

Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 60-69

Chapter 60

Dad smiled. "Dearest Eve, you can draw of us at the same time, both mom and I. It would be best if we could be hugging you in the picture. That way, everyone in our family can be together, for we are one happy family."

I began nodding ecstatically and started drawing, sticking my tongue out in concentration. Suddenly, Crystal stood timidly in front of me, telling me she wanted to draw too. I told her we could share the markers. To my surprise, she sprawled onto the ground and started crying. As she threw a tantrum, she shrieked, "I want to draw. Don't hate me. I'll be good!"

Aunt Natalie marched forward to carry Crystal and started sobbing as well. I sat there, dumbstruck. I had no idea why my cousin had cried. Just then, Dad walked over and reprimanded me, saying I should take care of Crystal since she was younger. Mom, on the other hand, did not say anything. She pulled me into her embrace and started comforting me, telling me softly that it would be best to avoid conflict with Crystal.

Feeling as though I had been wronged, I quickly clarified that I did not bully Crystal. It was her who had started crying out of nowhere. To my dismay, not only did my father not believe me, but he even threatened to hit me. After that, the first set of markers I ever owned was given to Crystal. Disappointment filled my heart, but my mother bought me another set soon enough. Even so, something felt different, as if something was missing.

Before long, Scarlett appeared in front of our house, carrying Yvette. Mom cried the entire night. I remembered snuggling up to her and calling out to her, telling her she still had me, and asking her to stop crying. But my mother did not stop, and my tears started to fall as well.

I must have fallen asleep after crying so much. When I awoke the next day, Mom was gone. I cried out for her, earning a slap from my father. I was only six when that happened. The slap made me lose my balance, and I fell to the floor in pain.

With heavy breaths, Dad told me that my mother had run away with another man. The man's name was Victor Cohen. He forbade me from saying her name ever again. As much as they tried to convince me, I refused to accept that as the truth. I had seen Victor a few times, and Mom always was in a bad mood to see him.

However, Dad never believed what I said. He forced me to call Scarlett my new mom, and Yvette would become my sister. If I refused, he would hit me. He would even allow Scarlett to lock me in a room without any food for days.

I screamed inside the room, making a fuss, hoping that my father would hug and comfort me like he used to. However, instead of doing so, Dad brought Yvette and the rest to go shopping, leaving me alone to starve the whole day. It was already nighttime when Crystal brought in some food for me.

I was famished. I quickly grabbed the bowl and started eating, but I stopped after taking one bite. Crystal had spiked the food with an unimaginable amount of salt, making the food inedible. Furious, I flipped the bowl of food onto the ground, screaming and scolding her for pulling such a cruel prank.

“You little b*tch! Can you stop causing trouble on purpose? Crystal was the one who told me you have not eaten. That’s why I let her bring the food to you! Continue reflecting on your behavior, and don’t even think about eating before you learn your lesson!”

Ignoring my cries of protest, my father slammed the door with a bang, leaving me lying alone on the cold floor. Realization dawned on me then. I had become a motherless child, and I had lost my dad too. There was no one I could depend on.

I was locked in the room for two consecutive days without food. When I was allowed to exit the room, I had no energy to even walk. If the servants had not taken pity on me and fed me, I would have died from starvation.

Mom, why did you leave me? I don’t believe someone as perfect as you would cheat on Dad with Mr. Cohen. Even if you did, why didn’t you take me with you?

Mom... where are you?

When I woke up, my mother was not by my side. However, I was being held in a warm embrace. I leaned deeper into the person’s chest, feeling as though I was still in a dream. All my troubles and thoughts seemed to disappear as long as I stayed in the warm, secure embrace.

With half-opened eyelids, I looked up to see Christopher’s defined jawbone and chin. He was holding me tightly in his arms. His eyebrows were knitted closely together, probably because he was worried about me. Seeing his frown, I suddenly had the urge to smoothen it out.

I did not want him to feel unhappy. It was a realization I had back in the restaurant. The only reason I had shrugged him off to save Lyle was that I had gotten used to not being able to see my husband hurt.

Yet at the next moment, when I saw him looking at me with such disappointment in his dark eyes, an indescribable mixture of sorrow and fear rose in my chest. I was terrified. Terrified that Christopher would never want to see me again.

Chapter 61

When one had been lonely for far too long, they would be afraid of the kindness being shown to them by others. Christopher had been too warm and too nice to me. Although I kept rejecting his kindness out of fear, a little part of me still longed for the warmth. People would probably snort at my actions if they knew my true thoughts.

After all, there was no such thing as unconditional love in this world. My heart was still holding on to Lyle. Who was I to hope that another man would give me his whole heart?

However, I still yearned to hang on to that little warmth. I took in my surroundings and realized I was in my own home. A home that Christopher had prepared for me. There was no one around except for the two of us. I sat up and placed a gentle kiss on his lips before quickly backing away.

“You must be furious at me, right, Christopher? After all, I was stupid enough to save Lyle at the expense of my own life. And yet, he abandoned me so easily, walking away from me as if nothing happened. Even I am angry at myself. I’m such a disappointment. No wonder I’m hated. But now, I’m scared. I’m scared that you’ll hate me too...” I mumbled groggily.

“In my twenty years of life, you were the first person who was so good to me aside from my mom. You know, Christopher, sometimes I feel that you like me, but I’m not sure if I can trust that feeling,” I continued.

“I no longer am brave enough to love again. If... Just if... you have even a smidge of feelings for me, could you... Once I have settled my divorce with Lyle if you still want me, can I stay by your side? Once you find yourself a wife and get married, I promise I’ll leave. Is that ok?”

I poured out all my emotions in one breath. As I was talking, even I was surprised by how much the man in front of me meant to me. I wanted so badly for him to continue being good to me, to the extent that I was willing to stay by his side for as long as he was a bachelor.

I had no idea whether or not I would be heartbroken once he got married, but one thing was for sure. I would not be involved with him once he got married. As a wife who found out her husband cheated on her, I could not wish that heartache on any other woman.

Women should support other women, or at the very least, I promised myself I would not become someone I despised the most.

Perhaps it was the warmth of his embrace, but it was not long before I started dozing off again. In my drowsy state, I seemed to hear someone talking.

“Such an idiot. You’re not just stupid. You’re so stupid that you make others worried. The pursuit of a wife sure is hard. Don’t even think about leaving me once I was married. You’re not going anywhere once I marry you. Even if you do, you’ll only be taking me with you, dum dum!”

A sigh ensued. “What am I going to do with you? That was such a heavy chandelier. The consequences didn’t even cross your mind as you rushed forward to save him, did it? What if it crashed on your head? You’re lucky I still want you. You used to be so sharp, so why have you gotten so dumb? Remember when you were the thirteen-year-old girl who outsmarted the gangsters and saved us all? You’ve caught my eye since then...”

His voice started trailing off into a hum as I slowly slipped away, eventually falling asleep. By the time I opened my eyes once again, the sun had long risen. I struggled to sit up. My head felt heavy as if I was going to topple over anytime.

“Don’t move. The pillow will be at an awkward angle, and you’ll suffer when you get the drip infusion if you do. I don’t want your teeth on my arm when you cry out in pain.” Sabrina quickly supported me as I got up, sliding a cushion behind my back.

I blinked at her in confusion before looking around in search of Christopher, but he was nowhere in sight. I would be lying if I said I was not disappointed. Seeing my disappointment, Sabrina pouted. “Can’t believe you’re so upset to see me. If it weren’t for me taking care of you without sleep the entire night, you would be lying here alone.”

Was all that a dream? Although disappointed, I quickly apologized to her. She was right. If it weren’t for her, I would have woken up with no one except myself. I gestured to the needle on the back of my right hand. “What happened?”

Chapter 62

“Anemia from miscarriage. Plus too much stress. That’s why you fainted. During the check-up, the doctor did not stop scolding us, saying that we suck at taking care of people. On a side note, look at that scumbag, Lyle. You saved him in front of so many people, yet he didn’t even repay the favor. Instead, he carried Crystal away.

I’m not sure a scumbag is a fitting title for him anymore. How about a b*stard? Yeah, that sounds way better. Why did you even save him? If he had died, you would have been given the authority over his finances. With that amount of money, you could have found a second lover in no time.” Sabrina clicked her tongue as she shook her head.

I let out a dry laugh. She had a fair point. I was an idiot, so stupid that I had forgotten about myself. Every time the scene in the restaurant crossed my mind, my heart sank and my lungs felt heavier. The man I loved would never be beside me when I needed him most. Instead, I would be abandoned again and again. What other hope did I have?

“Why were you in the restaurant yesterday? And with... Christopher?” I could not help but inquire.

“Oh, that. That was a coincidence. Christopher has wealth, power, and impeccable looks. As a rich bachelorette, he and I got set up on a blind date. We do make a good match, don’t you think?” Sabrina flashed me a wide grin as she leaned forward to inch closer to me.

“Yes... A good... good...” For some reason, I found it difficult to say the word “match.” Have I truly lost everything? Even the last bit of warmth?

The door of the bedroom suddenly swung open. In walked Christopher wearing an apron with a cartoon bear printed on it. He walked over with a tray and placed it in front of me. On top of the tray sat a bowl of porridge. He made sure everything was alright with the drip before turning to me. “Eat. I just cooked this. You must be hungry.”

His long fingers looked as defined as the sculptures in the museum. Still hazy, I accepted the porridge and took a few bites. My mind was still in a blur as I could not make heads or tails of the situation. Why is Christopher here? Is he here for Sabrina?

“Pfft!” Sabrina must have found my dazed look funny. She laughed heartily before patting my shoulders. “Alright, I’ll stop teasing you. Seeing your disappointment, I almost feel like I’m as despicable as Crystal. Almost.”

She then turned and nudged Christopher toward me, puckering her lips. “Here, this is the man who took care of you the entire night without a wink of sleep and the one good enough to cook for you. A piece of advice, you should really show your gratitude. I suggest repaying him with your affection.”

Speechless, I stared at my hand as Sabrina placed it in Christopher’s. She quickly strode out of the bedroom after that. Before she closed the door, she sneaked me a cheeky wink. “By the way, I only showed up yesterday because I received a call for help from him, abandoning my own boyfriend for you. I’m a good enough friend, don’t you think?”

As she closed the door shut, my brain got even foggier. What on earth happened? Why is it that I can understand all that she was saying, but at the same time I can’t make sense of it?

“Christopher...” I whined.

“Eat first.” The man could not help but chuckle at my confusion. He took the bowl from me and started feeding me. “Open your mouth, darling. Ahhh...”

A blush crept up my face. Darling? Such a title was far too cheesy and intimate. I quickly snatched the spoon from him. “I can do it myself.”

He shrugged, not insistent on feeding me. He then took a seat on a chair by the bed, keeping his eyes on the drip bottle as he did so. When the liquid inside the drip bottle almost ran out, he placed his hand over mine. “It might be a little painful. You’re gonna have to bear with me.”

“Just pluck it out. I’m not that spoiled.” After all, it was just a needle. That was nothing compared to all the hurt and pain I had experienced in the Tanner residence. I was confident that I would not be bothered.

“Hah!” Christopher gave a low laugh. “I wonder who was the one who bit my arm in pain last night.”

My face started to grow hot as I retorted meekly, “How was that possible? I’m not afraid of needles!” Sabrina’s words played in my mind. I don’t want your teeth on my arm when you cry out in pain. A blur memory resurfaced at that moment. A doctor had been approaching me with a needle. At the sight of the sharp point, I had started yelling and crying out for my mother.

Chapter 63

Disregarding the fact that I cried, I was still writhing in Christopher’s arms. He hugged me, telling me not to be afraid and saying that he was by my side. I replied that I was still scared, then pressed into his embrace and bit his arm. Nevertheless, he did not make a sound. After the injection, he then patted my back and said comfortingly, “It’s over. Don’t be afraid. I’m here with you.”

How embarrassing. As a woman in her twenties, I was afraid of injections. What kind of situation was that? I replied stiffly, "I said I'm not."

Yet, I could not help but look at his arm, which had the sleeve rolled up. As soon as I saw the row of teeth marks, I wanted to hide. Judging by the depth of the prints and the fact that they still had not faded, I had bitten him very hard.

"Okay, you're not," he said as he patted my head affectionately. Such a reaction from him made it look even more like I was acting cute to my boyfriend. Thus, my face grew even redder than before.

Although I had already done everything with Christopher by then, at that moment, he was acting like a young man trying to woo his girlfriend. As a result, I became shy instead. He then went to the table and brought some iodine over. Dabbing some over a cotton swab, he then disinfected the scratches on my arm.

Just then, I recalled the previous day's scene again. When I pushed him away then, his gaze had been full of shock and disbelief, as well as disappointment. Resultantly, after considering my tone, I eventually mustered up my courage and said, "I'm sorry!"

He raised his eyebrow and asked, "Why are you suddenly apologizing?"

I rubbed my nose, avoiding his gentle gaze as I said quietly, "Yesterday, I pushed you away to save Lyle because he saved me before. I thought of it as a clean break. He saved me, and now I saved him, so we're even now. We've already known each other for so long. This time, all our grudges would have passed."

The man seemed to become more surprised after I spoke. A while later, he asked, "Are you explaining things to me?"

His words stunned me. Indeed, even if I cared for him in the past, I had only thought about it in my mind. However, right then, I had taken the initiative to explain things to him. Unknowingly, he had somehow become important to me.

"I just... I just think Lyle's been bullying me. Despite that, I still went to help him when you came to help me. I feel a bit stupid, and I feel that I'm disappointing those who are helping me now. Don't misunderstand, I just..."

The more I spoke, the messier my words became, and the more I felt that something was wrong. Eventually, I stopped talking and looked at him helplessly.

"Misunderstand what?" Christopher asked. He was still in a good mood, with a slight smile on his face.

"Noth..." In reality, I did not want him to know exactly how much I cared about him. Similarly, I had not let Lyle find out that I had had a crush on him for ten years. In this manner, I could retain my remaining dignity when I left.

I was timid. I loved someone but did not dare to admit it. Similarly, I liked someone but did not want others to find out. At least, things were good that way, for both parties would be happy and could part with good feelings.

“Silly girl!” he chuckled, patting my head. I realized he liked to do that a lot. It was both intimate and affectionate and had a sweet vibe to it. Wanting to eat something sweet, I then said, “Christopher, I want to eat a lollipop. Can you help me get one? It’s in the cabinet.”

He walked over and rummaged in the cabinet for a while before taking out an empty box.

There’s none left? Truly, I blamed my gluttony. I did not know where Christopher had asked Zachary to buy them from, but they were my favorite. Thus, I had unknowingly finished eating an entire box of them.

Since I was looking at him eagerly, he helplessly spread his hands out and said, “I’ll go buy some.”

“Mm!” I pouted, looking at him pleadingly.

He leaned in and pointed to his cheek. “What about my reward?”

Obediently, I leaned forward and kissed him. Noticing that he was still not satisfied, I then kissed his forehead and nose. Only then did he leave.

Chapter 64

As soon as Christopher left, Sabrina came in from outside. She had on an amused look as she said mysteriously, “You’re good, Eve. You managed to find such a handsome guy. He’s got a good figure and is talented. If I didn’t already have someone in my heart, I would’ve wanted to steal him from you. No wonder you hugged and kissed him at the clubhouse then. It turns out you two already had some relations.”

“There’s nothing going on between us. Don’t misunderstand anything.”

Although I reflexively denied her words, it made me feel like I was a hypocritical person. Christopher and Sabrina had gone to the restaurant to help me, and he even brought me back and took care of me the whole night. Thus, unless the entire world were full of fools, even I felt like a hypocrite if I still said that there was nothing between us. I laughed dryly before shutting my mouth.

“Come on, you’re still pretending in front of me? I’ve never liked Lyle, so if you have something going on with Christopher, I’d be very happy. Compared to Lyle, he’s so much better.”

Her expression was full of interest as she smiled happily down at me. In reality, I knew she really was happy for me. She had always disliked Lyle and was reluctant to be friends with him. If it were not for me, she would not even bother about him.

“But he’s Christopher. He has relationships with many other women. I don’t know what to do,” I replied. His identity was indeed a big issue. Furthermore, when he had gotten involved with me, there were many different women by his side.

“What’s the problem? Before a man confirms his relationship with a woman, he’s free. As long as he doesn’t mess around once the relationship’s confirmed, it’s fine. This is especially important when you’re married.”

She touched her chin then pointed to the half-finished fish soup on the counter. “Look, a man like him is willing to cook for a woman. He has to like you for real. Otherwise, who’d want to put on such an act.”

She spoke in a very reasoned manner, and I did find that her words made sense. However, I still could not help but tease, “You’re speaking as if you know him well. Before this, you didn’t even know his identity, but you kept saying good things about him. You don’t seem scared that I’ll fall into another trap.”

She smirked, looking at me in disbelief. “Can anything be worse than your current state?”

I was speechless at her question. You see, there was indeed no one else who had it worse than me. Yvette stole my home, and Crystal stole my lover. Furthermore, the lover in question abandoned me without another word. Thus, the easiest solution was to leave with nothing, yet I still had to be labeled as a cheater.

“Sabby, I’m already so miserable, but you’re still attacking me? How can you do this to me!” I mumbled, clutching at my heart with an expression full of setback and hopelessness.

Sabrina nudged me. “Don’t give me that. I’m not your husband. It’s useless to act cute to me. I merely want to snap you out of it in case you still want to stay with Lyle.”

I could not help but let out a bitter smile at that. Since things had already turned out that way, if I still did not give up, the word “cheap” would no longer be enough to describe me. I was human, not a machine. I felt pain and sadness and also needed others’ comfort and care, not merely blind effort.

“Don’t worry. I’ll go back and talk to Grandma about the divorce. This time, no matter what happens, I won’t give up,” I replied.

“I sure hope so. May you have the gods’ blessings!” She exaggeratedly put her palms together and raised them toward the sky. Then, when she heard the sound of a key in the lock, she blinked at me. “There’s now a good man who will take care of you. Seize the opportunity. I will no longer be the third wheel here. Hope you two have a good evening.”

She smiled slyly as she passed by Christopher, who had just entered. Simultaneously, they both patted each other on the back before one entered the bedroom while the other left. The scene left me feeling weird. Since when were they so familiar with each other? Sabrina hated playboys, which was why Christopher was the top person she most refused to communicate with in the past.

“Here you go, your lollipop!” Christopher had gone very far away to get a box of lollipops for me. In reality, it was tough to buy that specific brand. When I was little, I used to eat it a lot. However, the manufacturer later closed down, so I could not find it any longer. Who knew where he had even bought it.

Chapter 65

I took the lollipop and licked it slightly. Instantly, a sweet taste filled my mouth. He was staring at me intently as I licked it, so I stretched my hand out and asked, "Do you want some too? Have a taste. It's sweet."

Christopher smiled sneakily. "You sure you want me to eat it?"

"Try it. I like this flavor the most." Before I passed the lollipop to him, I deliberately licked it, leaving my saliva all over it. I wanted to tease him a little. Since he had treated me so nicely, I wanted to act cutely and play around with him.

Suddenly, he leaned over and kissed me. Shocked by his actions, I instinctively tried to move back. However, he cupped the back of my head and deepened the kiss further. Seeing as I kept my mouth tightly shut, he then lightly bit on my lip. I opened my mouth in response to the pain, wanting to speak. Instead, at that moment, he took the opportunity to lick into my mouth.

His tongue entangled with mine, guiding me along. One moment, his tongue entered my mouth, exploring it. The next, he pulled my tongue into his. It was getting difficult to breathe as the temperature kept rising. Although it was already autumn, my entire body was heating up, my face flushing. My brain was also fuzzy, and I had no idea where I was.

If someone had asked me what I was thinking back then, I would say I was asking myself who I was, where I was, and what I was going to do. My replies were funny only because at that moment, his handsome face and his charming eyes filled both my heart and eyes.

Christopher had very long eyelashes. With only a gentle blink, they charmed me. Furthermore, his gently upturned eyes awakened a fiery desire in me. I was reflected in his deep, dark eyes as if to say that he only had eyes for me.

Wrapping my arms around his neck, I responded affectionately to him. Sabrina's words turned out to be very useful. Although they were full of disapproval for me, each sentence struck deep in my heart. Thus, this time, the overly-cautious me also wanted to indulge myself and take a gamble.

Life was an unknown path one had to take. Until the end, no one would know what would happen. Perhaps I would be able to get my happiness in the next second.

"Why don't we eat some other lollipop," he said. He then changed his focus, kissing my forehead and cheek instead. Slowly, he moved down to my neck.

Of course, I knew what he meant. I wrinkled my nose. This adjective is a little too strange.

"You're so dirty-minded!" I chided as I felt my breathing grow unsteady.

“I’m only like this to you,” he replied. His kisses were growing hotter by the minute, and his hands had already slipped into my clothes. I then gave in to my feelings and moved to lie under him. Since I had already decided to be a bad woman, why hold back?

When his heated body finally pressed against mine, I could not help but ask, “Did you also say such words when you were with those other women in the past?”

However, that question had probably killed the atmosphere. Christopher abruptly stopped moving, then stared at me intently. His fingertips were on my collarbone as he raised his eyebrows. He asked, “Does that mean you’re jealous?”

“I’m curious!” As it happens, when a woman said such a thing, she definitely minded it a lot. Since she cared, she tried to cover it up as best as she could. Nevertheless, she still wanted to find out if she was the most special woman in that man’s heart.

“Silly girl, you’re starting to act stupid again!” he said, lightly kissing my forehead. Then, just as I thought we would have a passionate lovemaking session, he suddenly got up and went to the restroom.

He even covered me with a blanket before he left. I lay in bed under the covers, a little dumbfounded. Is he going to the restroom now? What’s going on? After a while, I heard the splashing of water from inside, mixed with rapid, constrained gasps.

I was stunned, for I did not understand why he chose to relieve himself in a way that grown men would not prefer. Ever since I decided to divorce Lyle and started to resist all of this, although Christopher still spoke very flirtatiously, he would at most hug me but did not go any further.

Chapter 66

I got off the bed and walked into the restroom barefoot. Seeing him trying to get himself off, I could not help but ask, “Why?”

Although he had not expected me to enter, he did not hide anything or shy away. Instead, he stared at me as he jerked himself off, his gaze becoming increasingly intense. Even though nothing was happening, I felt like I had already been pressed to the bed and taken several times. My arms and legs went weak.

I looked away and asked again, “Why?”

Eventually, after getting himself off, he took a shower and walked out. As soon as he noticed that I was walking around barefoot, he frowned and bent down to pick me up. Then, he placed me on the bed and pulled me over his leg. As he hit my buttocks a few times, he said, “You’re not allowed to walk around barefoot next time. I’ll hit you every time I see it.”

Upon hearing his words, my face flushed, and even my toes began to heat up. He walked over, and I, an adult in my twenties, was pressed on his lap and slapped on the butt like a three-year-old before. However, that did not matter. After all, this was not the most important thing. The most important thing was that we were both naked, yet nothing had happened between us. It made for a weird scene.

“Remember it now?” Christopher hit me several more times before stopping.

I hurriedly nodded, telling him I remembered his words. Only then did he place me back on the bed and cover me with a blanket. He kissed my forehead and said, “When I can openly hold your hand next time, then we’ll do it. I’ll owe it to you for now. Remember, when you’re my girlfriend, I’ll listen to you when we’re outside, but you’ll have to listen to me in bed.”

I nodded stupidly. My mind was full of the words “openly” and “girlfriend.” Suddenly, my eyes welled up with tears again, for no one else knew the actual meaning of those two words better than I did.

He knew my worries and my anxious thought. Thus, to reassure me, he had rather gotten himself off instead of touching me. Not many men were this kind and cherishing.

After staying at home the whole day, I abruptly recalled that I had just found a job. On the first day that I had to report to work, I was late because of anemia. Indeed, with joy came sorrow. At that moment, I was terribly anxious.

Christopher was sitting next to me, wanting to feed me some grapes. However, I pushed him aside before standing up. I looked for my shoes while I cried, “It’s over, my job’s gone. I finally managed to find such a suitable job. I can’t lose it because I was careless.”

Watching me running around the house frantically, he could not help but ask, “What are you looking for?”

“My shoes. I’m going to work. I forgot to tell you. It’s all your fault, buying me lollipops and cooking for me. It looks like it’s true that people always fall for gentle treatment.”

Eventually, after rummaging around, I managed to locate my bag and phone, but could not find my shoes anywhere. I knew I could not wear slippers to work. Even as a plain housewife, I still had that much common sense.

Christopher yawned and pointed at my feet. “Aren’t you wearing shoes?”

“Huh?” I looked down, only to realize that I had already worn my shoes. Then, noticing Christopher trying to hide his laughter, I glared at him. “Laugh if you want to. I have to go report to the company.”

“Do you want me to drive you over?” he asked, amusement evident in his tone. He was convulsed with laughter, not having the slightest bit of style a rich man should have.

“It’s fine. I’ll take the bus. It’s very convenient here.” After all, I was not that stupid to go to work in a luxury car. After packing my things, I noticed him leaning on the couch while supporting his chin with his hand, his eyes half-closed, with dark circles under them.

I knew he had not slept the previous night because he was taking care of me. Feeling a little sorry for him, I walked over to pull on his sleeve and whispered, “Go sleep on the bed. I’ll go to the company and

take a look. If I need to work, I'll be back at six. But I don't think I need to anymore. Anyway, I should go over and explain myself. Rest well. I'll come back with dinner."

Just as I was about to leave, he grabbed me, smiled lazily, then pointed to his forehead. "You need to give a goodbye kiss when you say goodbye."

Chapter 67

I pecked his forehead and left the house in a rush. Only after getting out of the apartment and onto the bus did I regain my composure. Did I just give my consent to let Christopher stay in the same house as me, and on the same bed, no less?

I rubbed my chin in confusion. He bought the apartment with my ID, and now he's staying there. The only difference was that I had moved in. Something is off. Why is that?

Anyway, the company I signed a contract with was generous. I had made up an excuse saying that I was sick yesterday, telling them that was why I had not made it to work, but the manager did not seem to mind at all. He even asked me to take a good rest at home and to only come to work the next day. The manager even muttered something along the lines about not having to worry about me going elsewhere since I had signed the contract.

Shouldn't it be the other way around? I was the one who should be worried about losing my job for playing hooky on the job. He made it sound as if I was an intangible asset of the company. Well, as long as I still have the job, right?

Trailing the corridor, I eyeballed the employees around. It seemed like a legit operation as there was a myriad of licenses displayed on the walls.

Forget it. I shouldn't get too suspicious. Things are as good as they can get since my job and contract are intact.

With that thought in mind, I went to the HR department to claim my work attire and documents before heading back home. As soon as I reached downstairs, I received a call from Sabrina. She sounded cheery on the line. "Eve, I have really great news to share with you! Crystal has been exposed online as a homewrecker, and everyone is bashing her! It's so satisfying to see so many people backing you up."

"What news?" I asked impassively.

"Oh my, have you lost your memories or something? So many reporters surrounded you yesterday at the restaurant. Have you forgotten all about it?" My friend's disappointment in me was apparent even through the phone.

"Nobody is interested in affair news anymore unless it has to do with someone famous. Lyle may seem like somebody, but in reality, he can't even compare with his grandmother, Sharon. Unlike you, Crystal is a famous up-and-coming artist who has won prizes and is an overseas graduate. She's someone whom the public acknowledges. I mean, her image in the public's eyes is impeccable."

“So, this news has garnered a lot of attention?” I asked, still oblivious to the point that Sabrina was trying to make.

“You’d better hurry and get to a news station. Or maybe you could go on your phone to check what people say about her on the Internet. I bet you’re going to be beyond elated to read them. They basically said she’s a slut disguised as a nun; a b*tch that snatches another woman’s husband, and a homewrecker even. It’s such a delight to read those comments.”

Sabrina did not even stop to breathe in between her words. I noticed that there was a newsstand right opposite the road, so I dashed over to the newsstand and bought a fresh copy. Sabrina turned out to be right. Crystal’s face was all over the cover, and there was only a blurry silhouette of me in the corner.

The image of Lyle and Crystal hugging was extremely crisp, however, and the article below the picture detailed how the duo had tyrannized me — the wife. It vividly described how Lyle chose to cheat on me after I had risked my life saving him, portraying me as the poor wife who had been taken advantage of.

I couldn’t help but be troubled at the sight of the image of Lyle hugging Crystal. With his hands hugged around my cousin, the man seemed like he owned the world; he seemed as if he no longer had eyes for any other person.

Having said that, I was still beyond elated to read the article. Crystal had been toying with me all this while, even to the extent of using Lyle to belittle me. It seemed like she had forgotten the fact that unlike me, she had a reputation to maintain. She would be the one to suffer public wrath when she was exposed. Too bad that I was the one who married Lyle, and not her.

“So? Have you seen it? I bet you’re so happy that you’re even thinking about giving the editor of the newspaper a kiss, right?” Sabrina chuckled.

“Yes, I am over the moon, so much so that I feel like singing a triumphant song to announce my victory.” I chuckled.

Chapter 68

I sat by the entrance and read through the article on the paper again and again. Suddenly, I recalled Christopher saying that I shouldn’t sit on cold surfaces. Then, I fumbled around for a flyer and sat on top of it before ruminating over the article again.

“I’ve opened multiple alternate accounts to attack Crystal online. You owe me a treat, Eve.”

“That’s for sure.”

It’s great to see a b*tch like her suffer karmic retribution. I hung up on the phone and grinned from ear to ear. I bought some of my favorite snacks and some seafood from the market, planning to cook a scrumptious meal to celebrate the delightful news. My phone rang before I left the market.

It was from Lyle. I looked at the caller ID for two seconds before deciding to ignore it. I pressed on the silent button, and after a while, my phone buzzed again with multiple texts. The texts were all asking about my whereabouts. It seemed like he was urgently looking for me.

Nothing good ever came from him looking for me. There was no point meeting him anyway. I'd better take the time to think about how to explain things to Grandma.

I was just thinking about Grandma when the caller ID indicated that it was Josephine calling. She was the housekeeper and caretaker of my grandmother, so I answered her call right away.

"Mrs. Smith, you'd better hurry back and take a look at Old Mrs. Smith. She saw the news about you and Mr. Smith on the TV and fainted. She doesn't look good even after she woke up. She's not listening to a word I say."

"What? Did Grandma faint again? I'll get home right away." I had kept the thing about Lyle cheating on me as a secret because I was afraid that Grandma might not be able to take it well. I even went as far as to say that Lyle and I were doing well. However, Crystal's high-profile nature blew my cover. How would I be able to face Grandma if anything should happen to her?

I hailed a cab and reached the Smith family in a jiffy. Josephine dragged me to the back garden, and I was greeted by the sight of my paternal grandmother standing under a hibiscus tree. Her sorrowful manner was accentuated by her graying hair; gone was her jubilant manner. A lump formed in my throat as I looked at her.

After turning eighteen, I cut almost all ties with the Tanner family, and for a good reason. Dad had wanted me to marry the third son of the Warner family to elevate the Tanners' status, and even going to the extent of cutting off my financial support after I refused the arranged marriage to make me comply.

Actually, I was interested in art, and I was good at it. My work had been favored by one of the artists over at Astoria back then. However, after submitting one artwork I considered to be one of my best, my application was rejected. On the other hand, Crystal was the one who took a fancy to my work.

I did not understand the reason I failed the application, not especially since I poured three months' worth of blood and sweat into that work. Albeit all those hard works, the fact it did not earn a successful application made the artwork a worthless piece of paper. In the end, I chose to study finance in Avenport, and since I was dirt poor and could not afford the schooling fees, I resorted to working odd jobs to support myself.

Sharon was the one who offered me a job in the Smith family. She was using the administration work as a front to hand me money because she knew I wouldn't just accept the money if she offered it to me without a proper cause. It was thanks to her that I finally got the time to really concentrate on my studies. She would also come up with a myriad of excuses to buy me things such as clothes, necessities and even learning equipment while preserving my dignity. Since then, I had long considered Sharon to be my own grandmother.

I took a coat and walked over to drape it over her shoulders. "Grandma, it's quite windy here. Why don't we head back in the house instead?"

Sharon sighed at the sight of me and patted my head gently before she pointed at the hibiscus tree and said, "This tree has accompanied me for years. Now it's getting old too."

I caught a lump in my throat as I detected the sorrowfulness in her tone. "Sorry for disappointing you, Grandma." That was a truthful admission. I did let her down.

"Don't be, silly. You're the one who's suffered," she said as she patted the back of my hand.

Unable to contain my emotions, I burst into a sob. It felt as if I finally had the chance to vent my pent-up feelings. I could not depend on my father while my husband ganged up with outsiders to go against me. I basically had no one to turn to, and I could only find solace in her words.

The indignation I felt had been eating me from inside out. The nights and days I was ignored by Lyle, the nights he left me alone when he was out cheating on me with Crystal, the vicious words he spewed at me to make me agree to a divorce; all that despair and helplessness I felt was enough to strangle me alive.

Chapter 69

"Grandma!" I burrowed myself in her chest and burst into a violent sob as I wiped the tears streaming down my cheeks. I really did not intend to break down in front of her, and I was actually here to comfort her. However, it proved to be impossible for me to hold back my tears at the sight of her.

"My good child, just let it all out. Everything is going to be alright afterward." She patted my back gently and coaxed me like I was a child.

The crying went on for quite some time before I could finally bring it to a stop. Seeing that the wind got stronger, I summoned Josephine and steadied Sharon back into the house. Perhaps it was because I had been crying for a long time, but I kept burping, and nothing I did could stop it. Josephine kindly brought me a glass of hot water, and I drank it all in one go before I finally felt better.

"How dare that brat cheat on you! Now everyone knows about this! Eve, don't worry. Grandma will make this right by you. That wretched girl has to go through me to marry into the Smiths. You are the only granddaughter-in-law whom I approve of," Sharon said sternly.

"Grandma, it's alright. Lyle has only had eyes for Crystal since the very beginning. I don't want to stand in their way any longer. I'm going to divorce him." I summoned all my courage and told her about my intention of getting a divorce.

"Grandma, I'm really too tired to go on any longer. Don't trouble yourself over this, okay? Even if I'm no longer your granddaughter-in-law, I will still treat you as my dearest grandma. I promise I will come by often to visit you, okay?"

I chose my words carefully and watched my tone. Sharon's face grimaced at the mention of divorce, and I tactfully bit my tongue, fearing that she might faint again.

"Eve!" She heaved out a long sigh and sent Josephine to fetch her medicine. She took quite a number of seemingly different pills before she finally said, "I watched you grow up, and I noticed that you liked Lyle when you came over to my house to play for the very first time. You're an innocent and honest girl, and I really took a liking for you since then. That's the reason I insisted for Lyle to marry you."

“Did you notice even back then, Grandma?” My face turned red from embarrassment and I touched it, only to feel myself burning up. I had always thought it was a secret crush, but Crystal had noticed it. Even Grandma had... So they could tell just by looking at my face.

I shot the elderly lady a wry smile. Lyle would never know that, and he would never think I loved him. To him, I had always been a gold-digger who would stoop to anything to marry into a rich family. The man even thought I would strip myself naked to have sex with any man for money.

I had only gone to the bar the other day because I quarreled with Lyle the other night. Enraged about finding that he had an affair, I confronted him. Lyle had chastised me as a shameless slut. It was the reason I turned to Christopher that night.

“Anyone who has paid attention to you will notice that.” Sharon leaned against the sofa as she spoke. She knew I was still on the fence about my decision and said, “I hope that you can reconsider your decision to get a divorce. It hasn’t been easy for you and Lyle all these years. Don’t give it up just because of Crystal. You have to think of a way if you want to keep the man. Otherwise, you’re going to be ridden with guilt and emptiness when you’re old and frail.”

Sharon seemed like she had her own stories to tell, judging by her anguished look. However, there really was no reason for me to keep going.

“Grandma, sometimes it’s useless if I’m the only one holding on. I know you like me a lot, and believe me, there were a lot of times where I sincerely hoped I was your granddaughter. At least I would have someone who truly cares about me that way. But Grandma, I’m really too tired to keep going.”

Furrowing her brows, Sharon looked troubled. She noticed the resolution in my voice, despite my deliberately small voice, and said helplessly, “Could you at least wait until after my seventieth birthday celebration? I want all my grandchildren to be my side. I don’t have much time left, you know.”

I was too drained to keep holding on. She was already seventy. This was just her final attempt in trying to salvage Lyle and my marriage that had fallen miserably apart. However, how could I say no to someone who cared that much about me?