

Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 631-640

Posted by **chapter novel**, 45 Views, Released on July 13, 2022

It turned out they were arguing over Christopher and I; I sighed internally. Mark had said before that he would help me persuade Isabelle, but she never gave in. I thought that Mark had given up after Christopher refused to join his business.

“Do you even hear yourself? Please. Think about what you’re saying. Eve marrying Christopher is the best thing that could happen to her. Why are you being so stubborn?”

“If it were anything else, I would listen to you, but not this time. Mark, I know you are worried about your newly found daughter. However, can’t you extend that same consideration for me? I’ve been with you for so long. While I may hold the title of your wife, I will always be known as that woman that abandoned her husband and daughter. We never even had a wedding ceremony, yet I chose to leave with you.

“Similarly, I am willing to be just as determined for my family. Even if Yvonne ends up hating me, I won’t budge. He was my brother. Didn’t you look up to him too? If he wasn’t dead, maybe you guys might be good friends.” Isabelle covered her face with her hands and started to sob.

“Don’t bring up Robert in front of me. He was the one who didn’t want anything to do with me back then. Otherwise, you would have married me long ago,” Mark snapped back. When he saw Isabelle crying, he went up to give her a hug.

“After being together so many years, I know how good you are to me. I’ve always known. No matter how I mess up, you always forgive me. Since you chose me, you’re mine to cherish forever. You will always be a part of the Goldstein family now. So, how could I ever bear to hurt you?”

“But when it comes to Eve, it’s different. She’s important to us both. Taking a step back will be better for all of us. Please, just give in this once. When everything is settled, you can do whatever you want to. I promise I won’t stop you, okay?”

Mark squeezed Isabelle gently on the shoulders. In his dark grey eyes, a glint flashed through. Looking at her, he said, “Promise me, Belle. Please.”

“N-No... I can't... I really can't.” Seeing him like this, Isabelle’s expression changed drastically. This was a sign that he was about to lose his temper. If they continued talking about this, she knew she was going to get in trouble.

Hence, she decided to just say yes for now, and go back on her words later on.

It had been years since someone spoke up for me. I never realized how nice it was to have a father to rely on. My eyes welled up with tears. It was at this moment that I finally accepted him into my heart and acknowledged him as my father.

I did not want them to fight over me. They were already in disagreement, and I did not want things to get worse. I mulled it over and decided to interrupt them. I went over and shouted, “Mom, Dad, morning.”

Seeing me come over, Mark instantly retracted his gloomy expression. “Why didn’t you give me a heads up before heading out? I’ve barely seen you around, and you haven’t been answering your phone either. You silly child. Don’t you know that your family will worry about you?”

“I went out to have a discussion with several of my artist friends. We were all having so much fun that I forgot to give you a call. Sorry for making you worry.”

I warmly grabbed onto his hand. This was the first time I was standing so close to him. “Dad, don’t argue with Mom over me anymore. You guys love each other so much. I don’t want to see your relationship fall apart over me.”

“Silly girl. You are my daughter, so it is only right that I stand up for you. I wasn’t around for you when you were younger, and you suffered a lot. Now, I just want to give you what you want.” Mark gently patted me on the head and sighed.

“Oh, Dad!” I called out with a sob.

“Hmph!” Hearing our loving conversation, Isabelle rolled up her sleeves and left the garden.

It turned out they were arguing over Christopher and I; I sighed internally. Mark had said before that he would help me persuade Isabelle, but she never gave in. I thought that Mark had given up after Christopher refused to join his

business. “Do you even hear yourself? Please. Think about what you're saying. Eve marrying Christopher is the best thing that could happen to her. Why are you being so stubborn?” “If it were anything else, I would listen to you, but not this time. Mark, I know you are worried about your newly found daughter. However, can't you extend that same consideration for me? I've been with you for so long. While I may hold the title of your wife, I will always be known as that woman that abandoned her husband and daughter. We never even had a wedding ceremony, yet I chose to leave with you. “Similarly, I am willing to be just as determined for my family. Even if Yvonne ends up hating me, I won't budge. He was my brother. Didn't you look up to him too? If he wasn't dead, maybe you guys might be good friends.” Isabelle covered her face with her hands and started to sob. “Don't bring up Robert in front of me. He was the one who didn't want anything to do with me back then. Otherwise, you would have married me long ago,” Mark snapped back. When he saw Isabelle crying, he went up to give her a hug. “After being together so many years, I know how good you are to me. I've always known. No matter how I mess up, you always forgive me. Since you chose me, you're mine to cherish forever. You will always be a part of the Goldstein family now. So, how could I ever bear to hurt you? “But when it comes to Eve, it's different. She's important to us both. Taking a step back will be better for all of us. Please, just give in this once. When everything is settled, you can do whatever you want to. I promise I won't stop you, okay?” Mark squeezed Isabelle gently on the shoulders. In his dark grey eyes, a glint flashed through. Looking at her, he said, “Promise me, Belle. Please.” “N-No... I can't... I really can't.” Seeing him like this, Isabelle's expression changed drastically. This was a sign that he was about to lose his temper. If they continued talking about this, she knew she was going to get in trouble. Hence, she decided to just say yes for now, and go back on her words later on. It had been years since someone spoke up for me. I never realized how nice it was to have a father to rely on. My eyes welled up with tears. It was at this moment that I finally accepted him into my heart and acknowledged him as my father. I did not want them to fight over me. They were already in disagreement, and I did not want things to get worse. I mulled it over and decided to interrupt them. I went over and shouted, “Mom, Dad, morning.” Seeing me come over, Mark instantly retracted his gloomy expression. “Why didn't you give me a heads up before heading out? I've barely seen you around, and you haven't been answering your phone either. You silly child. Don't you know that your family will worry about you?” “I went out to have a discussion with several of my artist friends. We were all having so much fun that I forgot to give you a call. Sorry for making you worry.” I warmly grabbed onto his hand. This was the first time I was standing so close to him. “Dad, don't argue with Mom over me anymore. You guys love

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“Mom!” I yelled after Isabelle, but she did not turn her head back. I was rather disappointed. Ever since Christopher’s identity was revealed, there had been a gap between her and me. It was like there was an invisible wall between us that neither of us could cross.

“Sigh. Your mother is really stubborn. She never wants to have a proper talk to me about this. Every time I mention it, she gets mad. I don’t know what to do either.” Mark sighed lightly.

“You tried your best, Dad.” I looked over to the mansion. After Isabelle headed in, I saw her appear in her room on the second floor. She seemed to be looking down at us. Although it was just a glance, I managed to catch the displeasure on her frowned face.

Isabelle seemed to dislike it when I got close to Mark. Every time we talked, she had an ugly expression. I could not understand why.

There seemed to be more and more secrets revolving around Isabelle, and she was becoming weirder and weirder. The image of the wonderful mother I had in my mind was slowly becoming more foreign to me. After some time, perhaps that memory of her might fade completely and be replaced by the current version of her.

Outside the door, the sound of a car honking could be heard. Christopher was urging me to hurry up. I looked down at the time and realized it was already half-past three. I was supposed to pass the painting to Remington by four o’clock. If I did not leave now, he was definitely going to cut ties with me. I raised my head to look at Mark.

“Christopher is waiting for you, isn’t he?” Mark asked.

“Yeah. We are supposed to go meet Remington, a famous artist. The art exhibition is coming up, and I’ve been invited to help set up.” I turned to look once more at the window of Isabelle’s room. She was no longer there

anymore. Thank God. If she sees Christopher, it's going to be another round of insults. I really don't want him to hear all that.

To be honest, there were times where I tried to think of a way that could please both parties. In the end, I merely came to the conclusion that unless Robert resurrected, that was simply not possible.

"Dad, I can't bear to see Mom so sad, but I really don't know what else I can do. She sounded so determined earlier. I understand that she doesn't want to back off, but unfortunately neither will I. I don't mean to be ungrateful and choose love over my own mother. However, Christopher is someone that I could never give up. It doesn't matter what I will lose. Meeting him has been my greatest honor. If it wasn't for him, I might not even be alive right now."

"I understand. You do what you have to. Things will sort themselves out eventually. I'll help you come up with a solution. Have fun, okay?" Mark patted me on the head comfortingly.

"Thank you, Dad!" I plunged into his arms and squeezed him tight. "It's so nice having a father."

"Why did you take so long?" Christopher asked as he opened the car door for me. "I thought you were just going to take the painting and go."

"I ran into Mom and Dad. They were arguing, so I got distracted for a bit." I sighed. There were a lot of complicated feelings in my heart, but some part of me was delighted. "Chris, it's so nice having a father. I haven't felt love like this in so long. I'm so happy."

"Is Mr. Goldstein good to you?" Christopher asked me a stupid question out of the blue. His gaze was weird, and his brows were knitted tightly together. He seemed to be thinking hard.

"What kind of question is that? Of course, he is. He's my father. Isn't that normal?" I rolled my eyes at him. "It's not weird for him to be good to me unless I'm not his biological daughter. However, I know that's not possible."

When I handed Remington the painting, relief flooded his face. "Yvonne, if you screwed up again this time, I was going to start suspecting that you were deliberately trying to mess things up for me."

I tapped him gently on the shoulder. That was all I could say for now. When he finally put my painting up in his art exhibition, I was sure he would be very surprised.

“As long as you don’t mind it. By the way, don’t be too shocked if some weird stuff happens. Just remember to focus on your art exhibition, got it?”

“Mom!” I yelled after Isabelle, but she did not turn her head back. I was rather disappointed. Ever since Christopher's identity was revealed, there had been a gap between her and me. It was like there was an invisible wall between us that neither of us could cross. “Sigh. Your mother is really stubborn. She never wants to have a proper talk to me about this. Every time I mention it, she gets mad. I don't know what to do either.” Mark sighed lightly. “You tried your best, Dad.” I looked over to the mansion. After Isabelle headed in, I saw her appear in her room on the second floor. She seemed to be looking down at us. Although it was just a glance, I managed to catch the displeasure on her frowned face. Isabelle seemed to dislike it when I got close to Mark. Every time we talked, she had an ugly expression. I could not understand why. There seemed to be more and more secrets revolving around Isabelle, and she was becoming weirder and weirder. The image of the wonderful mother I had in my mind was slowly becoming more foreign to me. After some time, perhaps that memory of her might fade completely and be replaced by the current version of her. Outside the door, the sound of a car honking could be heard. Christopher was urging me to hurry up. I looked down at the time and realized it was already half-past three. I was supposed to pass the painting to Remington by four o'clock. If I did not leave now, he was definitely going to cut ties with me. I raised my head to look at Mark. “Christopher is waiting for you, isn't he?” Mark asked. “Yeah. We are supposed to go meet Remington, a famous artist. The art exhibition is coming up, and I've been invited to help set up.” I turned to look once more at the window of Isabelle's room. She was no longer there anymore. Thank God. If she sees Christopher, it's going to be another round of insults. I really don't want him to hear all that. To be honest, there were times where I tried to think of a way that could please both parties. In the end, I merely came to the conclusion that unless Robert resurrected, that was simply not possible. “Dad, I can't bear to see Mom so sad, but I really don't know what else I can do. She sounded so determined earlier. I understand that she doesn't want to back off, but unfortunately neither will I. I don't mean to be ungrateful and choose love over my own mother. However, Christopher is someone that I could never give up. It doesn't matter what I will lose. Meeting him has been my greatest honor. If it wasn't for him, I might not even be alive right now.” “I understand. You do what you have to. Things will

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On the day of the art exhibition, Remington and Spencer called me several times since I was absent. As hard as I tried, I could not come up with a believable excuse. Eventually, I decided to go with the most overused one; I told them I was sick and had to go to the hospital.

No doubt that it was a cliché, but it worked anyway. Besides, that was the only reason that could explain why I did not attend the event. After putting Christopher's jacket on for him, I worked carefully on his necktie. Tying a tie was no easy feat, so I put in a lot of hours trying to get the knots right.

"Why don't you go to the office with me? After all, as a superior, you can't hide from the company forever. I'm pretty sure that's not how it works," suggested Christopher with a soft smile while he held my hands.

"No, I don't think that's a good idea. I literally know nothing of how the company operates. I mean, what the heck can I even do at a meeting? Take notes? Trust me. Even I can't read my own scribbles." I waved my hand and shot down the idea.

“Fine. Then wait for me at home,” responded Christopher calmly.

“Sure. Having the time to work on my drawings is a blessing.” A smile was plastered over my face as I said those words.

After seeing Christopher off, I went straight back to bed to make up for the sleep I lost the night before.

When I woke up and checked the time, I figured the exhibition was near its end. I was flipping through the channels on the TV when the news popped up.

“After disappearing from the art industry for more than a year because of a series of scandals, new school artist, Crystal Yates, appeared before the public once again at Remington Fowler’s first art exhibition. Not only has the artist’s work, Floral Bloom, won over the majority of the public, but it has also managed to swoon the critics. But is that enough to redeem the artist from her past sins? Only time will tell. What is apparent, though, is that fans of the artist have started to come together again. What happens next...”

I rewound the news to the part where they did a close-up on my work. It was displayed at the most prominent spot at the exhibition, and standing next to it was Crystal smiling at the press.

I straightened my back when I noticed Isabelle at the exhibition. Furrowing my brows at the TV, I wondered why she attended the event with Crystal.

I had planned to take my mother there so that she could see what I had achieved. I wanted her to see my world and be proud of her daughter. That was why I got upset when I saw Crystal take what should have been mine. Standing next to my mother was a fraud showcasing the piece of art that I had worked on for two months.

Agitated, I turned off the TV and started pacing around the house. As much as I wanted to, I could not figure out why my mother went there.

I thought Remington would be the first one to inform me of that. After all, being the upright person that he was, Remington could never stand an injustice like that. If it were not for the fact that the art exhibition was his very first, he would have blown the truth wide open.

Unexpectedly, Spencer was the first one to come to me. He knocked impatiently on my door while I was taking care of the flowers on the balcony. The man burst in as soon as I unlocked the door and questioned, "Why?"

"What are you doing here?" I blinked a few times to make sure my eyes were not playing tricks on me. Then, I looked past Spencer to see if Remington was following behind.

"Don't change the subject. Now tell me why." With his eyes widened, Spencer panted as if he had just experienced something entirely unacceptable to him.

"I'm surprised that you're the first one to come to me after what happened. After all, isn't that what you wanted? Any fool could tell what Crystal was to you."

On the day of the art exhibition, Remington and Spencer called me several times since I was absent. As hard as I tried, I could not come up with a believable excuse. Eventually, I decided to go with the most overused one; I told them I was sick and had to go to the hospital. No doubt that it was a cliché, but it worked anyway. Besides, that was the only reason that could explain why I did not attend the event. After putting Christopher's jacket on for him, I worked carefully on his necktie. Tying a tie was no easy feat, so I put in a lot of hours trying to get the knots right. "Why don't you go to the office with me? After all, as a superior, you can't hide from the company forever. I'm pretty sure that's not how it works," suggested Christopher with a soft smile while he held my hands. "No, I don't think that's a good idea. I literally know nothing of how the company operates. I mean, what the heck can I even do at a meeting? Take notes? Trust me. Even I can't read my own scribbles." I waved my hand and shot down the idea. "Fine. Then wait for me at home," responded Christopher calmly. "Sure. Having the time to work on my drawings is a blessing." A smile was plastered over my face as I said those words. After seeing Christopher off, I went straight back to bed to make up for the sleep I lost the night before. When I woke up and checked the time, I figured the exhibition was near its end. I was flipping through the channels on the TV when the news popped up. "After disappearing from the art industry for more than a year because of a series of scandals, new school artist, Crystal Yates, appeared before the public once again at Remington Fowler's first art exhibition. Not only has the artist's work, Floral Bloom, won over the majority of the public, but it has also managed to swoon the critics. But is that enough to redeem the artist from her past sins? Only time will tell. What is apparent, though, is that fans of the artist have started to come together again. What happens next..." I rewound the news to the part where they did a close-up on

my work. It was displayed at the most prominent spot at the exhibition, and standing next to it was Crystal smiling at the press. I straightened my back when I noticed Isabelle at the exhibition. Furrowing my brows at the TV, I wondered why she attended the event with Crystal. I had planned to take my mother there so that she could see what I had achieved. I wanted her to see my world and be proud of her daughter. That was why I got upset when I saw Crystal take what should have been mine. Standing next to my mother was a fraud showcasing the piece of art that I had worked on for two months. Agitated, I turned off the TV and started pacing around the house. As much as I wanted to, I could not figure out why my mother went there. I thought Remington would be the first one to inform me of that. After all, being the upright person that he was, Remington could never stand an injustice like that. If it were not for the fact that the art exhibition was his very first, he would have blown the truth wide open. Unexpectedly, Spencer was the first one to come to me. He knocked impatiently on my door while I was taking care of the flowers on the balcony. The man burst in as soon as I unlocked the door and questioned, "Why?" "What are you doing here?" I blinked a few times to make sure my eyes were not playing tricks on me. Then, I looked past Spencer to see if Remington was following behind. "Don't change the subject. Now tell me why." With his eyes widened, Spencer panted as if he had just experienced something entirely unacceptable to him. "I'm surprised that you're the first one to come to me after what happened. After all, isn't that what you wanted? Any fool could tell what Crystal was to you."

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I placed my flowers back onto the balcony and almost bumped into Spencer's chest when I turned around.

"Hey, I'm a soon-to-be-married woman, so you better keep your distance. I'm going to be in a lot of trouble if my man saw us this close." I pushed the man away before heading to the kitchen. "Would you like something to drink? Tea? Coffee? Here, you can watch the TV while I go get us something."

"I believe it's no overstatement when I say that Ms. Yates' return was highly anticipated. Even Spencer Lynch welcomed the new school artist with open arms at the entrance to the exhibition. After seeing Ms. Yates' awe-inspiring piece of work, which took her a full year to complete, Mr. Lynch was even more convinced that an artist's talent shouldn't be overlooked just because they made a mistake in the past. The drawing is now in Julian Stewart's hands, waiting to be signed by the man as a symbol of forgiveness. With that, Ms. Yates hoped that the public would give her another chance. The artist had shown remorse and... "

More than anything, I felt stupid for turning on the TV again. It was as if I wanted to spite myself. Crystal was all over the news that day, so I could not help but wonder how much she paid the media for that amount of coverage. It seemed like she really wanted to have a strong comeback.

Seeing how Spencer's face had hardened even more, I swiftly turned the TV off before making my way to the kitchen. "Be right back."

At that moment, all I wanted to do was leave the living room where Spencer was. The man looked so mad that it seemed like he was ready to swallow me whole. Spencer would usually smile like he was the nicest guy in the world, but he looked the total opposite when upset.

"How did your work end up as Crystal's? Did you just hand it to her, or did she trick you into doing it? After following me into the kitchen, Spencer snatched the kettle from my hand to demand my attention.

"Could you please just return the kettle to me first?" From the look in his eyes, I could tell that he was hurt. He probably even felt betrayed.

After letting out a sigh, I explained, "It's complicated. Whatever it is, it's between Crystal and me. Besides, you should be happy about what happened. I mean, she got what she wanted, thanks to you. I imagine that she would be very grateful for all that you've done for her. And who knows, you two might just end up together. That's what you wanted, isn't it?"

"What I wanted was for her to come up with her own piece of work. She should have attended the exhibition with her own work and bravely owned up to her past. From there, she would start anew as an honest artist, not one who takes credit for other people's work. That would be a disgrace to this profession! Do you understand what I'm saying, Yvonne? Why would you give her your work? You made yourself her accomplice. Do you realize that?"

Spencer covered his face in disappointment before continuing, "So no, this is not what I wanted. Not at all! I can't believe this, Yvonne. How did it all turn out this way?"

"I'm not sure I can tell you how to fix this. It is what it is. She wouldn't have made it this far if she didn't have your help. You have no idea how vile and selfish that woman can be. That's just who she is. I told you that you would regret it, didn't I? Crystal made a bet with me just so she could best me again, and she did. I lost my pride after that. Since you promised me that you

wouldn't regret it, I don't see why we have to discuss this any further. I still have things to attend to, so I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

I picked up my bag in the living room and gestured for the man to leave my house.

"I was wrong, and I regret it now. I really do," admitted Spencer in a broken voice before covering his face in shame.

The man finally broke down because he realized that Crystal had betrayed his trust.

Standing in front of the crying man, I was lost for words. At that point, I admitted it was partially my fault, so I promised myself that I would never give in to Crystal ever again.

I placed my flowers back onto the balcony and almost bumped into Spencer's chest when I turned around. "Hey, I'm a soon-to-be-married woman, so you better keep your distance. I'm going to be in a lot of trouble if my man saw us this close." I pushed the man away before heading to the kitchen. "Would you like something to drink? Tea? Coffee? Here, you can watch the TV while I go get us something." "I believe it's no overstatement when I say that Ms. Yates' return was highly anticipated. Even Spencer Lynch welcomed the new school artist with open arms at the entrance to the exhibition. After seeing Ms. Yates' awe-inspiring piece of work, which took her a full year to complete, Mr. Lynch was even more convinced that an artist's talent shouldn't be overlooked just because they made a mistake in the past. The drawing is now in Julian Stewart's hands, waiting to be signed by the man as a symbol of forgiveness. With that, Ms. Yates hoped that the public would give her another chance. The artist had shown remorse and..." "More than anything, I felt stupid for turning on the TV again. It was as if I wanted to spite myself. Crystal was all over the news that day, so I could not help but wonder how much she paid the media for that amount of coverage. It seemed like she really wanted to have a strong comeback. Seeing how Spencer's face had hardened even more, I swiftly turned the TV off before making my way to the kitchen. "Be right back." At that moment, all I wanted to do was leave the living room where Spencer was. The man looked so mad that it seemed like he was ready to swallow me whole. Spencer would usually smile like he was the nicest guy in the world, but he looked the total opposite when upset. "How did your work end up as Crystal's? Did you just hand it to her, or did she trick you into doing it? After following me into the kitchen, Spencer snatched the kettle from my hand to demand my attention. "Could you please just return the kettle to me first?"

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In the end, Remington never came to me. He only asked me a few questions over the phone. The man knew what was going on since he remembered everything I told him the day before. Still, he was slightly surprised when it actually happened. Remington quickly recollected himself before asking me for an explanation.

In response, all I told the man was that nobody could ever take away what truly belonged to me. If they could, it just meant that whatever they took did not really belong to me anyway.

That was what Christopher taught me when he assured me that nobody could take him away from me, no matter how hard they tried.

A cool wind was blowing in the air that evening, bringing the sweet aroma of lily to my room as I listened to the calm chirping of the crickets.

However, engaged in excessive “exercise”, I was drenched in sweat, and my voice had turned hoarse. I could feel the icy coldness on my cheek as Christopher pressed me against the glass window. I could feel his chest against my back as his sweat dripped onto my shoulder. He leaned down to press another kiss on my back, leaving another evidence of his love for me onto my body.

As soon as I turned around to face the man, he greeted me with his warm lips, and the smell of tobacco quickly filled my mouth. His sweet kiss, plus the gentle caressing of his fingers, was almost too much for me. Christopher always knew just how to lift me to cloud nine.

“I love you, Eve. I love you so much!” Christopher whispered those words softly into my ears as he tightened his arms around me.

“It’s Thanksgiving tomorrow, and my mother would love to have dinner with us,” informed Christopher as he washed my back in the shower.

After a moment of silence, I responded to the man with a half-smile. “I’m afraid I can’t. My mother called me three times this afternoon just to remind me about tomorrow’s dinner with her.”

“What about morning? It’s been a while since my mother last saw you, and she really misses you.” Christopher then gave me a peck on the forehead.

“Sure.” To be honest, I was a little afraid to meet with Julia then. I used to have nothing but respect for the woman, the kind that one would have for their mother-in-law, but then things got more complicated than they should be.

Even though I had never met my uncle, knowing that Julia was responsible for his death was enough to make me wary of the woman.

Isabelle told me to meet her at The Continental for our Thanksgiving dinner, which I thought was odd. Why did we not celebrate the holiday at home since her chefs were as good as those at The Continental? However, I decided not to ask her about it in the end. Somehow, the two of us had slowly grown apart, and it felt like we would never get as close as we used to be.

It made me wonder if that was what my mother intended. Instead of talking to me lovingly like she used to do, she started to speak to me in a commanding tone. I was not allowed to question her decision, nor was there any room for discussion.

When I saw Tobey and Crystal sharing the table with my mother, I had to force a smile to greet the two. Then, Isabelle told me that Mark could not come because he was busy. Holding on to my glass as if it was a shield, I remained silent throughout most of the evening.

“Tobey, I believe this young woman next to me needs no introduction. From now on, you’re cousin to a Tanner and a well-known new school artist.” Isabelle chatted with Tobey politely.

“Oh, yes, Mrs. Goldstein. I’m well aware. It’s my honor, cousin. Do let me know if you’re participating in another art exhibition so that I can show my support.” As Tobey entertained Isabelle and Crystal, he would turn to me from time to time as if he was afraid that I would feel left out.

Upset, I pressed my fingers so hard against my glass that they started to turn pale. I could not believe that my mother had set me up.

After a while, my mother excused herself and brought Crystal away with her, leaving me alone with Tobey. Before she went away, she even reminded me to take care of Tobey and show him around Avenport.

“Were you surprised? Seeing how persistent Mrs. Goldstein was, I think you should reconsider my offer, Ms. Tanner.”

In the end, Remington never came to me. He only asked me a few questions over the phone. The man knew what was going on since he remembered everything I told him the day before. Still, he was slightly surprised when it actually happened. Remington quickly recollected himself before asking me for an explanation. In response, all I told the man was that nobody could ever take away what truly belonged to me. If they could, it just meant that whatever they took did not really belong to me anyway. That was what Christopher taught me when he assured me that nobody could take him away from me, no matter how hard they tried. A cool wind was blowing in the air that evening, bringing the sweet aroma of lily to my room as I listened to the calm chirping of the crickets. However, engaged in excessive “exercise”, I was drenched in sweat, and my voice had turned hoarse. I could feel the icy coldness on my cheek as Christopher pressed me against the glass window. I could feel his

chest against my back as his sweat dripped onto my shoulder. He leaned down to press another kiss on my back, leaving another evidence of his love for me onto my body. As soon as I turned around to face the man, he greeted me with his warm lips, and the smell of tobacco quickly filled my mouth. His sweet kiss, plus the gentle caressing of his fingers, was almost too much for me. Christopher always knew just how to lift me to cloud nine. "I love you, Eve. I love you so much!" Christopher whispered those words softly into my ears as he tightened his arms around me. "It's Thanksgiving tomorrow, and my mother would love to have dinner with us," informed Christopher as he washed my back in the shower. After a moment of silence, I responded to the man with a half-smile. "I'm afraid I can't. My mother called me three times this afternoon just to remind me about tomorrow's dinner with her." "What about morning? It's been a while since my mother last saw you, and she really misses you." Christopher then gave me a peck on the forehead. "Sure." To be honest, I was a little afraid to meet with Julia then. I used to have nothing but respect for the woman, the kind that one would have for their mother-in-law, but then things got more complicated than they should be. Even though I had never met my uncle, knowing that Julia was responsible for his death was enough to make me wary of the woman. Isabelle told me to meet her at The Continental for our Thanksgiving dinner, which I thought was odd. Why did we not celebrate the holiday at home since her chefs were as good as those at The Continental? However, I decided not to ask her about it in the end. Somehow, the two of us had slowly grown apart, and it felt like we would never get as close as we used to be. It made me wonder if that was what my mother intended. Instead of talking to me lovingly like she used to do, she started to speak to me in a commanding tone. I was not allowed to question her decision, nor was there any room for discussion. When I saw Tobey and Crystal sharing the table with my mother, I had to force a smile to greet the two. Then, Isabelle told me that Mark could not come because he was busy. Holding on to my glass as if it was a shield, I remained silent throughout most of the evening. "Tobey, I believe this young woman next to me needs no introduction. From now on, you're cousin to a Tanner and a well-known new school artist." Isabelle chatted with Tobey politely. "Oh, yes, Mrs. Goldstein. I'm well aware. It's my honor, cousin. Do let me know if you're participating in another art exhibition so that I can show my support." As Tobey entertained Isabelle and Crystal, he would turn to me from time to time as if he was afraid that I would feel left out. Upset, I pressed my fingers so hard against my glass that they started to turn pale. I could not believe that my mother had set me up. After a while, my mother excused herself and brought Crystal away with her, leaving me alone with Tobey. Before she went away, she even reminded me to take care of Tobey and show him around Avenport. "Were you

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“Am I to marry you and reduce the person I love to my secret lover? Is he to be the despised scandal?” I scoffed at Tobey in disgust.

“I think that’s a little extreme, Ms. Tanner. Besides, you missed my point entirely. What we’re doing is going to benefit both of us. After we get what we want, we can always get a divorce. You need to learn how to fully utilize all the resources available to you. Being stubborn won’t get you anywhere. Trust me.”

Tobey seemed to be irritated by my words because the smile on his face had vanished. “Do you actually think someone as aggressive as your mother would let you back out of this? You didn’t think she would just let this go, did you?”

In response, I narrowed my eyes at the man before sneering, “Maybe you don’t have a code, but I do. Some things are worth standing your ground for. And that’s my mother you’re talking about. Do you think she’s going to do anything that would hurt her own daughter? If you’re looking for an arranged marriage, I’m afraid that you’ve come to the wrong person, pal. I will never consider an arranged marriage, and I couldn’t care less about inheriting the Goldstein fortune. Do you hear me?”

“A typical woman. You have eyes for nothing but love. How boring, stupid, and unattractive of you.” If nothing else, the way Tobey acted as if he knew it all made me sick.

“What use is a man who couldn’t protect the one he loves? You treated her like she was your mistress. That, to me, is a useless man.”

Suddenly, a familiar voice came from behind me. After turning to see Christopher with Dylan in hand, I skipped over excitedly to the two. “Why are you here?”

“We just happened to be having our Thanksgiving dinner here too.” Christopher gave me a warm smile before pulling up a chair next to Tobey. He then raised a brow at the man and asked provokingly, “So, Mr. Osborn, any comments? Do you think I have a point?”

Seemingly offended, Tobey's eyes hardened and narrowed into slits as he glared at Christopher. "I think that's quite an exaggeration, Mr. Lane. Besides, this is between Eve and me. An outsider like you should refrain yourself from meddling in other people's business."

"Outsider?" Christopher and I exchanged looks before laughing out loud together.

"This here is my aunt. She's already married to Uncle Christopher. Don't you know that? It seems like you're the outsider here, mister," stated Dylan as he pointed at Tobey.

"You're only a child, so what do you know? Be quiet when the adults are talking." Tobey tried his best to pretend like he was not embarrassed. "Even if I don't interest you, Ms. Tanner, there's no need to come up with such a cheap lie."

After roping me in with his arm, Christopher cupped my face in his hands and brazenly gave me a wet kiss. Regardless of how many people were watching us, we had the longest kiss before Christopher finally let go of me and turned back to Tobey. "I meant every word I said, and I never joke when it comes to my wife. I take her as seriously as I do to all those who would dare pester my wife."

I shrugged my shoulders casually at the surprised man before adding, "I guess my mother didn't tell you the whole story, huh? I've been married to Chris for a while now. Our marriage is just short of a wedding ceremony. You may not have realized it, but you're actually asking me to break my marriage vow when you proposed to marry me."

"What!" Unable to stay seated any longer, Tobey slapped on the table and jumped to his feet.

At the end of the day, I knew my mother was to be blamed for the misunderstanding, so I apologized to the man. "I'm sorry, but that is the truth. I have no idea what kind of a deal my mother has struck with you or what projects you two are working on, but I cannot marry you. Period. If you ask me, I think you should marry the woman who stuck by your side no matter how bad things got. That's the kind of person you'd want to spend the rest of your life with. She deserves to marry you when you have everything, not live a life separate from yours like a mistress. That's all I have to say, and I hope

you sleep on my advice. I'm sure someone like you is not short of money, but the right life partner only comes once in a while. Don't miss it."

After finishing my sentence, I froze for a while. It was because I realized that I had just told Tobey exactly what Lyle said to me.

"Am I to marry you and reduce the person I love to my secret lover? Is he to be the despised scandal?" I scoffed at Tobey in disgust. "I think that's a little extreme, Ms. Tanner. Besides, you missed my point entirely. What we're doing is going to benefit both of us. After we get what we want, we can always get a divorce. You need to learn how to fully utilize all the resources available to you. Being stubborn won't get you anywhere. Trust me." Tobey seemed to be irritated by my words because the smile on his face had vanished. "Do you actually think someone as aggressive as your mother would let you back out of this? You didn't think she would just let this go, did you?" In response, I narrowed my eyes at the man before sneering, "Maybe you don't have a code, but I do. Some things are worth standing your ground for. And that's my mother you're talking about. Do you think she's going to do anything that would hurt her own daughter? If you're looking for an arranged marriage, I'm afraid that you've come to the wrong person, pal. I will never consider an arranged marriage, and I couldn't care less about inheriting the Goldstein fortune. Do you hear me?" "A typical woman. You have eyes for nothing but love. How boring, stupid, and unattractive of you." If nothing else, the way Tobey acted as if he knew it all made me sick. "What use is a man who couldn't protect the one he loves? You treated her like she was your mistress. That, to me, is a useless man." Suddenly, a familiar voice came from behind me. After turning to see Christopher with Dylan in hand, I skipped over excitedly to the two. "Why are you here?" "We just happened to be having our Thanksgiving dinner here too." Christopher gave me a warm smile before pulling up a chair next to Tobey. He then raised a brow at the man and asked provokingly, "So, Mr. Osborn, any comments? Do you think I have a point?" Seemingly offended, Tobey's eyes hardened and narrowed into slits as he glared at Christopher. "I think that's quite an exaggeration, Mr. Lane. Besides, this is between Eve and me. An outsider like you should refrain yourself from meddling in other people's business." "Outsider?" Christopher and I exchanged looks before laughing out loud together. "This here is my aunt. She's already married to Uncle Christopher. Don't you know that? It seems like you're the outsider here, mister," stated Dylan as he pointed at Tobey. "You're only a child, so what do you know? Be quiet when the adults are talking." Tobey tried his best to pretend like he was not embarrassed. "Even if I don't interest you, Ms. Tanner, there's no need to come up with such a

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Thinking, Tobey stared at me for a while before shifting his focus back onto Christopher. “Your family may be influential in Avenport, but you're far from being almighty. Even though my family is no match for yours, I imagine that you'd be less arrogant when you speak to me after the Goldsteins become my in-laws.”

“If I heard you right, you mean to tell me that not only are you insisting on marrying my wife, but you're also planning to get rid of her lawfully-married husband? Wow, I can't say I've ever met a third wheel that forthcoming,” ridiculed Christopher.

Seeing how my husband got a little carried away, I deliberately coughed a few times to interrupt him. Having nothing against Tobey, I did not think it was necessary to belittle him like that. After all, the man lived in Dellmoor and had no business in Avenport.

“Mr. Osborn, I hope that you’ll at least consider what I’ve told you. As for the tour around Avenport, I don’t really go out much, so I’m not the right person to...”

“I can introduce you to some of the best tour guides in town, and I promise you that they know their way around like the back of their hands. Heck, I’ll even pay for them. Trust me. You don’t want my wife as your guide. So, what do you say?” That was not the first time Christopher had interrupted me, and I just wished I could shove something into that man’s mouth to shut him up.

In response, Tobey snorted frustratedly before storming off.

After successfully dissuading Tobey, I rolled my eyes at Christopher. “You just can’t be nice, can you? Was that really necessary? All those mean words.”

“Why should I play nice with the man who’s trying to marry my wife?” Christopher exhaled sharply in disbelief. “You should learn to be meaner to men like that. Your polite manners clearly weren’t doing much before I got here. Had I not arrived in time, would you have dated the man like your mother wanted?”

“Of course not! Don’t be stupid!” I reached out and pinched Christopher on his belly for asking the idiotic question.

“Aunt Eve, it’s Thanksgiving, and you haven’t shown your appreciation for me yet. I helped with a few words too just now.” Dylan walked up to me with a Chesire Cat grin.

“Oh, I haven’t forgotten what you did for me, Dylan. That was really brave of you. Thank you.” I gave the boy a peck on the cheek before he ran off in embarrassment. Then, I looked around The Continental and wondered how Christopher managed to find me. “How did you know where I was?”

Unbeknownst to me was the fact that Christopher had already installed a tracking device in my phone and that Lucas told him about Isabelle’s plan to set up a blind date.

“I just happened to pass by. It was all by chance.” After diverting my question. Christopher took my hand and started walking out of the building. “Your mother intended for you to have a date night, so I say we do exactly that. Let’s go for a date.”

“Seriously? I mean, we see each other every single day.”

“I’m dead serious. You know how dating works, right? First, we go shopping. Then, it’s the movies. After that, we kiss and make love. I say we take the full package. I even got us a new water bed that I know you’re going to love.” Christopher looked as excited as a kid on Christmas day when he laid out his plan for me.

I found it hard to believe that the man did not plan everything from the beginning.

Chuckling, I wrapped my arms around the man and squeezed him as tightly as I could. Suddenly, I noticed a group of journalists just ahead of us. It was as if they were waiting for someone of great importance.

Christopher and I were about to take a detour when I saw Isabelle and Crystal walking out of a building hand-in-hand. Immediately, the journalists rushed forward and completely surrounded the two.

“Ms. Yates, your work has been critically-acclaimed. What inspired you to draw the ‘Floral Bloom’? Rumor said that Ms. Yvonne was absent at the exhibition because she wanted you to have the spotlight to have a chance at redemption. Is that true? And why is Mrs. Goldstein with you at the exhibition? Does that mean Ms. Yvonne and you are on good terms now?”

I stopped to stare at Crystal, who could barely keep her eyes open with all the camera lights flashing at her. First, she stole my hard work to redeem herself, and then she got me involved in her self-woven narrative to generate publicity. I wondered if there was no end to the woman’s shamelessness.

Thinking, Tobey stared at me for a while before shifting his focus back onto Christopher. “Your family may be influential in Avenport, but you’re far from being almighty. Even though my family is no match for yours, I imagine that you’d be less arrogant when you speak to me after the Goldsteins become my in-laws.” “If I heard you right, you mean to tell me that not only are you insisting on marrying my wife, but you’re also planning to get rid of her lawfully-married husband? Wow, I can’t say I’ve ever met a third wheel that forthcoming,” ridiculed Christopher. Seeing how my husband got a little carried away, I deliberately coughed a few times to interrupt him. Having nothing against Tobey, I did not think it was necessary to belittle him like that. After all, the man lived in Dellmoor and had no business in Avenport. “Mr. Osborn, I hope that you’ll at least consider what I’ve told you. As for the tour

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"I'm sure everyone now knows that Aunt Isabelle is Yvonne's mom. Although Yvonne isn't Uncle Nathan's daughter, I still grew up with her, and Yvonne had been nothing but kind to me. I feel sorry for the things I've done in the past, and I'm happy that Yvonne chose to forgive me. I could never have finished the painting if Yvonne didn't encourage me to do so. I'm glad that I have the opportunity to talk to all of you here." Crystal held onto Isabelle's arm with a calm expression.

"Exactly. Crystal is a good kid, and those rumors about her were too exaggerated. People misunderstood her because they didn't know her well. I've been spending time with Crystal ever since I came back, and I could tell that she's a kind-hearted young girl. It's just that everyone expects her to be perfect because she's like an idol figure to the public."

Isabelle continued saying with a smile, "I believe it's more important for her to learn from her mistakes. It's unfair to dismiss her based on the rumors alone. I believe she will be a great artist in the future."

"Mrs. Goldstein, do you mean that Ms. Goldstein has forgiven Ms. Yates for snatching her husband and her spot? Isn't that a stretch?" one of the journalists asked a provocative question.

"Not at all. Anyone who came in contact with Crystal would know that she's not a bad person. Besides, evidence can be falsified, and the truth can be fabricated too. Things are not always what they seem to be on the surface. Do you understand me?"

Isabelle's expression darkened as she made it clear that she was defending Crystal.

While I stood there listening to her praises for Crystal, the glint in my eyes dimmed bit by bit. Those things that she mentioned were all traumatic wounds that I never dared to bring up. But somehow, she made them sound irrelevant.

That made me wonder if those painful experiences were even worth going through. I was never a vengeful person, but I was still human. Even if I chose not to take revenge, that wouldn't mean that I'd somehow stop hating on Crystal. Moreover, I would never forgive her.

"Isn't it weird to see Isabelle's attitude toward Crystal? It doesn't seem like her to be this forgiving. At least, she wasn't that merciful when she was trying to bring down the Tanner family." It was rare for Christopher to analyze the situation with a frown instead of offering me some comforting words.

"So you noticed it too. There's something I didn't tell you. I helped Yvette with something previously, and she told me about this. Back then, I thought she was trying to sow discord between Mom and me. However, reality proves that she was right. Mom really adores Crystal," I said with a gloomy expression.

"So, Isabelle was the one who asked you to give the painting to Crystal." Christopher frowned in confusion. "Something is fishy."

I had never told Christopher about this, and I responded with a nod. "You're surprised, aren't you? I find it hard to believe that she's treating Crystal this well. It feels like I can no longer understand my mom."

"Something does not feel right. Could it be..." Christopher suddenly growled in a low voice. He turned around and looked at me. Upon seeing my gloomy expression, he swallowed his words and patted me on the head. "Perhaps I'm reading too much into this situation. The chances of that are close to zero."

"What?" I was puzzled.

"Nothing." He shook his head. "Your mom treated you well during your childhood, didn't she?"

"She did. Those days made up my happiest memories."

With that, the crowd dispersed, and my mood to go out on a date was gone too. Mom's attitude this time was no different from Nathan defending Crystal back then. The only difference was that Nathan slandered me, but Mom didn't.

Both of them adored Crystal so much.

But why Crystal?

I had been asking myself this question countless times.

"I'm sure everyone now knows that Aunt Isabelle is Yvonne's mom. Although Yvonne isn't Uncle Nathan's daughter, I still grew up with her, and Yvonne had been nothing but kind to me. I feel sorry for the things I've done in the past, and I'm happy that Yvonne chose to forgive me. I could never have finished the painting if Yvonne didn't encourage me to do so. I'm glad that I have the opportunity to talk to all of you here." Crystal held onto Isabelle's arm with a calm expression. "Exactly. Crystal is a good kid, and those rumors about her were too exaggerated. People misunderstood her because they didn't know her well. I've been spending time with Crystal ever since I came back, and I could tell that she's a kind-hearted young girl. It's just that everyone expects her to be perfect because she's like an idol figure to the public." Isabelle continued saying with a smile, "I believe it's more important for her to learn from her mistakes. It's unfair to dismiss her based on the rumors alone. I believe she will be a great artist in the future." "Mrs. Goldstein, do you mean that Ms. Goldstein has forgiven Ms. Yates for snatching her husband and her spot? Isn't that a stretch?" one of the journalists asked a provocative question. "Not at all. Anyone who came in contact with Crystal would know that she's not a bad person. Besides, evidence can be falsified, and the truth can be fabricated too. Things are not always what they seem to be on the surface. Do you understand me?" Isabelle's expression darkened as she made it clear that she was defending Crystal. While I stood there listening to her praises for Crystal, the glint in my eyes dimmed bit by bit. Those things that she mentioned were all traumatic wounds that I never dared to bring up. But somehow, she made them sound irrelevant. That made me wonder if those painful experiences were even worth going through. I was never a vengeful person, but I was still human. Even if I chose not to take revenge, that wouldn't mean that I'd somehow stop hating on Crystal. Moreover, I would never forgive her. "Isn't it weird to see Isabelle's attitude toward Crystal? It doesn't seem like her to be this forgiving. At least, she wasn't that merciful when she was trying to bring down the Tanner family." It was rare for Christopher to analyze the situation with a frown instead of offering me some comforting words. "So you noticed it too. There's something I didn't tell you. I helped Yvette with something previously, and she told me about this. Back then, I thought she was trying to sow discord between Mom and me. However, reality proves that she was right. Mom really adores Crystal," I said with a gloomy expression. "So, Isabelle was the one who asked you to give the painting to Crystal." Christopher frowned in confusion. "Something is fishy." I had never told Christopher about this, and I responded with a nod. "You're surprised, aren't you? I find it hard to believe that she's treating Crystal

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The Bentley was speeding ahead, and as it passed by me, a strong gust of wind followed behind. I coughed a little due to the dust that came with it. The Bentley made a turn before pulling over in front of me. The window was rolled down, revealing Isabelle's angry face.

She was glaring at me and Christopher's clasped hands while her cheeks were flushed from anger. “Did you not take my words to heart?”

“Mom!” I was already upset with what happened earlier, and her scolding made me feel worse. “I—”

“You don't have to explain. I don't want to do this with you in public. Get in,” Isabelle pushed open the car door and instructed.

“Mrs. Goldstein...”

“I don't want to hear a word from you. Nothing you say can change the fact that your mother killed my brother. Christopher, please let go of my daughter's hand.” Isabelle's anger was so overwhelming that it felt like it could swallow me alive.

I wanted to let go of his hand, but he tightened his grip on mine. “Mrs. Goldstein, do you have to do this? Why are you forcing Eve to do as you wish? Can't you just let her be happy? She's your daughter, after all. Shouldn't her happiness come first?”

Christopher was holding my hand, and his tone sounded determined.

“Shut up. Are you implying that she has to marry you in order to be happy? What makes you think you’re in the place to say such a thing? Your mom is a murderer. Why would I let my daughter marry you?” Isabelle stepped out of the car after noticing that I wasn’t getting in and attempted to shove me into the car. When I didn’t want to, she tried to hit me but to no avail as Christopher immediately stopped her.

Isabelle then shifted her attention to Christopher and hit him instead. However, he didn’t resist and merely shielded me. When my head almost hit the car door, he reached out his hand to shield it.

I shook my head at him, gesturing for him to keep silent since Mom was still mad. I knew how harsh her words could be, and I didn’t want Christopher to be embarrassed. Hence, I got inside the car. Isabelle immediately shut the door behind me.

“Christopher, let me tell you this. I will never forget what Julia did to Robert. If you want to marry my daughter, then you better ask your mom to return Robert to me.” Isabelle stood by the car door as she glared at Christopher. A cold aura surrounded her.

“Mrs. Goldstein, is there no ?” Christopher studied her expression. He had found out a lot of things about Isabelle, and she seemed different from the person he thought she was. It was as if she had been faking it all this while.

The impatient and hot-tempered woman standing in front of him was the total opposite of how he thought she ought to be, and he wondered what she had in mind.

Is she trying to make people think that she’s a malicious woman?

Before he could come up with a conclusion, Christopher would never tell a thing to Yvonne. He had to be extra careful in dealing with this woman since she was Yvonne’s mother.

“Other way?” Isabelle laughed with a hand covering her mouth. “Sure, there’s one. Just bring your mom to Century Tower, and let me push her down from the highest floor. If you can accept this, I’ll agree to let you marry my daughter. It’s your call. I think you wouldn’t mind me killing Julias since you’re so desperate to marry my daughter.”

“Mom!” I interrupted their conversation as I could no longer bear to hear it. Then, I looked pleadingly at Christopher, begging him to stop talking. After all, there would be no winner in this situation.

I used to think that Mom would move on with time, and things would take a better turn someday. But at that moment, I realized that I had been too naive. Mom would never give in, and she had never planned to do so.

The Bentley was speeding ahead, and as it passed by me, a strong gust of wind followed behind. I coughed a little due to the dust that came with it. The Bentley made a turn before pulling over in front of me. The window was rolled down, revealing Isabelle's angry face. She was glaring at me and Christopher's clasped hands while her cheeks were flushed from anger. “Did you not take my words to heart?” “Mom!” I was already upset with what happened earlier, and her scolding made me feel worse. “I—” “You don't have to explain. I don't want to do this with you in public. Get in,” Isabelle pushed open the car door and instructed. “Mrs. Goldstein...” “I don't want to hear a word from you. Nothing you say can change the fact that your mother killed my brother. Christopher, please let go of my daughter's hand.” Isabelle's anger was so overwhelming that it felt like it could swallow me alive. I wanted to let go of his hand, but he tightened his grip on mine. “Mrs. Goldstein, do you have to do this? Why are you forcing Eve to do as you wish? Can't you just let her be happy? She's your daughter, after all. Shouldn't her happiness come first?” Christopher was holding my hand, and his tone sounded determined. “Shut up. Are you implying that she has to marry you in order to be happy? What makes you think you're in the place to say such a thing? Your mom is a murderer. Why would I let my daughter marry you?” Isabelle stepped out of the car after noticing that I wasn't getting in and attempted to shove me into the car. When I didn't want to, she tried to hit me but to no avail as Christopher immediately stopped her. Isabelle then shifted her attention to Christopher and hit him instead. However, he didn't resist and merely shielded me. When my head almost hit the car door, he reached out his hand to shield it. I shook my head at him, gesturing for him to keep silent since Mom was still mad. I knew how harsh her words could be, and I didn't want Christopher to be embarrassed. Hence, I got inside the car. Isabelle immediately shut the door behind me. “Christopher, let me tell you this. I will never forget what Julia did to Robert. If you want to marry my daughter, then you better ask your mom to return Robert to me.” Isabelle stood by the car door as she glared at Christopher. A cold aura surrounded her. “Mrs. Goldstein, is there no ?” Christopher studied her expression. He had found out a lot of things about Isabelle, and she seemed different from the person he thought she was. It

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

I already knew that when I accidentally listened in on Mom and Dad's conversation that day. After seeing how resolute she was about the matter with Christopher, I realized that she would never compromise.

I felt a little lost. Why was Mom acting so differently ever since she returned?

Crystal seemed to be the only one who was benefitting from this. She got everything she wanted including a promising future ahead of her. Meanwhile, I was once again living in her shadows.

"Get out!" Upon returning to the Goldstein residence, Isabelle pulled me out of the car. She was trembling in anger as she grabbed my arm, and her nails were digging into my flesh.

"Mom, it hurts!" I quickened my footsteps to catch up with her.

We arrived at the living room, and Isabelle suddenly slapped me hard on the face. Instantly, my cheek went numb.

I covered my cheek as I looked at Isabelle in disbelief. This was the first time she hit me this hard. However, she was still not done yet. Raising her hand, she slapped me again across the other cheek.

“How many times have I told you to stay away from Christopher? He’s the son of our enemy. Julia killed your Uncle Robert! You told me to give you more time to digest this, but you’re seeing him in secret! Did you not understand a word I told you?” Isabelle yelled at me.

I was still dumbfounded at the fact that my mother just slapped me twice.

“Yvonne, what the hell do you want? Are you not devastated over your Uncle Robert’s death? He’s my elder brother, and he died because Julia pushed him down the building! Do you know how heartbroken I was to see his body? I gave you my advice and told you how I feel, but what did you do? Are you trying to drive me crazy?”

Isabelle suddenly started coughing violently. She covered her mouth, but her coughing didn’t stop, and she bent over as she did so, seeming like she was about to cough her lungs out.

“Mom, what’s wrong? Please don’t get too angry... You have to take care of yourself...” I hurried over to help her up.

“Get lost!” Isabelle shoved me away. I staggered backward and hit the coffee table. As a result, the hot water the servant had just prepared spilled on my hand, and my face contorted in pain.

“That’s what you get for feigning kindness. I’m sure you wish that I never returned. If that were the case, you could’ve been living happily with Julia’s son already. Do you think I don’t know what you’re thinking?” Isabelle accused as she got hold of Crystal’s hand instead.

“Mom, how could you think of me this way? How could you accuse me like that? I’m your daughter. It breaks my heart to hear that.” I felt a chill running down my spine when I heard her accusations. She was my mother, and I loved her so much that I only wanted to fix my relationship with her and go back to how things used to be. Yet, in her heart, I was such a bad daughter.

“Breaks your heart? I think your heart breaks at the thought that you can’t be with Christopher instead.” Isabelle sneered, not even noticing the blister on my hand. “I’ve made myself clear today. You can never see Christopher again. Do you hear me?”

“Mom, can you stop making things difficult for me? Please!” My eyes turned red as I shook my head.

“Tell me that you won’t be seeing Christopher or anyone from the Lane family again.” Isabelle took a feather duster out of nowhere and whipped me with it.

She kept yelling with each whip, “Tell me you won’t see Christopher again and keep in contact with them. Tell me...”

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