

## Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 621-630

Posted by **chapter novel**, 42 Views, Released on July 13, 2022

My heart was filled with dissatisfaction and grievances. I couldn't bear the thought of turning around and arguing with Isabelle about what she said to me. However, it was only recently that my mother and I were able to mend our relationship. I didn't want to have to go to war with her again.

I forced myself to calm down, then turned to Isabelle, and said, "Mom, can you tell me why? If you could just tell me the reason, I can do whatever you want."

"I'm sorry... but I can't tell you right now." Isabelle sighed deeply.

"You're not even going to tell me why?" Even though I was heartbroken, I forced myself to smile.

"Do you know how much I enjoy drawing, Mom? I place all my dreams and hopes on my paintings. Both you and Dad were not by my side when I was a child and the Tanners saw me as an outsider. Every time there was a celebration, it was always me who was left alone in a corner to hear Yvette and the others' laughter. At that time, I tried hard to convince myself that everything was fine, and that was because I still had my paintings."

I continued, "I always include many people in the backgrounds of my paintings. Some of them would be waiting for me, talking to me, or simply smiling at me. I've also drawn some lonely people because their presence would make me feel less abandoned. You now want me to give one of my paintings to someone else. Do you understand what that means to me?"

Isabelle responded softly, "I understand."

"You don't understand, Mom. I'm really upset about it. You can't even give me one reason for doing this."

"It's all my fault!"

Despite her admittance, however, Isabelle was unwavering. She still looked determined and did not want to compromise at all. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath before turning to her and handing over the unsigned painting. "I'm hoping this is the last time, Mom."

I dashed out of the room with my ruined painting as I finished speaking.

When I opened the door, I was surprised to see Crystal standing in the hallway. She was also taken aback when she saw me running out of the room with my eyes welling up with tears. However, she reacted to it quickly and flashed me an annoyingly triumphant smile.

She then raised her thumb at me and slowly pointed it to the ground. She whispered, "You can see that you've lost again, can't you? Yvonne, you're going to lose everything to me sooner or later. Do you believe it?"

Suddenly, I lifted my hand and slapped Crystal with all my strength. The sound of the slap, mixed with Crystal's scream, echoed in the hallway. Even after I did that, I still felt enraged.

So this is what the bet is about This Crystal is really crafty. Even my Mom is on her side. I don't know what she has done to get this opportunity, but I still feel beaten by it.

Why must it be Crystal? Crystal Yates!

"Yvonne, you dare to slap me! I can tell you right now that you will not be arrogant for long. You'll always be that poor little girl begging at my feet."

"The things you stole will never be yours. I don't care how you got Mom to agree to it, but if you think a painting can change your life, you're dreaming."

"Eve!" The clacking sound of high heels could be heard, followed by footsteps going down the stairs. I did not want to see Isabelle at the moment so I ignored Crystal's provocation, turned around, and stormed out of the Goldstein residence.

I'm no longer able to understand my mother. What's more important to her? Are certain benefits really that important to a point she is willing to sacrifice everyone, including her family? If so, what's the difference between me and a string puppet?

It was raining when I stormed out of the Goldstein residence. Then a servant came over and handed me an umbrella, but I did not take it. I just stormed into the rain. All I could hear behind me was the worried servant's shouts. However, it was not her voice that I wanted to hear.

The cold raindrops fell on me but they did not wash away my rage. Instead, it revealed all my repressed feelings and made me yell at the sky. In my head, I was mulling over a question: Am I really Isabelle's daughter?

My heart was filled with dissatisfaction and grievances. I couldn't bear the thought of turning around and arguing with Isabelle about what she said to me. However, it was only recently that my mother and I were able to mend our relationship. I didn't want to have to go to war with her again. I forced myself to calm down, then turned to Isabelle, and said, "Mom, can you tell me why? If you could just tell me the reason, I can do whatever you want." "I'm sorry... but I can't tell you right now." Isabelle sighed deeply. "You're not even going to tell me why?" Even though I was heartbroken, I forced myself to smile. "Do you know how much I enjoy drawing, Mom? I place all my dreams and hopes on my paintings. Both you and Dad were not by my side when I was a child and the Tanners saw me as an outsider. Every time there was a celebration, it was always me who was left alone in a corner to hear Yvette and the others' laughter. At that time, I tried hard to convince myself that everything was fine, and that was because I still had my paintings." I continued, "I always include many people in the backgrounds of my paintings. Some of them would be waiting for me, talking to me, or simply smiling at me. I've also drawn some lonely people because their presence would make me feel less abandoned. You now want me to give one of my paintings to someone else. Do you understand what that means to me?" Isabelle responded softly, "I understand." "You don't understand, Mom. I'm really upset about it. You can't even give me one reason for doing this." "It's all my fault!" Despite her admittance, however, Isabelle was unwavering. She still looked determined and did not want to compromise at all. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath before turning to her and handing over the unsigned painting. "I'm hoping this is the last time, Mom." I dashed out of the room with my ruined painting as I finished speaking. When I opened the door, I was surprised to see Crystal standing in the hallway. She was also taken aback when she saw me running out of the room with my eyes welling up with tears. However, she reacted to it quickly and flashed me an annoyingly triumphant smile. She then raised her thumb at me and slowly pointed it to the ground. She whispered, "You can see that you've lost again, can't you? Yvonne, you're going to lose everything to me sooner or later. Do you believe it?" Suddenly, I lifted my hand and slapped Crystal with all my strength. The sound of the slap, mixed with Crystal's scream, echoed in the hallway. Even after I did that, I still felt enraged. So this is what the bet is about This Crystal is really crafty. Even my Mom is on her side. I don't know what she has done to get this opportunity, but I still feel beaten by it. Why must it be Crystal? Crystal Yates! "Yvonne,

you dare to slap me! I can tell you right now that you will not be arrogant for long. You'll always be that poor little girl begging at my feet." "The things you stole will never be yours. I don't care how you got Mom to agree to it, but if you think a painting can change your life, you're dreaming." "Eve!" The clacking sound of high heels could be heard, followed by footsteps going down the stairs. I did not want to see Isabelle at the moment so I ignored Crystal's provocation, turned around, and stormed out of the Goldstein residence. I'm no longer able to understand my mother. What's more important to her? Are certain benefits really that important to a point she is willing to sacrifice everyone, including her family? If so, what's the difference between me and a string puppet? It was raining when I stormed out of the Goldstein residence. Then a servant came over and handed me an umbrella, but I did not take it. I just stormed into the rain. All I could hear behind me was the worried servant's shouts. However, it was not her voice that I wanted to hear. The cold raindrops fell on me but they did not wash away my rage. Instead, it revealed all my repressed feelings and made me yell at the sky. In my head, I was mulling over a question: Am I really Isabelle's daughter?  
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This was the first time this question came to my mind. Although it was ridiculous, the fact that I really had this thought showed how heartbroken I was at the time.

Not far away, a light flashed, followed by a car speeding toward me. Unfortunately, it was too late for me to avoid it by the time I could take a good look at it.

The car made a screeching sound with its brakes and stopped abruptly in front of me. The door opened and a man came out. Strangely, I could not get a good look at this man's face – he appeared to be swaying. Meanwhile, the ground was also shaking. After a brief moment, I fell to the ground.

"Are you okay?" From my ears, I could hear a soft and gentle male voice. I thought it felt familiar but no matter how hard I tried, I could not open my eyes.

Then, I had a nightmare about something that I had not dreamed about for a long time. This nightmare was absurd and strange. Crystal arrived at my house in the dream, and my mom treated her nicely and kept telling me to take good care of her.

I was the only child in my family so of course I was happy having someone to play with. Crystal appeared to enjoy playing with me when there were other

people around. However, when no adults were present, she began to bully me and tore up my favorite dress. When my mother found out that it had been torn, Crystal accused me of having lost my temper and that I had ruined my own dress.

My mother slapped me without even asking me about the incident. I cried and said that Crystal had torn it, but no one would listen. They all assumed I was lying to avoid taking responsibility. I was punished with no lunch and could only watch Crystal sit at the spot that was originally mine as she was being gently cared for by my mother.

The dream felt so real that when I woke up, I almost believed the incident had actually happened in real life. I sat on the bed and patted my head. I felt like my head was going to explode, so I patted it with greater force, which exacerbated the headache.

“Why did I have to have such a realistic dream?” I sat on the bed and thought deeply about it.

“You’re awake.” After a while, someone pushed open the door and stopped me from letting my thoughts wander. A stranger walked in. My face turned pale as I realized I was not in the Goldstein residence or the home that Christopher and I owned.

“Who are you?” I looked at the man in front of me. He seemed familiar, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not remember who he was.

“You don’t remember me? How could you have forgotten about me?” The man looked surprised. “We met at the Goldsteins’ party, and recently...”

“Oh, I remember you now. You’re Tobey Osborn!” I looked around the room and then back at myself. When I realized I was not wearing the same clothes as before, my expression became uneasy. I asked, “How did I get here?”

“Have you forgotten? You passed out beside the road because you were in the rain and had a fever. I was driving by and saw you, so I brought you back here. Don’t worry. The maid in my house helped you change into the clothes you’re wearing.” Tobey smiled.

This man appeared to be quite considerate, but I had the impression that he was looking at me as if I were his bank vault. I gave him a forceful smile and said, “Thank you.”

“There’s no need to thank me. I’ve prepared a shirt for you to change into. Dinner will be ready by the time you’ve changed. You’ve slept the entire afternoon so I’m guessing you’re already hungry.”

Tobey placed the shirt by my bedside and then exited the room. Then, I jumped out of bed and hurriedly changed my clothes. At the moment, I just wanted to get out of here as soon as possible. My intuition was perhaps incorrect, but I felt uneasy staying here even though he had saved me.

The size of the shirt was perfect; it was just right for me. The only thing was that its design was too exposed. Because of the shirt, my impression of Tobey deteriorated. When I heard Tobey talking on the phone as I walked down the stairs, I came to a halt.

“Mrs. Goldstein, Eve is having a good time here. Her fever is already gone. Even if you don’t visit her, I’m sure she won’t fuss about it. She’ll understand that you’re preoccupied. It’s my honor that you’d entrust her to me. I’ll make sure Eve is in better shape than she was before. Please have a pleasant meal with Ms. Yates... Sure, I’ll tell her about it... Don’t worry. There is no woman I can’t handle...”

This was the first time this question came to my mind. Although it was ridiculous, the fact that I really had this thought showed how heartbroken I was at the time. Not far away, a light flashed, followed by a car speeding toward me. Unfortunately, it was too late for me to avoid it by the time I could take a good look at it. The car made a screeching sound with its brakes and stopped abruptly in front of me. The door opened and a man came out. Strangely, I could not get a good look at this man's face - he appeared to be swaying. Meanwhile, the ground was also shaking. After a brief moment, I fell to the ground. “Are you okay?” From my ears, I could hear a soft and gentle male voice. I thought it felt familiar but no matter how hard I tried, I could not open my eyes. Then, I had a nightmare about something that I had not dreamed about for a long time. This nightmare was absurd and strange. Crystal arrived at my house in the dream, and my mom treated her nicely and kept telling me to take good care of her. I was the only child in my family so of course I was happy having someone to play with. Crystal appeared to enjoy playing with me when there were other people around. However, when no adults were present, she began to bully me and tore up my favorite dress. When my mother found out that it had been torn, Crystal accused me of having lost my temper and that I had ruined my own dress. My mother slapped me without even asking me about the incident. I cried and said that Crystal had torn it, but no one would listen. They all assumed I was lying to

avoid taking responsibility. I was punished with no lunch and could only watch Crystal sit at the spot that was originally mine as she was being gently cared for by my mother. The dream felt so real that when I woke up, I almost believed the incident had actually happened in real life. I sat on the bed and patted my head. I felt like my head was going to explode, so I patted it with greater force, which exacerbated the headache. "Why did I have to have such a realistic dream?" I sat on the bed and thought deeply about it. "You're awake." After a while, someone pushed open the door and stopped me from letting my thoughts wander. A stranger walked in. My face turned pale as I realized I was not in the Goldstein residence or the home that Christopher and I owned. "Who are you?" I looked at the man in front of me. He seemed familiar, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not remember who he was. "You don't remember me? How could you have forgotten about me?" The man looked surprised. "We met at the Goldsteins' party, and recently..." "Oh, I remember you now. You're Tobey Osborn!" I looked around the room and then back at myself. When I realized I was not wearing the same clothes as before, my expression became uneasy. I asked, "How did I get here?" "Have you forgotten? You passed out beside the road because you were in the rain and had a fever. I was driving by and saw you, so I brought you back here. Don't worry. The maid in my house helped you change into the clothes you're wearing." Tobey smiled. This man appeared to be quite considerate, but I had the impression that he was looking at me as if I were his bank vault. I gave him a forceful smile and said, "Thank you." "There's no need to thank me. I've prepared a shirt for you to change into. Dinner will be ready by the time you've changed. You've slept the entire afternoon so I'm guessing you're already hungry." Tobey placed the shirt by my bedside and then exited the room. Then, I jumped out of bed and hurriedly changed my clothes. At the moment, I just wanted to get out of here as soon as possible. My intuition was perhaps incorrect, but I felt uneasy staying here even though he had saved me. The size of the shirt was perfect; it was just right for me. The only thing was that its design was too exposed. Because of the shirt, my impression of Tobey deteriorated. When I heard Tobey talking on the phone as I walked down the stairs, I came to a halt. "Mrs. Goldstein, Eve is having a good time here. Her fever is already gone. Even if you don't visit her, I'm sure she won't fuss about it. She'll understand that you're preoccupied. It's my honor that you'd entrust her to me. I'll make sure Eve is in better shape than she was before. Please have a pleasant meal with Ms. Yates... Sure, I'll tell her about it... Don't worry. There is no woman I can't handle..."

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Meanwhile, at the staircase, chills traveled down my spine as I overheard Tobey's conversation with Mom. It was at that moment I realized that Mom was not the least bit worried about me staying at Tobey's place.

Besides, Mom had really gone overboard this time trying to set me up with a random man whom I had just met.

It was pointless to be a bigger person by tolerating Mom's behavior, as she tended to cross the line sometimes. Thinking of that, I couldn't help but sneer at myself. I bet she'll be happy if anything happened between Tobey and me here. With that, her dream of marrying me to Tobey would finally come true.

Meanwhile, their conversation continued. I strode down the stairs and headed to the couch. My expression slowly darkened as I eavesdropped on their conversation. All they talked about were business opportunities and investment.

"Mrs. Goldstein, let me know if you have any other requests. We'll be family soon, won't we? As agreed previously, you should give away Yvonne's portion. Marry her? Sure, I like Ms. Yvonne, too. I wish to marry her as soon as possible! The shares? Yes, of course. They're still hers. But since we'll soon be family, we should not be so calculative. Am I right? Haha!"

Everything was set up perfectly on the dining table. Candles were lit and illuminated the steak and wine, while the dining area was done up romantically. Nevertheless, I was not touched after listening to their conversation.

It took Tobey a while to finally end that sickening conversation. He whistled a tune happily and headed upstairs with a smug grin, only to hurry down the stairs to look for me soon afterward.

"Eve? Where are you?" He glanced around nervously.

I picked up the glass of wine in front of me. Hearing the sound, Tobey instinctively looked in my direction and was stunned to see me sitting at the table. He probably did not think I would have come down so quickly. As soon as Tobey regained his composure, he quickened his steps and walked toward me with a polite smile. "You're here. Why didn't you tell me?"

"I'm afraid of disturbing you since you were on the phone," I said in a straightforward manner.



Tobey's face turned pale. Scratching the back of his head anxiously, he asked, "Did you hear everything, Eve?"

As I saw Tobey put a smile on his face, I could not help but notice that he actually had a warm and pleasant smile. However, his smile could not compare to Andrew's radiant smile. Andrew's was so genuine and contagious that it would instantly warm my heart.

Seeing Tobey's hypocritical smile, I scoffed heartlessly, "I think we're not that close, Mr. Osborn. I would appreciate it if you could address me as Ms. Tanner or Ms. Goldstein. 'Eve' is only for my closest friends and family. I hope you get what I mean."

Disgusted by his pretense, I was not planning to show mercy to such a hypocrite.

My forthright behavior and the hostility in my tone must have frightened Tobey. He stood there, too stunned to speak. After collecting himself, he smiled bitterly and responded, "Ms. Goldstein, is there a misunderstanding between us? Why are you acting like this? Do you not remember it was me who saved you on the street?"

"Of course I do, and I'll repay this debt of gratitude. Nevertheless, I would like to be excluded from any agreement or dealing that you have with my mother. Please don't involve me in this."

Having that said, I stood up from my seat, grabbed my handbag from the coffee table, and continued coldly, "What's yours is yours, and what's mine is Christopher's. I have nothing to do with you anymore. I'm not in the mood to eat. I'll make a move now, Mr. Osborn."

Tobey scurried over and blocked my way. Raising his eyebrow, he uttered, "Ms. Goldstein, you must have misunderstood me. How can you judge me by just listening to a phone conversation?"

"Really?" I scoffed with disdain.

He replied, "I can't tell what's on your mind. So, let me make this clear to you: I actually have someone that I like."

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"What did you say?" I was clearly puzzled at his words. With a quizzical look, I asked further, "If so, why did you say that to my mother?"

I still couldn't find a valid reason to befriend Tobey, even after he disclosed that to me. Things were different from the time I first met Lucas, though. Although Mom had a role to play in my relationship with Lucas, I knew right away that Lucas would be a great friend. It turned out that my intuition was not wrong.

"How about we eat something first? I haven't had anything yet. Moreover, you're my guest, so let me have the opportunity to welcome you." Tobey ignored my question and swiftly gestured me back to the dining table.

I hesitated for a moment before heading to the dining table, as I wanted to know what tricks Tobey had up his sleeves. I took a small bite of the food while waiting for Tobey to say something. Shifting my attention to him, I noticed his inelegant table manners.

"I have poor etiquette, don't I?" He wiped his mouth. Hearing his confession, I became less irritated for some unknown reason.

"Well, I prefer it that way. At least it's real. I hate pretentious people."

"I understand. You're indeed a genuine and straightforward person who wouldn't tolerate any fakeness. Me too, actually. Hence, I think both of us should be honest with each other."

Tobey smiled gently, and I started to see him in a more positive light.

“The Osborn family is not considered a prestigious family. We only managed to make a fortune in recent years and because of that, my family earned a little respect in Dellmoor. However, I was not fed with a silver spoon since young, and I don’t wish to erase the old me just because my life has changed. Anyway, I actually have someone in my heart but she’s merely a kindergarten teacher from an ordinary family. I know she’s the one for me when she offered me tremendous help back when my family was nearly bankrupt. She even went to great lengths to lend me her savings.”

“Why are you not tying the knot with her yet? You are not getting any younger.” I could tell that the woman he mentioned was really a nice girl.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Shrugging his shoulders, he heaved a sigh before continuing, “We like each other a lot, but my family doesn’t approve of our relationship due to her family background. That’s also why I came to Avenport.”

Curiosity flooded me. “Do you mean that the deal you have with my mother is just an expedient strategy of yours? What are both of you up to?”

“Since our families have business dealings with each other, your mother wishes the two of us to get married. Besides, you’re no ordinary girl, as you come from a prestigious family. No one would say no to marrying a girl like you.”

I was momentarily stunned to hear such honesty from Tobey. A brooding expression returned to my face as I replied, “Do you mean that you want to marry me?”

“Why not?” He glanced at me meaningfully and voiced earnestly, “Look, both of us have someone we like, but we couldn’t do anything about it because of the pressure from our families. We actually share the same fate.”

At this point, I had more questions than I had answers. “Same fate? What are you talking about?”

“Ms. Goldstein, you shouldn’t take things too seriously. Think about it: our families want us to get married to a suitable candidate. Why don’t we enter into an agreement and fake our marriage? By easing their minds, we could have the best of both worlds and we don’t have to give up on the people we love. Isn’t that a great idea?”

“Fake our marriage?” My expression turned gloomy after I heard his preposterous suggestion.

“Don’t be angry. What I’m suggesting is just a fake marriage; we won’t interfere with each other’s personal relationships. As you know, many couples from rich families who entered into arranged marriages do this as well. Rest assured that I won’t let you suffer any loss in this. We’ll sign a prenuptial agreement to safeguard our personal assets. Isn’t it a good idea to kill two birds with one stone? With our marriage, our families would also have more business opportunities with each other.”

“What did you say?” I was clearly puzzled at his words. With a quizzical look, I asked further, “If so, why did you say that to my mother?” I still couldn’t find a valid reason to befriend Tobey, even after he disclosed that to me. Things were different from the time I first met Lucas, though. Although Mom had a role to play in my relationship with Lucas, I knew right away that Lucas would be a great friend. It turned out that my intuition was not wrong. “How about we eat something first? I haven’t had anything yet. Moreover, you’re my guest, so let me have the opportunity to welcome you.” Tobey ignored my question and swiftly gestured me back to the dining table. I hesitated for a moment before heading to the dining table, as I wanted to know what tricks Tobey had up his sleeves. I took a small bite of the food while waiting for Tobey to say something. Shifting my attention to him, I noticed his inelegant table manners. “I have poor etiquette, don’t I?” He wiped his mouth. Hearing his confession, I became less irritated for some unknown reason. “Well, I prefer it that way. At least it’s real. I hate pretentious people.” “I understand. You’re indeed a genuine and straightforward person who wouldn’t tolerate any fakeness. Me too, actually. Hence, I think both of us should be honest with each other.” Tobey smiled gently, and I started to see him in a more positive light. “The Osborn family is not considered a prestigious family. We only managed to make a fortune in recent years and because of that, my family earned a little respect in Dellmoor. However, I was not fed with a silver spoon since young, and I don’t wish to erase the old me just because my life has changed. Anyway, I actually have someone in my heart but she’s merely a kindergarten teacher from an ordinary family. I know she’s the one for me when she offered me tremendous help back when my family was nearly bankrupt. She even went to great lengths to lend me her savings.” “Why are you not tying the knot with her yet? You are not getting any younger.” I could tell that the woman he mentioned was really a nice girl. “Isn’t it obvious?” Shrugging his shoulders, he heaved a sigh before continuing, “We like each other a lot, but my family doesn’t approve of our relationship due to her family background. That’s also

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“You're doing this only because you don't love her as much as you think you do. You're simply acting in your own best interest and choosing power over her, you hypocrite.”

Our negotiation ended on a sour note because I splashed a glass of wine on his face.

The prenuptial agreement and fake marriage may seem like a good idea to others, but to me, it only illustrated that it was in his best interest to compromise. In my opinion, married men would flirt around only when their love for their partners wasn't deep enough.

They wanted control over everything; they wanted power and love. However, one could not sell the cow and drink the milk. Had I done the same thing, I would be no different from these people.

I couldn't accept it. I truly love Christopher and was willing to give up everything for his sake. Why would I want to throw away my most precious treasure for material things especially when I already had so few things to begin with?

I truly believed that Christopher and I were on the same page. He gave up so much for me back then. We would have split up a long time ago if we didn't put so much effort into our relationship. Accepting Tobey's terms would be humiliating Christopher and belittling our love.

I returned to our home, opened the door, and was about to clean up the house when Christopher suddenly walked over and pulled me into his arms.

"What happened?" I asked worriedly as I stared at the thunderous look on his face.

"Where did you go? I tried calling you multiple times but you didn't pick up. I went to the Goldsteins to look for you but they said you left yesterday. I've been really worried about you ever since you failed to come home last night." Christopher tightened his embrace and scolded. "You should have told me you were going out. Don't make me worry."

I took out my phone from my bag and noticed it was turned off. "I'm sorry, I didn't know that my phone battery died. Don't be mad," I said innocently.

"Then tell me where you went last night." Christopher harrumphed. "I'll be really mad if you lie to me."

"Gosh, you're not suspecting that I cheated on you, are you?"

I shrugged nonchalantly and smiled. I then stood up, pecked him on the cheek, and dragged him over to a mirror. I pointed at the mirror and said, "Look at this rich, handsome man with broad shoulders and long, slender legs. He is good in bed and is my idol. I would have to find someone as good as he if I wanted to cheat, wouldn't I? I couldn't be interested in anyone inferior to him."

"You have good taste. Remember to tell me where you are going next time." Christopher broke into a smile after hearing me out. He let me off. "At least inform Sabrina where you are going next time. I was really worried about you."



"I'm not a child anymore." I pouted. I wasn't upset; I was simply being coquettish. I was elated to know that Christopher cared so much about me. After giving it some thought, I decided to tell him about Tobey while withholding parts of the conversation that would hurt him. I simply told him about Tobey's plan and the girl he loved. I made myself clear by repeating the latter point in case he became jealous once again.

"Duh, why should my wife marry someone else and keep our relationship secret? Are you kidding me? What's there to hide?" Christopher lifted his chin snobbishly and pointed at his reflection in the mirror. "This man here is an idol. And as an idol, I will never compromise."

After some dilly-dallying, we headed over to the kitchen to prepare lunch. I really enjoyed being with him and just doing the little things together with him. I felt the sweetest love in our ordinary, everyday lives.

I flipped through my calendar after washing my hands and suddenly realized that today wasn't just an ordinary day. I fell silent.

"What special day is it?" Christopher glanced at my calendar. I had specially put a marking on today's date in case I forgot.

"Today is Lyle's birthday. Sharon used to insist that we head to her place to visit her on this day every year."

"You're doing this only because you don't love her as much as you think you do. You're simply acting in your own best interest and choosing power over her, you hypocrite." Our negotiation ended on a sour note because I splashed a glass of wine on his face. The prenuptial agreement and fake marriage may seem like a good idea to others, but to me, it only illustrated that it was in his best interest to compromise. In my opinion, married men would flirt around only when their love for their partners wasn't deep enough. They wanted control over everything; they wanted power and love. However, one could not sell the cow and drink the milk. Had I done the same thing, I would be no different from these people. I couldn't accept it. I truly love Christopher and was willing to give up everything for his sake. Why would I want to throw away my most precious treasure for material things especially when I already had so few things to begin with? I truly believed that Christopher and I were on the same page. He gave up so much for me back then. We would have split up a long time ago if we didn't put so much effort into our relationship. Accepting Tobey's terms would be humiliating Christopher and belittling our love. I returned to our home, opened the door, and was about to clean up the house

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

Time flew by fast. It had been six months since Lyle left us. I also turned from rags to riches. Life works in mysterious ways.

My heart was heavy upon thinking about Lyle. It felt like a weight on my chest. Every breath I took felt like a burden.

Some people would only be remembered after their deaths. I was disgusted by the mere thought of him when he was alive, but I couldn't get him off my mind after his death.

Lyle died for my sake. My heart ached for him whenever I recalled how he slowly slipped away in my arms on that fateful day.

I didn't even have the chance to tell him that I no longer hated him. I wanted to tell him that we would be the best of friends from now on because he was my savior.

"Why don't you visit Sharon today? I'm sure she wouldn't want to spend this day alone as well."

"Okay!" I hesitated for a bit before replying. Honestly, it had been so long since I last paid Sharon a visit. It was about time I did. However, I was also a little apprehensive about meeting her.

I felt like I could never repay the Smiths for everything they had done for me. It was a favor I could never return, nor could I do anything to compensate for their loss.

Even though the Smith family business improved with Christopher's help, I knew Sharon would rather sacrifice everything than lose Lyle.

The car rolled to a stop in front of Sharon's mansion. I stood outside the gates, hesitant to step foot inside the property. I peered through the iron gate and noticed that her favorite flowers were already wilting and the place was full of weeds. It looked abandoned. Only one small patch remained tended: the spot where Lyle's favorite flowers were planted. It was obvious that the owner no longer had the time and energy to take care of anything else.

Christopher held my hand and gave me a reassuring look. With that, I finally stepped foot into the courtyard. Sharon was trimming the branches of the flowery plant as we walked toward her. She had aged overnight. This time, she was sitting in a wheelchair. I frowned when I noticed that she wasn't even wearing shoes.

Sharon could only move around in the wheelchair because she couldn't even walk now. She was well into her eighties and had always been weak. Lyle's death was a huge blow on her; she crumbled as if she had lost her emotional support.

"Grandma!" My eyes brimmed with tears as I walked over and helped her carry a flower pot.

Sharon turned around as if she finally realized my presence. She scrutinized me for a long while before she broke into a smile. "Oh, it's you, Eve. I was wondering when you and Lyle are coming back. I was about to get mad if you guys didn't come to visit me soon. Today is his birthday. I will head over to his office and beat him up if he's using work as an excuse to not come to see me."

I stared at Sharon in surprise. She kept mentioning Lyle's name as if she had gone senile. She held my hand, turned to Christopher, and scolded, "What are you doing standing over there? Come here. I want to take a good look at you. I'll think that I have a granddaughter instead of a grandson if you don't come back soon."

I quickly gave Christopher a glance. He then walked toward Sharon and greeted her like how I did.

"That's more like it. I'll get Molly to prepare your favorite dishes. You have to eat more today—don't leave the table halfway because of a call. I will break your leg if you do so. Lyle, remember to switch off your phone during dinner later, and don't bully Eve! Where will you find someone else as good as she?" Sharon held my hand and Christopher's hand in hers and smiled dotingly.

"We're not going anywhere, Grandma. We're here to stay today." I choked up and almost cried.

Time flew by fast. It had been six months since Lyle left us. I also turned from rags to riches. Life works in mysterious ways. My heart was heavy upon thinking about Lyle. It felt like a weight on my chest. Every breath I took felt like a burden. Some people would only be remembered after their deaths. I was disgusted by the mere thought of him when he was alive, but I couldn't get him off my mind after his death. Lyle died for my sake. My heart ached for him whenever I recalled how he slowly slipped away in my arms on that fateful day. I didn't even have the chance to tell him that I no longer hated him. I wanted to tell him that we would be the best of friends from now on because

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“Molly, what happened to Grandma?” I walked into the kitchen and asked while Sharon and Christopher stayed in the yard.

Molly choked up upon that. She wiped away her tears and said, “Old Mrs. Smith is growing senile. Mr. Smith’s death was the final blow for her. She thinks that Mr. Smith is still alive and that he will come back and visit someday. I couldn’t bear to tell her the truth when she looks so happy.”

“What did the doctor say?” My face fell.

“The doctor said it was simply due to old age. She’s having hallucinations because of how much she misses Mr. Smith. There’s no treatment for her,” Molly said.

I lowered my gaze and said helplessly, “It’s my fault she turned out this way. If not for me, she would still be well right now.”

“This is fate!” Molly wiped away her tears. “Mrs. Smith used to visit her from time to time. They would talk about Mr. Smith during their conversation and Mrs. Smith would break down into tears. We’re the only two left after she moved out, so Old Mrs. Smith must feel very lonely. Ms. Yvonne, please come and visit often if you have her best interest at heart.”

My heart was heavy after leaving the Smith household. It ached so much that I couldn’t breathe after seeing Sharon in such a state. Why is life so hard? Why can’t we just live a happy and simple life?

“I’ll come with you to visit Sharon whenever I’m free from now on. What do you think?” Christopher pulled me into his arms and said in a low voice.

“Thank you, Christopher. Thank you so much!”

I accidentally ruined my painting with Remington when I spilled paint on it the other day. I left in such haste that I did not think about how to salvage the artwork. Upon returning to the studio only two days later, I realized that nothing had been touched except for the painting given to Crystal, which was not there anymore.

The messed-up painting was now beyond recognition. I rolled it up as I did not dare show Remington what happened. His art exhibition was launching next week. Not only was I holding him back, but I also destroyed his work.

"This is the painting you claim to have completed? Yvonne, do I have to thank you for this?" Sure enough, Remington broke down after seeing his ruined painting and almost jumped in rage.

I scratched the back of my head and replied in embarrassment. "There's no way I can salvage this painting now. A lot of things happened this week and it was too late by the time I wanted to salvage it. Why don't you try calling Spencer back from Anglandur? We still have one week left to finish the painting."

"Haha, Yvonne. I just noticed how naive you actually are. Spencer is there for a competition. I will do whatever you say if you manage to get him back!" Remington had no way to vent so he glared at me menacingly. He then stared at Christopher, who was behind me, from time to time. After a while, he rolled up his sleeves and walked over to Christopher. "Come on, let's have a fight. I need to let off steam before I blow up."

"Don't. Why don't you just beat me up? I won't fight back." I laughed drily. Remington would be beaten to a pulp if he got into a fight with Christopher. I patted my chest and said, "I assure you I will get Spencer back here to clean up the mess. I swear."

"Molly, what happened to Grandma?" I walked into the kitchen and asked while Sharon and Christopher stayed in the yard. Molly choked up upon that. She wiped away her tears and said, "Old Mrs. Smith is growing senile. Mr. Smith's death was the final blow for her. She thinks that Mr. Smith is still alive and that he will come back and visit someday. I couldn't bear to tell her the truth when she looks so happy." "What did the doctor say?" My face fell. "The doctor said it was simply due to old age. She's having hallucinations because of how much she misses Mr. Smith. There's no treatment for her," Molly said. I lowered my gaze and said helplessly, "It's my fault she turned out this way. If not for me, she would still be well right now." "This is fate!" Molly wiped away her tears. "Mrs. Smith used to visit her from time to time. They would talk about Mr. Smith during their conversation and Mrs. Smith would break down into tears. We're the only two left after she moved out, so Old Mrs. Smith must feel very lonely. Ms. Yvonne, please come and visit often if you have her best interest at heart." My heart was heavy after leaving the Smith household. It ached so much that I couldn't breathe after seeing Sharon in such a state. Why is life so hard? Why can't we just live a happy and simple life? "I'll come with you to visit Sharon whenever I'm free from now on. What do you think?" Christopher pulled me into his arms and said in a low voice. "Thank you, Christopher. Thank you so much!" I accidentally ruined my painting with



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I was completely guilty, so I dared not say a word back as Remington let out his anger. Unfortunately, Christopher was by my side. He was the type to protect his wife no matter what happened. Whenever Remington raised his voice at me, Christopher would start putting on a cold front. In the end, Remington was shrieking in anger. He grabbed Christopher by the collar and dragged him to the practice room upstairs.

Outside the door, I could hear the two of them fighting with each other. I clasped my hands together before my chest. "Please just let them put an end to this peacefully."

"To h\*ll with peace! Yvonne... Ouch! You... I'm telling you, if this painting isn't done by Sunday, I will cut off all ties with you. I will never show up before you again. I... Argh! Oh, is that how you want to play it? Come here and let me teach you a lesson, Christopher!"

“What else did you expect? For me to stand here and let you hit me? My wife is the only one that I will willingly allow to lay a finger on me.”

“I see you’re willing to throw away your friendship for your relationship. I can only say that it is unfortunate to have been your friend.”

“Friends are for using. My wife is for loving. That’s just how it is.”

Listening in to their conversation, my eyes were twitching. Hopefully, Remington would not get angrier after hearing Christopher’s preposterous logic.

I kept hearing heavy thumps on the floor, coupled with Remington’s miserable screams from time to time. Finally, the practice room door opened. Christopher walked out first with his sleeves rolled up high. The tie around his neck was in a mess. There was a bruise on the corner of his mouth. The sight of it made my heart ache.

“Aren’t you going to blow on it for me? It hurts.” Christopher put his face near mine.

“I can’t believe you guys actually beat each other up. Couldn’t you have toned it down a little? Besides, there’s a punching bag right there. The two of you could have just competed to see who would break the punching bag first or something.” I leaned over to him and blew gently on his bruise.

“Don’t worry. I never lose.” Christopher shot me a sly smile. “Your kiss numbs all pain.”

“Will the two of you stop showing off? At least take a moment to consider how I feel. Move aside.” Remington stepped out with his chest puffed. There seemed to be no injuries on his face. As he walked out, he even did a biting motion toward us to signify his victory. With my jaw wide open, I softly whispered to Christopher, “I thought you said you never lose?”

“Shush!” Christopher took a step nearer to me. “He’s just happy he left a mark on my face. I deliberately landed all my punches on places that are covered by his clothes. Trust me. He’s definitely in more pain than me.”

I shot him a thumbs up. Indeed, I had to admit that I admired his skills.

“What about Spencer? If I use Crystal as an excuse to lure him back, do you think it will work?” I asked hesitantly.

“Just tell him that Crystal is looking for him urgently. Remember to emphasize that she is close to tears. I guarantee he will be on a flight back tonight,” Christopher said solemnly.

“That’s true. No argument there.” I once again gave him a thumbs up to salute his intelligence.

That night, after Christopher and I finished our “vigorous exercise”, we lay cuddling in bed. Suddenly, a series of fast-paced knocks sounded. Initially, I thought it was probably the neighbors. After a while, the knocking did not stop, and both Christopher and I were awakened. It was only then we realized that someone was knocking at our door.

I exchanged glances with Christopher. Both of us were visibly puzzled. I held onto my forehead and frowned. “It can’t be. When I called him, he was busy. So I left a message. Considering the time difference, he must have left at around midnight. That man is honestly hopeless.”

“Even more importantly, he’s so blind. He had just had to fall in love with a girl that loves playing games and flirting with other men. He has such weird taste, unlike me.” Christopher had just gotten done changing. He kissed me on the forehead before going to check on the door.

I shut my eyes. I was half asleep when suddenly someone kicked the bedroom door open. This was followed by Spencer’s loud and panicked voice shouting in my ear. “Yvonne, tell me. Where is Crystal? Is she okay?”

I was completely guilty, so I dared not say a word back as Remington let out his anger. Unfortunately, Christopher was by my side. He was the type to protect his wife no matter what happened. Whenever Remington raised his voice at me, Christopher would start putting on a cold front. In the end, Remington was shrieking in anger. He grabbed Christopher by the collar and dragged him to the practice room upstairs. Outside the door, I could hear the two of them fighting with each other. I clasped my hands together before my chest. “Please just let them put an end to this peacefully.” “To h\*ll with peace! Yvonne... Ouch! You... I’m telling you, if this painting isn’t done by Sunday, I will cut off all ties with you. I will never show up before you again. I... Argh! Oh, is that how you want to play it? Come here and let me teach you a lesson, Christopher!” “What else did you expect? For me to stand here and let you hit

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Oh my God. I'm not even dressed yet. How could he just barge in? I stared at Spencer charging over and quickly wormed into my blanket. After making sure I was properly covered with nothing hanging out, I sighed in relief.

Christopher walked in hurriedly and slapped Spencer on the head. He wailed out in response. Like a rat that had just been caught, he was quickly thrown out. Finally, I was able to climb out of bed and put on some clothes.

During Crystal and Lyle's wedding, Spencer had done nothing. Hence, I thought that he and she were nothing more than close friends that shared a passion for art. But now, it was clearly more than just friendship. If anything, his feelings for her seemed to have grown more intensely over the course of time.

Walking out of the room, I saw Spencer getting ready to charge over again. I quickly hid behind Christopher and said, "Calm down. Let's talk like adults. Stop rushing over at me. If you do that again, don't blame my husband for beating you up. In fact, I might even add a few extra kicks in."

"Then tell me what is going on? Why is Crystal looking for me? What kind of terminal disease does she have? Is she really dying?"

"What? Who said she's terminally ill? All I said was that she's looking for you, so you should come back when you have the time." My jaw dropped to the floor upon hearing Spencer's questions.

"Huh?" It was Spencer's turn to be surprised.

I rubbed the back of my head. I could not understand how my words were twisted into what Spencer had heard. "Wait, what's going on?"

"Tell me exactly what you said on the phone yesterday," Christopher turned to me and ordered. He seemed to have thought of something.

I repeated what I said in Angladurn. After hearing what I said, Christopher pulled me into his arms and started laughing out loud. Meanwhile, Spencer's face looked particularly sour, as if having bit into a wedge of lemon.

I laughed dryly. Even if I was an idiot, I knew what was going on. Clearly, I had miscommunicated the message. I shrugged and said innocently, "Okay, fine. I admit that my Angladurn isn't the best. Can't fault me for it, can you?"

"What were you actually trying to say?" Spencer was pale from anger. I could tell that he wanted to just devour me whole right now. He leaned back against the couch and yawned. If he could just end me, all his anger would disappear in an instant.

"The painting that we made with Remington was accidentally destroyed by me. Now, we're one painting short. We have about a week to paint a new one, and we can't do it without you. So, please help us out. I'm so grateful that you rushed over here. Truly, thank you so much."

Spencer looked at me, then back at Christopher. He stood up with a slap on the table and shouted, "F\*ck off!"

"Hmm?" Christopher and I exchanged glances. We simultaneously put our hands on our hips and laughed. "Haha. You've already entered our territory. There's no escape for you now."

Then, I picked up a fruit knife on the table and handed it over to Christopher. Solemnly, he twirled it in his hands. He shifted the knife from his left hand to his right as he toyed with it.

Slowly, we made our way over to Spencer. "The only option here for you is to work on the painting."

"What do you guys think you're doing?" Spencer staggered back.

"What does it look like?" I laughed maniacally. For a moment, it felt like I was the antagonist of a big movie.

"D-Don't go too far. If you come any closer, I'll scream. Christopher, don't think I'm afraid of you just because you can fight. You have no idea what I'm capable of when I get mad."

The reason Spencer was so afraid was probably due to the trauma of him being beaten up by Christopher when he was younger.

“Scream all you want. You can scream your lungs out, but nobody will come to save you. Take out your pencil right now and start drawing. We’ll rush over to Remington’s house as soon as possible and invite him to join us.”

Oh my God. I'm not even dressed yet. How could he just barge in? I stared at Spencer charging over and quickly wormed into my blanket. After making sure I was properly covered with nothing hanging out, I sighed in relief. Christopher walked in hurriedly and slapped Spencer on the head. He wailed out in response. Like a rat that had just been caught, he was quickly thrown out. Finally, I was able to climb out of bed and put on some clothes. During Crystal and Lyle's wedding, Spencer had done nothing. Hence, I thought that he and she were nothing more than close friends that shared a passion for art. But now, it was clearly more than just friendship. If anything, his feelings for her seemed to have grown more intensely over the course of time. Walking out of the room, I saw Spencer getting ready to charge over again. I quickly hid behind Christopher and said, “Calm down. Let's talk like adults. Stop rushing over at me. If you do that again, don't blame my husband for beating you up. In fact, I might even add a few extra kicks in.” “Then tell me what is going on? Why is Crystal looking for me? What kind of terminal disease does she have? Is she really dying?” “What? Who said she's terminally ill? All I said was that she's looking for you, so you should come back when you have the time.” My jaw dropped to the floor upon hearing Spencer's questions. “Huh?” It was Spencer's turn to be surprised. I rubbed the back of my head. I could not understand how my words were twisted into what Spencer had heard. “Wait, what's going on?” “Tell me exactly what you said on the phone yesterday,” Christopher turned to me and ordered. He seemed to have thought of something. I repeated what I said in Angladurn. After hearing what I said, Christopher pulled me into his arms and started laughing out loud. Meanwhile, Spencer's face looked particularly sour, as if having bit into a wedge of lemon. I laughed dryly. Even if I was an idiot, I knew what was going on. Clearly, I had miscommunicated the message. I shrugged and said innocently, “Okay, fine. I admit that my Angladurn isn't the best. Can't fault me for it, can you?” “What were you actually trying to say?” Spencer was pale from anger. I could tell that he wanted to just devour me whole right now. He leaned back against the couch and yawned. If he could just end me, all his anger would disappear in an instant. “The painting that we made with Remington was accidentally destroyed by me. Now, we're one painting short. We have about a week to paint a new one, and we can't do it without you. So, please help us out. I'm so



grateful that you rushed over here. Truly, thank you so much.” Spencer looked at me, then back at Christopher. He stood up with a slap on the table and shouted, “F\*ck off!” “Hmm?” Christopher and I exchanged glances. We simultaneously put our hands on our hips and laughed. “Haha. You've already entered our territory. There's no escape for you now.” Then, I picked up a fruit knife on the table and handed it over to Christopher. Solemnly, he twirled it in his hands. He shifted the knife from his left hand to his right as he toyed with it. Slowly, we made our way over to Spencer. “The only option here for you is to work on the painting.” “What do you guys think you're doing?” Spencer staggered back. “What does it look like?” I laughed maniacally. For a moment, it felt like I was the antagonist of a big movie. “D-Don't go too far. If you come any closer, I'll scream. Christopher, don't think I'm afraid of you just because you can fight. You have no idea what I'm capable of when I get mad.” The reason Spencer was so afraid was probably due to the trauma of him being beaten up by Christopher when he was younger. “Scream all you want. You can scream your lungs out, but nobody will come to save you. Take out your pencil right now and start drawing. We'll rush over to Remington's house as soon as possible and invite him to join us.”

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To be honest, it was near impossible to complete such a huge oil painting within a week. Fortunately, we had already done it once before, so we did not need much creativity with it. All we needed to do was repeat what we did the last time.

After burning the midnight oil for several nights in a row, we finally finished it. The three of us felt a huge weight lift off our shoulders. We lay on the couch and refused to move an inch. Eventually, it was Remington who got up to cover the painting with a cloth.

“From now on, I will never let anyone else take the paintings out of my drawing-room. I would just be digging my own grave,” Remington said tiredly.

“I feel completely drained,” Spencer remarked with his face plastered on the couch.

I did not even have any strength to respond to their comments.

After resting for a couple of days, we finally managed to recover. We marked our seals onto the painting and took one final look at it. The more we looked, the more satisfied we were with our work. Creativity was something that came at the most unexpected times. While we were redoing the painting, we made a

few changes here and there. Now, it was even more beautiful than the previous one.

“Yvonne, where’s your painting? When are you going to hand it over?” Remington asked with a mouthful of instant noodles. Even while eating, he did not forget to remind me to bring my painting.

The feeling of joy from painting together soon died down. How was I supposed to hand over my painting? Isabelle refused to even give me a reason for making me give my painting to Crystal. Because of Isabelle’s earlier illness, our relationship was stagnant for a while. She was very polite when she spoke to me. However, that courtesy did not at all cover up her refusal to budge on the matter.

“Unfortunately, I don’t think I will be able to give you my painting in support of your art exhibition,” I said sadly.

“Don’t tell me you destroyed that too?” Both Remington and Spencer widened their eyes in disbelief.

“Yvonne, your fellow artists haven’t recognized you as a new school artist yet. That was just a nickname that the media gave you. Now, you think you’re all that? Do you even want to continue doing art? I can’t deal with you.”

Remington was close to coming over and strangling me to death.

“You really are something, Yvonne. Picasso has nothing on you, you know that?” Spencer was speaking with a sarcastic tone. “I admire no artist except you.”

“I admire myself too.” It took me half a month just to conceptualize that painting. Within one afternoon, it became someone else’s possession. “I’m incredibly generous. That small painting is nothing to me.”

As I spoke, I suddenly covered my mouth and burst out into laughter. I laughed so hard that I actually started to cry. All the sadness in my heart was starting to bubble over.

“You...” Remington and Spencer could feel that something was wrong with me. They thought they had misspoken, so they quickly apologized.

“Come on. We only said those things because we’re good friends. You can take a joke, right?” Spencer was very direct.

“We’ll apologize to you, okay?” Remington rubbed the back of his head.

“Don’t worry about it. I’m fine.” I dabbed away my tears. After pondering for a moment, I said to Remington, “Actually, I have a painting that was meant to enter in the National Youth Art Exhibition and Contest. However, due to certain reasons, it was taken down before anyone could get a look at it. Do you want me to display it in your art exhibition?”

“Sure. I promise to put it in the most eye-catching corner. I remember that painting being the most distinctive painting that I’ve seen for a while.”

It had been several days since I returned to the Goldstein residence. I had several text messages from Mark, as well as missed calls that I forgot to answer while painting. However, none of them belonged to Isabelle. Oddly enough, I felt like I was starting to understand my own mother less and less.

After entering, I saw Mark and Isabelle standing under a tree. I could not hear what they were saying, but it was clear that they were in disagreement over something. Isabelle had a frustrated expression on, and Mark was not looking too good either.

“How many times have I told you that you should stay out of Eve’s business with the Goldstein family? Why must you stop her? Why did you get Tobey to come to mess things up? Do you even listen to a thing I say?”

“As I’ve mentioned before, I can accept anyone except Julia’s son. I’ve said so many times that she was the one who killed my elder brother. How can I let my daughter marry her son? I will never allow this. Over my dead body.”

To be honest, it was near impossible to complete such a huge oil painting within a week. Fortunately, we had already done it once before, so we did not need much creativity with it. All we needed to do was repeat what we did the last time. After burning the midnight oil for several nights in a row, we finally finished it. The three of us felt a huge weight lift off our shoulders. We lay on the couch and refused to move an inch. Eventually, it was Remington who got up to cover the painting with a cloth. “From now on, I will never let anyone else take the paintings out of my drawing-room. I would just be digging my own grave,” Remington said tiredly. “I feel completely drained,” Spencer remarked with his face plastered on the couch. I did not even have any

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