to keep yourself hydrated after being unconscious for such a long time.”

Christopher shrugged me off and warned me, “No, I want you to get out of my sight at once!”

I couldn’t stand the man’s hoarse voice and knew he must be having a sore throat. “Chris, you need to stop moving around since you’re still relatively frail! We’ll talk once you finish this!”

“Have I not made myself clear? Get out of my sight at once!” Unable to take it anymore, he pushed me away with all his might. As a result, I staggered and fell. In spite of sustaining a minor injury, I tried my best to stop myself from spilling the water since it was the party’s sole source of hydration.

“Yvonne, are you okay?” Lyle rushed over to help me up. He turned around and reprimanded Christopher, “Are you even in your right mind? Can you stop picking on her when she has put her life at stake for you?”

“Lyle?” Christopher looked at me in the eyes and announced with a contemptuous look, “I can’t believe you’re having an affair with Lyle when I’m away! He must be the reason you weren’t there to send me off, huh? I don’t need such a pretentious woman like you here with me! Get off my sight with your boyfriend over here!”

“No, Chris—” I couldn’t even explain myself since Christopher launched a powerful slap in my face halfway through my sentence. As a result of the slap, I felt my cheek turning numb.

He had never gotten so worked up in front of me. All of a sudden, it felt as if the man in front of me was a stranger.

“Actually, it's not even necessary since there's no way we're making it out alive when we can't even put on much of a fight!” Once Zachary finished remarking sarcastically, he turned around and asked, “How have you made your way here? Is Sabby aware of the things going on?” Shaking my head, I shared the bad news with him, “Sabby was the one who told me of the things going on! Otherwise, I wouldn't even be here!” Colors started draining from his face. He seemed as if he was about to pass out soon. The fact he was still conscious was a miracle since he could barely carry on with the conversation. “I can't believe I have been away from home for a fortnight. Are the little ones doing fine?” “They're doing fine! In fact, they're in great hands with Sabby since she's exceptionally patient with the little ones. Your safety is her sole concern as of now.” “Nothing else matters as long as they're doing fine!” Zachary repeated himself over and over again as if he couldn't care less about himself. Seated next to the boulder, Lyle remained silent throughout the session, but his disappointment was written all over his face. Initially, I thought he was nothing more than a burden when he insisted on tagging along for the trip to Yorksland. After all, he was the reason I was abducted the moment we reached. However, I started appreciating his effort since he had put his life at stake when he could've returned and left me alone. To begin with, it had nothing to do with him at all. I inched over and handed him a military ration, expressing my utmost apology, “I'm so sorry for getting you involved. I should've stopped you when you insisted on tagging along with me.” He had a mouthful of the ration and asked, “Are you going to make fun of me again if I say I'm also regretting my decisions?” Chuckling, I remarked in return, “There's no way I'm going to make fun of you when I'm equally afraid of dying. It's just human's nature.” “E-Eve—” When I heard someone calling my name, I turned around and rushed in the direction of Christopher without a second thought. The moment he regained consciousness, he reprimanded me, “What are you doing here?” I was certain he would lose his cool as soon as he found out I was there for him. In the end, I made something up to deceive him. “I-I just happened to be here!” “Are you kidding me? You're not supposed to be here!” Christopher sat upright and was about to launch a powerful slap in my face. However, he stopped himself in the nick of time. I was certain the intelligent man had figured out it was nothing more than a lie the moment I brought it up. Instead of carrying on with the conversation, I brought him another bottle of water and urged, “You need to keep yourself hydrated after being unconscious for such a long time.” Christopher shrugged me off and warned me, “No, I want you to get out of my sight at once!” I couldn't stand the

man's hoarse voice and knew he must be having a sore throat. "Chris, you need to stop moving around since you're still relatively frail! We'll talk once you finish this!" "Have I not made myself clear? Get out of my sight at once!" Unable to take it anymore, he pushed me away with all his might. As a result, I staggered and fell. In spite of sustaining a minor injury, I tried my best to stop myself from spilling the water since it was the party's sole source of hydration. "Yvonne, are you okay?" Lyle rushed over to help me up. He turned around and reprimanded Christopher, "Are you even in your right mind? Can you stop picking on her when she has put her life at stake for you?" "Lyle?" Christopher looked at me in the eyes and announced with a contemptuous look, "I can't believe you're having an affair with Lyle when I'm away! He must be the reason you weren't there to send me off, huh? I don't need such a pretentious woman like you here with me! Get off my sight with your boyfriend over here!" "No, Chris—" I couldn't even explain myself since Christopher launched a powerful slap in my face halfway through my sentence. As a result of the slap, I felt my cheek turning numb. He had never gotten so worked up in front of me. All of a sudden, it felt as if the man in front of me was a stranger.

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"Christopher, that's too much!" When Lyle was about to throw a powerful punch in Christopher's direction, I got in his way and yelled, "No! Stop it, Lyle! You're not supposed to beat him!"

"That's it! Stop being lovey-dovey in front of me! It's disgusting! Get out of my sight at once! Yvonne, I'll file for divorce with you as soon as I make it out alive!" Christopher was at the top of his lungs again.

As my mind was all over the place, I started wailing, "No! There's no way I'm leaving you just yet! If you want me to leave, you need to come with me!"

"Well, if you're not leaving, I'll leave! Zach, it's time to go and leave them alone!" Christopher staggered the moment he tried to bring himself up. Nonetheless, he supported himself and made his way to Zachary's side with the aid of the boulder.

I rushed over to his side and stopped him from leaving while wailing, "Can you stop chasing me away? I know you're trying to get rid of me and lure John away from us! I'm well aware you're trying to keep me safe, but you're not supposed to leave me alone! Haven't you promised me to stay with me till death do us part?"

Slouching against Christopher, I started weeping and gasped out the things I had in mind, "I have long made up my mind to brace myself through the challenge with you! Have you forgotten your promise when we were stranded on the island? You told me you would never leave me again!"

I was conscious of the reason behind his drastic change of attitude since he was never an arrogant man. There was no way he would make a fuss merely because Lyle was there. Therefore, I was certain it was another attempt of his to drive me away from him to keep me safe.

Christopher couldn't bring himself to keep up with his act. Instead, he repeated himself while wiping my tears off my cheeks, "You're not supposed to be here! You shouldn't have made your way here in the first place!"

As I continued bawling my eyes out, I wrapped my arms around him. "Chris, I can't live without you! You're the only reason I'm still alive! You need to stop driving me away!"

Gritting his teeth, he remarked, "You know that's not true, don't you? After all, you're still alive after leaving Lyle when you once mentioned you couldn't live without him. Yvonne, listen to me! I can still keep all of you safe as long as I lure them away with me! Can you do me a favor and bring them to safety with you?"

"No!" Shaking my head, I repeated myself, "There's no way I'm leaving you!"

"Yvonne, listen to me and stay here!" It was the first time in forever he groveled himself at others' mercy. Staring at me in the eyes, he asked, "Do you want me to witness you passing on in front of me? If you love me, listen to me! Otherwise, I'm going to leave you for good!"

"No! I'm not going to repeat myself anymore! I don't care if you're going to file for divorce with me once we make it out alive; there's no way I'm leaving you! You don't get to make the call when we're in the middle of nowhere!"

Christopher finally gave up since he figured out he couldn't do anything to change my mind. Once he returned to his senses after a few minutes, he turned around and told Lyle, "You should've stopped her from making the trip if you truly have a thing for her! Keep her safe, and she's yours once I'm gone!"

Lyle shook his head and rebuked, "I have always resented you for driving us apart from one another, but I'm well aware I'll never be a match for you. She cares for you as much as you do. Thus, she would've made the trip even if I tried stopping her."

Sighing, Christopher repeated himself, "Aren't you aware it's over the moment you pass on? You still stand a chance if you take her away with you!"

"Christopher, that's too much!" When Lyle was about to throw a powerful punch in Christopher's direction, I got in his way and yelled, "No! Stop it, Lyle! You're not supposed to beat him!" "That's it! Stop being lovey-dovey in front of me! It's disgusting! Get out of my sight at once! Yvonne, I'll file for divorce with you as soon as I make it out alive!" Christopher was at the top of his lungs again. As my mind was all over the place, I started wailing, "No! There's no way I'm leaving you just yet! If you want me to leave, you need to come with me!" "Well, if you're not leaving, I'll leave! Zach, it's time to go and leave them alone!" Christopher staggered the moment he tried to bring himself up. Nonetheless, he supported himself and made his way to Zachary's side with the aid of the boulder. I rushed over to his side and stopped him from leaving while wailing, "Can you stop chasing me away? I know you're trying to get rid of me and lure John away from us! I'm well aware you're trying to keep me safe, but you're not supposed to leave me alone! Haven't you promised me to stay with me till death do us part?" Slouching against Christopher, I started weeping and gasped out the things I had in mind, "I have long made up my mind to brace myself through the challenge with you! Have you forgotten your promise when we were stranded on the island? You told me you would never leave me again!" I was conscious of the reason behind his drastic change of attitude since he was never an arrogant man. There was no way he would make a fuss merely because Lyle was there. Therefore, I was certain it was another attempt of his to drive me away from him to keep me safe. Christopher couldn't bring himself to keep up with his act. Instead, he repeated himself while wiping my tears off my cheeks, "You're not supposed to be here! You shouldn't have made your way here in the first place!" As I continued bawling my eyes out, I wrapped my arms around him. "Chris, I can't live without you! You're the only reason I'm still alive! You need to stop driving me away!" Gritting his teeth, he remarked, "You know that's not true, don't you? After all, you're still alive after leaving Lyle when you once mentioned you couldn't live without him. Yvonne, listen to me! I can still keep all of you safe as long as I lure them away with me! Can you do me a favor and bring them to safety with you?" "No!" Shaking my head, I repeated myself, "There's no way I'm leaving you!" "Yvonne, listen to me and stay here!" It was the first

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