

Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 641-650

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

I gritted my teeth and kept silent as she continued whipping me with the feather duster. She refused to stop even when she was exhausted, and all I could do was stand there helplessly with tears welled up in my eyes.

Later on, someone walked over and took the feather duster away from Mom; it was Lucas. He shielded me and yelled at her, "Aunt Isabelle, this is way out of line. Are you trying to kill her?"

Isabelle threw the feather duster away. Noticing that I was still refusing to say a word, she sneered. "Yvonne, that's all I have to say for today. If you still insist to be with Christopher, I'll disown you."

"Aunt Isabelle, please don't get angry." Crystal finally spoke up after watching silently from the sidelines. She walked to Isabelle and took her hand before smiling smugly at me. "Yvonne, why don't you apologize to Aunt Isabelle already? Stop being so stubborn. You should know that Christopher is our enemy, and you shouldn't be choosing the enemy over your mother."

"You don't have to do this. I'm sure she never respected me as her mother. If she loves the Lane family so much, she can choose to be their daughter instead," Isabelle said coldly.

"Aunt Isabelle, Yvonne just needs more time to process this. After all, the Lane family is so influential here in Avenport. Her status will skyrocket after she marries into their family. After all, Yvonne suffered so much in the past. It's only normal for her to be reluctant to let go of this golden opportunity. Just give her a few more days, and I'm sure she would be able to think more rationally. Am I right, Yvonne?"

Crystal winked at me, gesturing for me to just play along. However, her words were full of sarcasm and mockery. I could even see the smugness hidden in her eyes as though she found this amusing.

"Yvonne, you should know that you're now the eldest daughter of the Goldstein family. Men will be lining up for you. Why do you have to be so obsessed with Christopher? Anyway, why don't you consider Mr. Osborn instead? He's a capable guy, and I know there's a lot of women interested in him. Aunt Isabelle took a lot of effort to pick the right guy for you, so you should be more appreciative."

“Crystal, I think you shouldn’t be interfering with our family matters,” Lucas interrupted Crystal’s words as he helped me up.

“I-I was trying to help!” Crystal pursed her lips with a pitiful look.

“Lucas! Who are you to interfere when I’m lecturing my daughter? Is this how you treat a guest? Where are your manners?” Isabelle scolded in a low voice.

“Aunt Isabelle, isn’t it obvious that I’m more polite than Ms. Yates? At least, I’m not as shameless as she is...”

I tugged Lucas’ arm lightly, gesturing for him to stop. At that moment, I felt pain all over my body, especially my back. However, the pain was overwhelmed by the numb feeling in my heart. What did I do to deserve this?

If what I did was wrong, what is the right thing to do?

“Aunt Isabelle, I’m sorry. I hope you don’t mind me interfering. I just didn’t want to see you and Yvonne fighting.” Crystal put on a piteous look.

“You did the right thing, Crystal. If only she’s as understanding and considerate as you are. It would have saved me a lot of trouble.” Isabelle sighed as she took Crystal’s hand. Her expression softened a little as she continued, “I’ll try to pick someone for you too. Just tell me if you have anyone in mind.”

Almost immediately, Isabelle turned around and shot me a cold glare. “You should learn from Crystal. Also, you’re grounded from now on. You can’t leave the house until you’ve thought things through.”

“Yvonne, just take this time to process what Aunt Isabelle said to you. I hope you won’t make her angry again. Everything Aunt Isabelle did was for your good.” Crystal raised her chin smugly.

Seeing them finishing each other’s sentences, I felt like an outsider once again. My sorrow turned into anger in that instant, and I could no longer contain it.

“Mom, you’re so fond of Crystal. I just want to ask you one thing. Do you prefer someone who listens to you and says words of flattery instead of your own daughter?”

I gritted my teeth and kept silent as she continued whipping me with the feather duster. She refused to stop even when she was exhausted, and all I could do was stand there helplessly with tears welled up in my eyes. Later on, someone walked over and took the feather duster away from Mom; it was Lucas. He shielded me and yelled at her, "Aunt Isabelle, this is way out of line. Are you trying to kill her?" Isabelle threw the feather duster away. Noticing that I was still refusing to say a word, she sneered. "Yvonne, that's all I have to say for today. If you still insist to be with Christopher, I'll disown you." "Aunt Isabelle, please don't get angry." Crystal finally spoke up after watching silently from the sidelines. She walked to Isabelle and took her hand before smiling smugly at me. "Yvonne, why don't you apologize to Aunt Isabelle already? Stop being so stubborn. You should know that Christopher is our enemy, and you shouldn't be choosing the enemy over your mother." "You don't have to do this. I'm sure she never respected me as her mother. If she loves the Lane family so much, she can choose to be their daughter instead," Isabelle said coldly. "Aunt Isabelle, Yvonne just needs more time to process this. After all, the Lane family is so influential here in Avenport. Her status will skyrocket after she marries into their family. After all, Yvonne suffered so much in the past. It's only normal for her to be reluctant to let go of this golden opportunity. Just give her a few more days, and I'm sure she would be able to think more rationally. Am I right, Yvonne?" Crystal winked at me, gesturing for me to just play along. However, her words were full of sarcasm and mockery. I could even see the smugness hidden in her eyes as though she found this amusing. "Yvonne, you should know that you're now the eldest daughter of the Goldstein family. Men will be lining up for you. Why do you have to be so obsessed with Christopher? Anyway, why don't you consider Mr. Osborn instead? He's a capable guy, and I know there's a lot of women interested in him. Aunt Isabelle took a lot of effort to pick the right guy for you, so you should be more appreciative." "Crystal, I think you shouldn't be interfering with our family matters," Lucas interrupted Crystal's words as he helped me up. "I-I was trying to help!" Crystal pursed her lips with a pitiful look. "Lucas! Who are you to interfere when I'm lecturing my daughter? Is this how you treat a guest? Where are your manners?" Isabelle scolded in a low voice. "Aunt Isabelle, isn't it obvious that I'm more polite than Ms. Yates? At least, I'm not as shameless as she is..." I tugged Lucas' arm lightly, gesturing for him to stop. At that moment, I felt pain all over my body, especially my back. However, the pain was overwhelmed by the numb feeling in my heart. What did I do to deserve this? If what I did was wrong, what is the right thing to do? "Aunt Isabelle, I'm sorry. I hope you don't mind me interfering. I just didn't want to see you and Yvonne fighting." Crystal put on a piteous look. "You did the right thing, Crystal. If only she's as understanding and considerate as you are. It would

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“Do you even hear yourself? Are you out of your mind?” Isabelle bellowed.

“Yeah, maybe I am. For some reason, Crystal always ends up using the people I love to hurt me. You're my mother, for Pete's sake, and even you treats me like this?” My mother used to sing lullabies to me when I was a kid. She was a gentle soul, but that part of her seemed to be dead.

“Christopher has gotten to you, hasn't he?” Isabelle raised her hand at me again, but Lucas stepped forward to protect me. However, I went around him. This time, I wouldn't back down anymore.

“That should be my line. Crystal has gotten to you. You fell for her cheap tricks. This is our problem, not hers. She's just an outsider. Do you have any idea how much it hurts seeing you take her side when she mocks me?”

I pointed at the painting on the wall and shouted painfully, “Mom, do you have any idea how much I wanted you to come with me to the exhibit? I wanted you to witness my world and my glory, but what did you do? You actually asked me to give my glory up to someone who's not even family! And without any reason! Do you know how much that hurts?”

“I told you I have my reasons.” Isabelle was fidgeting, but she was still looking at me coldly.

“Yeah, so? That doesn't mean it wouldn't break my heart.” I closed my eyes to calm down and raised my head as I took a deep breath. In the end, I said, “I think we need some time to cool off. We'll talk about this when we can deal with this calmly.”

I moved out of the Goldstein residence that afternoon. Since I didn't want to worsen my relationship with Isabelle, I went to the mansion she bought for me instead of my own house. Lucas helped me put my stuff in the trunk, while a servant gave me my handbag. Before I left, I looked at the mansion one last time.

Isabelle wasn't there, but that b*tch was. Crystal was leaning against the gates, waving at me smugly. "That's a bit too far, don't you think? Isabelle is crushed. And even if you don't care about her, you should think for yourself. Once you leave, it won't be easy for you to come back."

Did I go too far? Perhaps. But I ignored her mockery and only sneered at her.

After I came to the mansion, I turned my phone on and saw a lot of missed calls from Christopher. I wondered if I should call him back. In the end, however, I only told him everything was fine. Then, I put my phone down and went to the bed, exhausted.

A while later, I could vaguely feel someone pulling my blanket down before rubbing some salve on my back's wound carefully. It felt scorching at first, but eventually, a cool sensation ran down my spine. I wanted to turn around, but someone was pressing down on my back.

"Don't move. I'm still not done yet," Christopher whispered.

"How did you know I'm here?" I lay on the bed and let Christopher rub the salve on all my injuries. My arms, back, and even my legs were painted with red, ugly welts. Although it wasn't very painful when I was hit, when Christopher was rubbing that salve, I almost cried out in agony.

"Lucas told me." Christopher looked tense, obviously worried about me, but also furious about what happened.

"I didn't know you guys are frien... Ow, ow, ow! Go softer, will you?" Christopher hit an especially sore spot, and that turned on the waterworks.

"Oh, now you feel it, huh? Then you should have dodged it in the first place." After he was done, Christopher held me up and hugged me carefully, avoiding my wounds.

"It's not really painful. It's just..." Before I could continue further, I noticed the dark look looming over Christopher's face. I thought it was better to change

the topic, or he might explode in fury. "I just didn't expect Mom to go that far. I've never seen her looking so angry, so I thought I'd just let her vent. Chris, I think I need to see Julia. I have to know the truth, or I might lose sleep over this."

"Do you even hear yourself? Are you out of your mind?" Isabelle bellowed. "Yeah, maybe I am. For some reason, Crystal always ends up using the people I love to hurt me. You're my mother, for Pete's sake, and even you treats me like this?" My mother used to sing lullabies to me when I was a kid. She was a gentle soul, but that part of her seemed to be dead. "Christopher has gotten to you, hasn't he?" Isabelle raised her hand at me again, but Lucas stepped forward to protect me. However, I went around him. This time, I wouldn't back down anymore. "That should be my line. Crystal has gotten to you. You fell for her cheap tricks. This is our problem, not hers. She's just an outsider. Do you have any idea how much it hurts seeing you take her side when she mocks me?" I pointed at the painting on the wall and shouted painfully, "Mom, do you have any idea how much I wanted you to come with me to the exhibit? I wanted you to witness my world and my glory, but what did you do? You actually asked me to give my glory up to someone who's not even family! And without any reason! Do you know how much that hurts?" "I told you I have my reasons." Isabelle was fidgeting, but she was still looking at me coldly. "Yeah, so? That doesn't mean it wouldn't break my heart." I closed my eyes to calm down and raised my head as I took a deep breath. In the end, I said, "I think we need some time to cool off. We'll talk about this when we can deal with this calmly." I moved out of the Goldstein residence that afternoon. Since I didn't want to worsen my relationship with Isabelle, I went to the mansion she bought for me instead of my own house. Lucas helped me put my stuff in the trunk, while a servant gave me my handbag. Before I left, I looked at the mansion one last time. Isabelle wasn't there, but that b*tch was. Crystal was leaning against the gates, waving at me smugly. "That's a bit too far, don't you think? Isabelle is crushed. And even if you don't care about her, you should think for yourself. Once you leave, it won't be easy for you to come back." Did I go too far? Perhaps. But I ignored her mockery and only sneered at her. After I came to the mansion, I turned my phone on and saw a lot of missed calls from Christopher. I wondered if I should call him back. In the end, however, I only told him everything was fine. Then, I put my phone down and went to the bed, exhausted. A while later, I could vaguely feel someone pulling my blanket down before rubbing some salve on my back's wound carefully. It felt scorching at first, but eventually, a cool sensation ran down my spine. I wanted to turn around, but someone was pressing down on my back. "Don't move. I'm still not done yet," Christopher whispered. "How did you know

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The name Robert had always been alien to me. I didn't have any memory of him, and barely anyone brought him up when I was a kid. After Isabelle's departure, nobody talked about him anymore. The only thing I know about my mysterious uncle was that he used to be a business genius.

However, one thing didn't add up. Isabelle said that Robert's business failed and was acquired back when the Scotts were at their zenith. If that was true, that would mean that he was no business genius. After all, if he was, he wouldn't have run the company to the ground, nor would he commit suicide. I reckoned that something more must be going on.

Before we head over to the Lane residence, Christopher called his family behind my back, thinking that I wouldn't know. I found out since I was on the balcony. I knew he was trying to make the relationship work, and he was worried I might argue with Julia again. He kept convincing Julia it was fine, and I felt sorry for him.

He was a proud, successful man, but he had to deal with all this bullsh*t because of me.

Sometimes, I thought I've failed him. He gave me what I wanted most: love and career. But I couldn't even give him a simple love. Instead, he had to deal with all the troubles my mother and his mother were throwing around just so our relationship wouldn't be ruined. If he didn't do that, he wouldn't be able to fulfill his promise of giving me a grand wedding.

I didn't really mind though. I could do with or without the wedding since I already had the best things in life. The ceremony could be canceled and I couldn't care less. Although someone might gossip or laugh at me, it was still not a concern to me. The most important thing was to be happy.

I used to dream of standing at the receptionist, receiving all the congratulations from the guests, but over time, I thought that was a silly dream. Now, all I wanted was Christopher. As long as he was there, I was okay with anything.

Nonetheless, I still couldn't go against my mother's wishes.

It was a sleepless night, so I turned around to look at him. He lost his arrogance when he was asleep, and it was replaced with a childlike smile. He was hugging me tightly, as if he was worried I might disappear if he let me go.

I huddled closer and pecked his lips. "I'll keep walking this path no matter how hard it is, Chris, so don't worry. Not even death can stop us, so there's nothing to be afraid of.

Being in a relationship was an understatement for the bond we shared. This wasn't a rom-com in the eighties, nor was it a summer romance flick. We went through life and death, so we were a part of each other's lives. Taking us apart would be akin to killing us.

I felt a cool sensation running down my spine when I woke up the next morning. Apparently, Christopher had rubbed some salve on me. I went around the living room to see if he was there, but he was already gone. In the end, I went to get some gifts, though it took me some time to pick the best one. When I came back, Christopher's car was already in front of my house, so I went up to it. There were a few gift boxes in the backseat, so I knew Christopher went for a spot of shopping earlier as well.

"Why didn't you take me with you?" I shook my gift. "We could have gone together, but now we've spent unnecessary money."

"You looked like you could use some sleep, so I didn't wake you up." Christopher leaned over and gave me a deep good morning kiss.

When we got to the Lane residence, we saw a car coming out of it. As we crossed, I saw who the driver was. She looked cold, and she was holding a

cigarette between her fingers. Her dress was bright red, a perfect pair for her palpable fury.

I jumped up, banged my head against the roof, and plopped back down. Agitated, I tried to yank the door a few times only to find that it was locked.

“What is it?” Christopher stepped on the brakes and stopped the car beside a flowerbed.

I quickly opened the door and got out so I could catch up to the car I saw earlier, but it was already long gone. Despondent, I turned around and grabbed Christopher’s arms. “I saw Isabelle. She was in the car.”

The name Robert had always been alien to me. I didn't have any memory of him, and barely anyone brought him up when I was a kid. After Isabelle's departure, nobody talked about him anymore. The only thing I know about my mysterious uncle was that he used to be a business genius. However, one thing didn't add up. Isabelle said that Robert's business failed and was acquired back when the Scotts were at their zenith. If that was true, that would mean that he was no business genius. After all, if he was, he wouldn't have run the company to the ground, nor would he commit suicide. I reckoned that something more must be going on. Before we head over to the Lane residence, Christopher called his family behind my back, thinking that I wouldn't know. I found out since I was on the balcony. I knew he was trying to make the relationship work, and he was worried I might argue with Julia again. He kept convincing Julia it was fine, and I felt sorry for him. He was a proud, successful man, but he had to deal with all this bullsh*t because of me. Sometimes, I thought I've failed him. He gave me what I wanted most: love and career. But I couldn't even give him a simple love. Instead, he had to deal with all the troubles my mother and his mother were throwing around just so our relationship wouldn't be ruined. If he didn't do that, he wouldn't be able to fulfill his promise of giving me a grand wedding. I didn't really mind though. I could do with or without the wedding since I already had the best things in life. The ceremony could be canceled and I couldn't care less. Although someone might gossip or laugh at me, it was still not a concern to me. The most important thing was to be happy. I used to dream of standing at the receptionist, receiving all the congratulations from the guests, but over time, I thought that was a silly dream. Now, all I wanted was Christopher. As long as he was there, I was okay with anything. Nonetheless, I still couldn't go against my mother's wishes. It was a sleepless night, so I turned around to look at him. He lost his arrogance when he was asleep, and it was replaced with a childlike smile. He was hugging me tightly, as if he was worried I might

disappear if he let me go. I huddled closer and pecked his lips. "I'll keep walking this path no matter how hard it is, Chris, so don't worry. Not even death can stop us, so there's nothing to be afraid of. Being in a relationship was an understatement for the bond we shared. This wasn't a rom-com in the eighties, nor was it a summer romance flick. We went through life and death, so we were a part of each other's lives. Taking us apart would be akin to killing us. I felt a cool sensation running down my spine when I woke up the next morning. Apparently, Christopher had rubbed some salve on me. I went around the living room to see if he was there, but he was already gone. In the end, I went to get some gifts, though it took me some time to pick the best one. When I came back, Christopher's car was already in front of my house, so I went up to it. There were a few gift boxes in the backseat, so I knew Christopher went for a spot of shopping earlier as well. "Why didn't you take me with you?" I shook my gift. "We could have gone together, but now we've spent unnecessary money." "You looked like you could use some sleep, so I didn't wake you up." Christopher leaned over and gave me a deep good morning kiss. When we got to the Lane residence, we saw a car coming out of it. As we crossed, I saw who the driver was. She looked cold, and she was holding a cigarette between her fingers. Her dress was bright red, a perfect pair for her palpable fury. I jumped up, banged my head against the roof, and plopped back down. Agitated, I tried to yank the door a few times only to find that it was locked. "What is it?" Christopher stepped on the brakes and stopped the car beside a flowerbed. I quickly opened the door and got out so I could catch up to the car I saw earlier, but it was already long gone. Despondent, I turned around and grabbed Christopher's arms. "I saw Isabelle. She was in the car."

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"You're saying your mother was in that car?" Christopher's face fell, and he started worrying.

I held his hand anxiously and nodded. "Yes. I'm sure of it. The car's different, but I saw her, and she's clearly furious. She just came out of the Lane residence. What should we do?" If Isabelle raised hell in there, I can't bring myself to face them.

"Calm down. Let's go in and have a look. Maybe it's not as serious as you think." He patted my back and took me into the mansion. I hesitated for a while before going in since I'll be d*mned if I did and doomed if I didn't.

The servant was clearing the table when we came in. There were snacks and an untouched teacup on it. I noticed it contained red tea, which Isabelle loved.

Julia seemed to know Isabelle really well. She knew all her preferences since I realized that the snacks were Isabelle's favorite too.

"You're here. Coincidentally, I don't have any poker sessions today. I'll call Darius over so we can have lunch together." Julia was smiling warmly as if nothing had happened.

Seeing that only worried me even more, since Julia would only smile calmly when she was hiding her true feelings. If she was genuinely happy, she'd be beaming.

"Mrs. Lane, I..." I wanted to say something, but nothing came out.

"Did you have guests, Mom?" Christopher went up and sat beside her. He looked at her closely, trying to say something, but he didn't. He trusted that his mother would bring it up.

As expected, she was smart enough to see through us. Shaking her head, she said, "You two are nervous because you saw Isabelle, right?"

"Mrs. Lane, did my mother do anything?" There's no way she's here for a party. It's either about Robert or my relationship with Christopher, and she must have been really harsh, or Julia wouldn't put on that perfectly fake smile.

"Just some old history. We had a little chat, but it ended on a sour note," Julia answered calmly, but she evaded my question. "Come to think of it, we used to be friends. Best friends, even. We kept no secrets from each other. I was older, but we got along well."

Julia picked the cup up and took a sip. "I introduced this tea to her, and she fell in love with it, so I taught her how to make it."

Julia seemed to love that time in her life. Every time she talked about it, she would have this look of reminiscence and melancholy in her eyes. Obviously, it didn't just end on a sour note, but since she didn't want to talk it, I didn't pry about it.

However, I was shocked that Isabelle used to be best friends with Julia. That made me wonder what happened to turn them into enemies. "You must know my mom really well then, Mrs. Lane."

“Yes, just like how she knows me. I know what she likes to eat, her hobbies, and what she hates. The same goes for her. We would still be best friends if it weren’t for...”

Julia came up to me and gaze at me. “You don’t look like your mother at all.” She brushed her finger on my eyebrows. “Not even your personalities are alike. You must have gotten it from your father, or I would have recognized you the moment we met.”

Sensing that Julia had officially veered off the rails, I talked about art with her. Eventually, she said, “You’re a talented artist, just like your uncle was. He loved business and made the Scotts rich as he expanded his empire, but he was also extremely talented in painting. He once created a piece of work that was touted as the painting with the most potential.”

“You’re saying your mother was in that car?” Christopher’s face fell, and he started worrying. I held his hand anxiously and nodded. “Yes. I’m sure of it. The car’s different, but I saw her, and she’s clearly furious. She just came out of the Lane residence. What should we do?” If Isabelle raised hell in there, I can’t bring myself to face them. “Calm down. Let’s go in and have a look. Maybe it’s not as serious as you think.” He patted my back and took me into the mansion. I hesitated for a while before going in since I’ll be d*mned if I did and doomed if I didn’t. The servant was clearing the table when we came in. There were snacks and an untouched teacup on it. I noticed it contained red tea, which Isabelle loved. Julia seemed to know Isabelle really well. She knew all her preferences since I realized that the snacks were Isabelle’s favorite too. “You’re here. Coincidentally, I don’t have any poker sessions today. I’ll call Darius over so we can have lunch together.” Julia was smiling warmly as if nothing had happened. Seeing that only worried me even more, since Julia would only smile calmly when she was hiding her true feelings. If she was genuinely happy, she’d be beaming. “Mrs. Lane, I...” I wanted to say something, but nothing came out. “Did you have guests, Mom?” Christopher went up and sat beside her. He looked at her closely, trying to say something, but he didn’t. He trusted that his mother would bring it up. As expected, she was smart enough to see through us. Shaking her head, she said, “You two are nervous because you saw Isabelle, right?” “Mrs. Lane, did my mother do anything?” There’s no way she’s here for a party. It’s either about Robert or my relationship with Christopher, and she must have been really harsh, or Julia wouldn’t put on that perfectly fake smile. “Just some old history. We had a little chat, but it ended on a sour note,” Julia answered calmly, but she evaded my question. “Come to think of it, we used to be friends. Best friends, even. We kept no secrets from each other. I was older, but we got along well.”

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I was surprised. "Robert was a painter too?" Nobody told me about that. Not even Isabelle.

"Yes." Julia's eyes glinted with nostalgia. "I first met him back in our university's art exhibition. Avenport University is not short of talents, but even those who call themselves genius artists couldn't create a better painting than Robert did. He was talking happily about how he got his inspiration when I first saw him, and I could never forget his smile after that."

I widened my eyes in disbelief at that. She couldn't forget his smile? Is this what I think it is?

"Yes, it is what you think it is." Julia saw through me, and she didn't deny it. "Love at first sight is a magical thing. One look at your uncle, and I fell for him right away. He was a brilliant, brilliant man. More than you can imagine. Robert shone like a star, and all the girls loved him. I don't think any man can be as talented as he was."

So, is this the trigger? My instinct told me that Isabelle blamed Robert's death on Julia because of this.

“Mom, I know it’s a painful past, but we need to know the truth right now,” Christopher said softly. “Can you tell us what happened back then?”

“Yes, Mrs. Lane. Christopher and I have decided we’ll never break up no matter what, but Isabelle is trying to get between us. I need to know what happened. That’s the only way to get rid of her hatred. Can you tell us, please?” I asked somberly.

Personally, I thought that Julia was a noble, proud, and smart woman. She would never murder anyone, for that was her pride. Even if she got into an argument with Robert, she would never push him off of a building just to get back at him.

Some people were born proud, so they would never do anything they feel disgusted about.

“It’s not a taboo, really. I appreciate the fact you two gave me some time before bringing this up.” Julia waved at me. When I went over to her, she tugged at me, telling me to sit beside her. She sighed. “I fell in love with Robert at first sight, so naturally, I started paying attention to him. Eventually, I got to know your mother.

“We became friends when we found out we got along well, though a part of it was because I could get closer to Robert. The other girls never got that chance, you know. Your mother’s a proud lady, so it’s hard being her friend. I was happy that she accepted me, or at least that was what I thought back then.”

“So, did you date my uncle then? And did you guys get into a fight after that?” I imagined a typical romance drama that involved a happy relationship and the eventual breakup. Not everyone’s first love would work out, after all. Most of the time, the impulses of youth would ruin a budding relationship.

Julia shook her head. She was starting to tear up. It was obvious that the memory was getting painful. “It’s not a typical romance drama. I wish it were that simple. Robert seemed like a friendly man, but in reality, nobody could actually make him open up, aside from Priscilla, his wife.”

“My uncle had a wife?” I thought Robert never got married.

“Yes. He loved Priscilla deeply and cared nothing for any other woman. I tried my best to tell him I loved him, but he never cared about me. In the end, I

made a public confession during a party and set him up so that everyone thought we had sex. Yes, I was forcing him to marry me. Everyone was there, including his and my parents.”

I never expected that Julia would be crazy enough to do something like that. Perhaps women would put their pride aside when it came to love, no matter how powerful, rich, or smart they were. I mean, Monica used to do the same thing.

I was surprised. “Robert was a painter too?” Nobody told me about that. Not even Isabelle. “Yes.” Julia’s eyes glinted with nostalgia. “I first met him back in our university’s art exhibition. Avenport University is not short of talents, but even those who call themselves genius artists couldn’t create a better painting than Robert did. He was talking happily about how he got his inspiration when I first saw him, and I could never forget his smile after that.” I widened my eyes in disbelief at that. She couldn’t forget his smile? Is this what I think it is? “Yes, it is what you think it is.” Julia saw through me, and she didn’t deny it. “Love at first sight is a magical thing. One look at your uncle, and I fell for him right away. He was a brilliant, brilliant man. More than you can imagine. Robert shone like a star, and all the girls loved him. I don’t think any man can be as talented as he was.” So, is this the trigger? My instinct told me that Isabelle blamed Robert’s death on Julia because of this. “Mom, I know it’s a painful past, but we need to know the truth right now,” Christopher said softly. “Can you tell us what happened back then?” “Yes, Mrs. Lane. Christopher and I have decided we’ll never break up no matter what, but Isabelle is trying to get between us. I need to know what happened. That’s the only way to get rid of her hatred. Can you tell us, please?” I asked somberly. Personally, I thought that Julia was a noble, proud, and smart woman. She would never murder anyone, for that was her pride. Even if she got into an argument with Robert, she would never push him off of a building just to get back at him. Some people were born proud, so they would never do anything they feel disgusted about. “It’s not a taboo, really. I appreciate the fact you two gave me some time before bringing this up.” Julia waved at me. When I went over to her, she tugged at me, telling me to sit beside her. She sighed. “I fell in love with Robert at first sight, so naturally, I started paying attention to him. Eventually, I got to know your mother. “We became friends when we found out we got along well, though a part of it was because I could get closer to Robert. The other girls never got that chance, you know. Your mother’s a proud lady, so it’s hard being her friend. I was happy that she accepted me, or at least that was what I thought back then.” “So, did you date my uncle then? And did you guys get into a fight after that?” I imagined a typical romance drama that

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"Robert must have been furious, right?" I whispered.

Julia wiped her tears away, and it was then I realized she was crying. I regretted bringing this up, but that confirmed that she wasn't Robert's murderer.

Robert must have been one heck of a man, or Grandma and Julia wouldn't lament his death whenever they talked about him.

Julia continued, "Robert refused me, but because of some reason, he didn't end up with Priscilla. I kept clinging onto him, and that finally made him snap. He... said a lot of things to me. None of them are good, of course. Me being me, I couldn't understand why he'd rather date a plain Jane like Priscilla when he had me. As such, I went further and drove Priscilla out of Avenport."

Taking a deep breath, she said, "Robert came to see me after that. He was furious. Absolutely furious. He said I was unworthy of love. That I was an evil woman who could never measure up to Priscilla no matter what I did. We stop talking to each other after that. Your mother and I couldn't be friends because of that as well."

Huh, so that's how things ended between them. I thought it was quite regrettable, but what surprised me more was the fact that Julia actually interacted a lot with my family.

“So how did Robert die then? You weren’t the murderer, right?” Now, I wanted to know the truth more. A woman would never kill a man she truly loved. Even if she hated him, even if they could never be a couple, she would never kill him. After all, hate was a part of love.

Julia suddenly covered her face and started trembling, evidently crying.

“Mom...” Christopher hugged her. “You don’t have to say it if you don’t want to.”

“Yeah, Mrs. Lane. You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to.” I wouldn’t have asked her if I knew she would break down. I should have picked a better time to talk about it.

Julia turned around and sobbed in her son’s arms for a while. Finally, she took a deep breath and calmed down. A moment later, she took my hand and placed it in Christopher’s palm.

“I can’t drag you kids into this. And it’s not like I can’t talk about it either.” Julia started, “A few years later, Robert married Priscilla, and the Andersons rose to prominence. Eventually, I married Chris’ father, and we got on with our lives. Everything went well, and I thought that was the end of it. I thought we’d never meet again, but...”

“But what?” I asked nervously.

“But the Andersons’ business was hit hard, as if someone was attacking them on purpose, and they had the perfect plan for it. The Andersons’ business empire almost crumbled with one hit. During an inspection, the officials found that the Andersons’ hotels contained large amounts of drugs, and they also found that the Andersons were dealing drugs in their clubhouses and hotels. That was the nail in the coffin for them. They lost their business, and they had to deal with a lot of court cases. They were on the verge of bankruptcy after that.

She continued, “Your uncle managed to stabilize the family, but it was backbreaking work. Since the company was already an empty shell, they couldn’t run it anymore. Well, he was a business genius, so he could rise again if he wanted to, but something serious happened. And that tore him apart.”

Julia was quiet for a while, apparently reluctant to talk about what happened next. Christopher and I held her hand as we waited for her quietly. None of us wanted to rush her.

“Priscilla was pregnant at that time, but after the Andersons’ downfall, she wanted to get a divorce no matter what. She said she only married him because he was rich. Robert was hit hard by the news, and he tried to keep Priscilla around, but she didn’t even turn back. Just when she was about to leave, her car exploded, blowing her and their child into nothingness.”

“Robert must have been furious, right?” I whispered. Julia wiped her tears away, and it was then I realized she was crying. I regretted bringing this up, but that confirmed that she wasn't Robert's murderer. Robert must have been one heck of a man, or Grandma and Julia wouldn't lament his death whenever they talked about him. Julia continued, “Robert refused me, but because of some reason, he didn't end up with Priscilla. I kept clinging onto him, and that finally made him snap. He... said a lot of things to me. None of them are good, of course. Me being me, I couldn't understand why he'd rather date a plain Jane like Priscilla when he had me. As such, I went further and drove Priscilla out of Avenport.” Taking a deep breath, she said, “Robert came to see me after that. He was furious. Absolutely furious. He said I was unworthy of love. That I was an evil woman who could never measure up to Priscilla no matter what I did. We stop talking to each other after that. Your mother and I couldn't be friends because of that as well.” Huh, so that's how things ended between them. I thought it was quite regrettable, but what surprised me more was the fact that Julia actually interacted a lot with my family. “So how did Robert die then? You weren't the murderer, right?” Now, I wanted to know the truth more. A woman would never kill a man she truly loved. Even if she hated him, even if they could never be a couple, she would never kill him. After all, hate was a part of love. Julia suddenly covered her face and started trembling, evidently crying. “Mom...” Christopher hugged her. “You don't have to say it if you don't want to.” “Yeah, Mrs. Lane. You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to.” I wouldn't have asked her if I knew she would break down. I should have picked a better time to talk about it. Julia turned around and sobbed in her son's arms for a while. Finally, she took a deep breath and calmed down. A moment later, she took my hand and placed it in Christopher's palm. “I can't drag you kids into this. And it's not like I can't talk about it either.” Julia started, “A few years later, Robert married Priscilla, and the Andersons rose to prominence. Eventually, I married Chris' father, and we got on with our lives. Everything went well, and I thought that was the end of it. I thought we'd never meet again, but...” “But what?” I asked nervously. “But the Andersons'

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"What?" I yelled. Priscilla wanted to leave him at his darkest hour, and she got herself and the baby killed? God, Robert must have been devastated.

"Someone rigged the car. It was meant for Robert, but Priscilla was roped into it instead. His guilt crushed him. He loved Priscilla deeply, so he didn't hate her even though she betrayed him. He only blamed himself for it. I was worried when I found out, so I sneaked out to check on him."

Julia raised her head to keep her tears in. Then, she pointed at somewhere far away. "It happened at the roof of Century Tower. It used to be the Andersons' building. I saw him on the roof, harried and tired. He was crushed and on the verge of breaking down. I wanted to talk to him, but Robert cursed me. He even thought I played a part in Priscilla's death.

"I snapped eventually, so I yelled back at him. I talked about things I shouldn't, and I laughed at him because Priscilla left him instead of facing the darkest hours of his life with him. I kept provoking him, saying that he lost everything, including his family. I even said that he has no reason to live anymore." She covered her face, but tears fell through the cracks between her fingers. "He was an idiot. I could have given everything up for him, but he chose someone who only loved him for his money."

I was in no position to judge a person who was dead, but Julia had a point. I couldn't even make an argument for Robert. It was a tragic, heartbreaking, and unacceptable story. Sadness welled up within me, and I looked at Christopher. He held my hand, giving me a look of encouragement.

"I wanted to show my concern since I used to have a crush on him, but instead, I insulted him. I couldn't take back what I said, so I escaped the scene. The very next day, I found out Robert had leaped off the building and died just like that."

Julia wiped her tears away, but the more she wiped, the more she cried. In the end, she looked up at the ceiling and let her tears fall freely. "I regretted that decision even until today. If I didn't sneak out and insult him, he wouldn't have killed himself. I knew full well that he was breaking down, but still, I insulted him out of petty anger.

"Your mother's right. I killed Robert. Although I didn't push him, I was the cause of his death after what I said to him."

I see. So that's the truth. Robert killed himself, but Julia's insult was the last straw. That's why she never denied Isabelle's accusations.

I couldn't bring myself to say that it wasn't Julia's fault, but that only made it more tragic.

When I left the Lane residence, it was with a heavier heart than when I came. "Chris, I'm confused. Why must life throw so many lemons at us? Is it that hard to ask for a simple life? It'll make everyone happier that way."

I leaned against his chest, trying to rest my weary soul. He gave me a tight hug and told me, "Well, it's all the more reasons we have to cherish the time we have. Because you never know when life will change lemons out for guns."

I stayed at the mansion for the next couple of days, but I still couldn't shake my frustration away. I would scroll through my phone when I felt like it, and I would open the door as fast as possible when someone knocked. Every time, however, I would close the door in disappointment, since it was just the milkman.

Will Mom come to take me back? I sighed. I knew it was weird wanting to act spoiled after having a big argument, but that always happened with a mother

and her child. Yes, I was hurt, but still, I hoped Isabelle would pick me up after she regretted chasing me out.

One week later, Isabelle finally called me, and I almost cried tears of joy. However, after hearing what she said, the tears that fell were tears of despair.

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"How much longer are you going to keep this up? It's been days, so get back here! What, do you want me to go and pick you up? Stop being so childish. It was just a light beating, and you ran away because of that? What's next? Are you going to cut all ties with me?" Isabelle sounded impatient and upset as if I was the one being unreasonable here, not her.

I couldn't believe I expected more from her. All my excitement died at that moment, and I mocked, "I can see you're missing me, Mom."

"That's enough, I don't want to talk about useless stuff like that. Get back here once you're done throwing your tantrum. Your father has been complaining ever since you ran away. You are to come back this afternoon. I want to see you at lunchtime," Isabelle ordered imperiously, not giving me any chance to negotiate.

Useless stuff? Throwing a tantrum? I would have dismissed that usually, but coming from Isabelle, it hurt me deeply. Nonetheless, I forced a smile. "Mom, is that all you have to say?" I asked softly.

"What else do you want me to say?" Isabelle was confused. She kept quiet for a while before answering, "Are you expecting me to apologize? That was just a light punishment for a mistake you did, and you want me to say sorry for that? How much of a baby can you be? Can't you learn from Crystal? She thanks me every time I give her something, and she cares about me, unlike you."

“Oh, you want me to learn from her? Well, what do you want me to learn then? Do you want me to learn how to butter up to the rich and powerful? How to mock and belittle those who are down on their luck? Mom, Crystal’s going to dump you the moment you lose power. Why do you even care about her? I just don’t understand.”

I pulled at my hair, sadness and frustration welling up within me. I just couldn’t wrap my head around it. I felt confused every time I got into a conflict with Isabelle, especially when Crystal was around. What went wrong, exactly?

“You can’t talk like that about Crystal. You two grew up together. You should treat her like she’s your sister. Now that she’s down on her luck, you should give her a hand!” Isabelle growled. “I don’t want to argue with you. Pack your stuff and come back. Your father—”

“Enough!” I roared, venting my fury and frustration. “Why should I go home? Just to see you love Crystal more than you love me? Just to get insulted by the both of you? Mom, it’s either her or me!”

“What are you talking about? I’m very disappointed in you, Yvonne. If you still think of me as your mother, you’d better come home, or I’ll—”

“You’ll disown me? Well, it’s not the first time I heard that!” I interrupted her. Yes, I was sad and nervous the first time she said that, since it felt like I was hurt by the person I cared the most about. But the more she said that, the less panicked I was. Eventually, I was annoyed. Isabelle was my mother, but she blackmailed me emotionally with that tie every chance she could.

“I’m disappointed in you as well, Mom. You know nothing. Nothing at all. You never saw things from my point of view. Do you even love me? Sometimes I wonder about that. You don’t care about my existence either. I exist just so you can tell everyone I’m the proof of your relationship.”

I was shouting, sobbing, and covering my mouth, but still, I couldn’t stop crying. That kind of thought had been creeping up on me recently. To my horror, I found that Isabelle’s love for me wasn’t as deep as I thought it was. She didn’t remember my favorite food, the color of my shirt, the drawing I made for her when I was a kid, and she even remembered my birthday wrongly.

My mother didn’t love me, especially when Crystal was there.

“How much longer are you going to keep this up? It's been days, so get back here! What, do you want me to go and pick you up? Stop being so childish. It was just a light beating, and you ran away because of that? What's next? Are you going to cut all ties with me?” Isabelle sounded impatient and upset as if I was the one being unreasonable here, not her. I couldn't believe I expected more from her. All my excitement died at that moment, and I mocked, “I can see you're missing me, Mom.” “That's enough, I don't want to talk about useless stuff like that. Get back here once you're done throwing your tantrum. Your father has been complaining ever since you ran away. You are to come back this afternoon. I want to see you at lunchtime,” Isabelle ordered imperiously, not giving me any chance to negotiate. Useless stuff? Throwing a tantrum? I would have dismissed that usually, but coming from Isabelle, it hurt me deeply. Nonetheless, I forced a smile. “Mom, is that all you have to say?” I asked softly. “What else do you want me to say?” Isabelle was confused. She kept quiet for a while before answering, “Are you expecting me to apologize? That was just a light punishment for a mistake you did, and you want me to say sorry for that? How much of a baby can you be? Can't you learn from Crystal? She thanks me every time I give her something, and she cares about me, unlike you.” “Oh, you want me to learn from her? Well, what do you want me to learn then? Do you want me to learn how to butter up to the rich and powerful? How to mock and belittle those who are down on their luck? Mom, Crystal's going to dump you the moment you lose power. Why do you even care about her? I just don't understand.” I pulled at my hair, sadness and frustration welling up within me. I just couldn't wrap my head around it. I felt confused every time I got into a conflict with Isabelle, especially when Crystal was around. What went wrong, exactly? “You can't talk like that about Crystal. You two grew up together. You should treat her like she's your sister. Now that she's down on her luck, you should give her a hand!” Isabelle growled. “I don't want to argue with you. Pack your stuff and come back. Your father—” “Enough!” I roared, venting my fury and frustration. “Why should I go home? Just to see you love Crystal more than you love me? Just to get insulted by the both of you? Mom, it's either her or me!” “What are you talking about? I'm very disappointed in you, Yvonne. If you still think of me as your mother, you'd better come home, or I'll—” “You'll disown me? Well, it's not the first time I heard that!” I interrupted her. Yes, I was sad and nervous the first time she said that, since it felt like I was hurt by the person I cared the most about. But the more she said that, the less panicked I was. Eventually, I was annoyed. Isabelle was my mother, but she blackmailed me emotionally with that tie every chance she could. “I'm disappointed in you as well, Mom. You know nothing. Nothing at all. You never saw things from my point of view. Do you even love me? Sometimes I wonder about that. You don't care about my

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Isabelle was quiet for a long time, but she eventually answered sadly, "Of course, I love you, my child. But you're too soft. You break down from the slightest comment. I'm your mother. I'm doing this for your own good."

"Hah! What a joke!" I shook my head tearfully. "If you really love me, you wouldn't have left me to rot in the Tanner family. If you really love me, you wouldn't have taken Crystal back to the Goldstein family! If you love me, you wouldn't have forced me to do the things I don't like time and again. If you love me, you wouldn't have let Crystal mock me like I'm trash!"

Neither Isabelle nor I could stay calm when it came to Robert's death. We could never take a step back, nor could we ever come up with a compromise. Julia didn't kill him, but she was definitely related to his death. Yes, every irrational decision made by Isabelle would make it harder for me to deal with the case, but I wouldn't get angry at her.

I was only mad at her because she tolerated Crystal. Crystal could mock me all she wanted, and Isabelle wouldn't even do a thing. Instead, she would praise Crystal for calling me trash. Isabelle was my mother. She should be protecting me from any harm, but instead, she was enabling the abuse.

Even until this point, she didn't realize her unbridled tolerance toward Crystal had hurt me on more levels than one.

"I think you really need to calm down. Just come back for lunch, and we'll talk about it once we handle your father." Isabelle was quiet for a moment again. "All right, that's it. I still have something else to do."

What does she mean by 'handle' Dad? I was annoyed by how she phrased that, and her hanging up on me only frustrated me more. I wanted to vent, but I had no outlet to do that.

At some point, it became impossible to communicate with Isabelle. There was a great gap between us that was difficult to bridge. I had to lie back on the sofa and stare at the ceiling for a long, long time to get rid of my depression.

Sabrina came to invite me to a shopping session. She wanted to get her child some new clothes, and she wanted me to get used to taking care of a baby. I would have been delighted to do that any other time, but I just couldn't get myself motivated to go with her. As we chatted, I would space out and miss what she was talking about from time to time.

"What happened to you? You've been spacing out a lot. Did something happen? Did you get into a fight with Christopher?" Sabrina put the clothes down and poked my head.

"I wish. That'd be a lot simpler than what I'm dealing with." I shook my head. "Besides, he won't argue with me. Even if I want to, he'd settle matters fast enough that I can't even get mad at him."

"Ah, I'm guessing the evil queen wants to break you two lovebirds up again?" She blinked. Sabrina wanted to joke, but she kept her mouth shut when she realized I wasn't looking too happy. A while later, she whispered, "Judging from your looks, it's more serious than you first thought, isn't it? I thought your mother's a kind, gentle, and reasonable woman. So why is she so hard on you when it comes to Robert?"

Is she really hard on me? I didn't really care though. The only thing I minded was that she took Crystal's side when I was bullied. I thought she should be protecting me.

"That's part of the problem, but it's not the whole picture." I massaged my temples to soothe my headache. In the end, I dragged Sabrina to a coffee shop and got a glass of warm milk, but it didn't help one bit. I asked the waiter to get me some lollipops, and finally, it soothed me a bit.

"What is it? Don't just sigh by yourself. Tell me!"

Sabrina picked her kid up and put the kid on her shoulder. Since she looked exhausted, I offered to help her out. "Here, let me hold you. Aren't you adorable?"

The child cooed happily, and I smiled for the first time in ages. “Sabby, do you think Crystal’s going to be my nightmare for life? She’s like the bane of my existence.”

Isabelle was quiet for a long time, but she eventually answered sadly, “Of course, I love you, my child. But you're too soft. You break down from the slightest comment. I'm your mother. I'm doing this for your own good.” “Hah! What a joke!” I shook my head tearfully. “If you really love me, you wouldn't have left me to rot in the Tanner family. If you really love me, you wouldn't have taken Crystal back to the Goldstein family! If you love me, you wouldn't have forced me to do the things I don't like time and again. If you love me, you wouldn't have let Crystal mock me like I'm trash!” Neither Isabelle nor I could stay calm when it came to Robert's death. We could never take a step back, nor could we ever come up with a compromise. Julia didn't kill him, but she was definitely related to his death. Yes, every irrational decision made by Isabelle would make it harder for me to deal with the case, but I wouldn't get angry at her. I was only mad at her because she tolerated Crystal. Crystal could mock me all she wanted, and Isabelle wouldn't even do a thing. Instead, she would praise Crystal for calling me trash. Isabelle was my mother. She should be protecting me from any harm, but instead, she was enabling the abuse. Even until this point, she didn't realize her unbridled tolerance toward Crystal had hurt me on more levels than one. “I think you really need to calm down. Just come back for lunch, and we'll talk about it once we handle your father.” Isabelle was quiet for a moment again. “All right, that's it. I still have something else to do.” What does she mean by 'handle' Dad? I was annoyed by how she phrased that, and her hanging up on me only frustrated me more. I wanted to vent, but I had no outlet to do that. At some point, it became impossible to communicate with Isabelle. There was a great gap between us that was difficult to bridge. I had to lie back on the sofa and stare at the ceiling for a long, long time to get rid of my depression. Sabrina came to invite me to a shopping session. She wanted to get her child some new clothes, and she wanted me to get used to taking care of a baby. I would have been delighted to do that any other time, but I just couldn't get myself motivated to go with her. As we chatted, I would space out and miss what she was talking about from time to time. “What happened to you? You've been spacing out a lot. Did something happen? Did you get into a fight with Christopher?” Sabrina put the clothes down and poked my head. “I wish. That'd be a lot simpler than what I'm dealing with.” I shook my head. “Besides, he won't argue with me. Even if I want to, he'd settle matters fast enough that I can't even get mad at him.” “Ah, I'm guessing the evil queen wants to break you two lovebirds up again?” She blinked. Sabrina wanted to joke, but she kept her mouth shut when she

realized I wasn't looking too happy. A while later, she whispered, "Judging from your looks, it's more serious than you first thought, isn't it? I thought your mother's a kind, gentle, and reasonable woman. So why is she so hard on you when it comes to Robert?" Is she really hard on me? I didn't really care though. The only thing I minded was that she took Crystal's side when I was bullied. I thought she should be protecting me. "That's part of the problem, but it's not the whole picture." I massaged my temples to soothe my headache. In the end, I dragged Sabrina to a coffee shop and got a glass of warm milk, but it didn't help one bit. I asked the waiter to get me some lollipops, and finally, it soothed me a bit. "What is it? Don't just sigh by yourself. Tell me!" Sabrina picked her kid up and put the kid on her shoulder. Since she looked exhausted, I offered to help her out. "Here, let me hold you. Aren't you adorable?" The child cooed happily, and I smiled for the first time in ages. "Sabby, do you think Crystal's going to be my nightmare for life? She's like the bane of my existence."

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"What does she have to do in your case with the Lane family?" Sabrina was confused.

I smacked my forehead and sighed. "You went on a vacation with Zachary back when Remington held his art exhibition, so you didn't know about it. My art's credit was stolen. It sold for an exorbitant price, and even art lovers overseas knew about it. You even congratulated me, but my name wasn't on that painting. Crystal's was.

I told Sabrina briefly about Isabelle's demands, including why she was nice to Crystal. Sabrina didn't think it was serious at first, but she was shocked when I told her my own mother wanted me to give the painting to Crystal. When she heard that Isabelle wanted me to marry Tobey, she almost went on a rampage.

"Yvonne, did you get dumber after your mother came back? You aren't even that smart in the first place, and now you've gotten worse. Just say no, woman. I know you don't want to make things tense, but that's how it is with relationships. You haven't seen her in years, so I know you want to get along with her, but giving in to her every demand is not going to work."

I covered my face and sighed again. "What should I do then?"

“Simple. Tell her what your boundaries are, why you’re upset, and what you want her to do. It’s important. If you give in, she’ll just think you don’t mind her controlling you. You need to be frank.” Sabrina shrugged.

“Sabby, it’s a lot worse than you think it is. Just because I want to communicate, it doesn’t mean she’d listen.” I used to think Sabrina’s advice was great, but it was useless when it came to Isabelle. Of course, I would like to talk to Mom, but she refused to listen. If she refused to listen, then there was no use.

Sabrina, for once, was confused. “But that’s how families work. If communication fails, then are you even a family?” She scratched her head.

I looked at her solemnly. She made an offhand remark, but that gave me inspiration. There was this feeling welling up in me, and a crack slowly opened up in my rigid soul.

“Don’t look at me like that. I’m just kidding. Maybe it’s just how you communicate. Just get a chance to talk with her.” Sabrina stuck her tongue out, but when I still wouldn’t talk, she said, “Don’t get mad. I was just talking nonsense.”

“I’m not mad.” I shook my head, crestfallen.

Sabrina leaned on the table and played with her child using a teacup. “I’m not an expert in this. Relationship’s my forte, so you shouldn’t take any advice from me. I mean, every parent loves their child, right? I’m a mother, so I think I’m qualified to say that.”

When I was about to answer, something on the TV caught my attention, and both of us turned to see what was going on. It was an interview show, and Crystal was the guest for that episode. She was dressed up beautifully, and her smile gleamed like a star.

“Ms. Yates, your painting has garnered a lot of international attention. It is recognized by both the public and Mr. Sawyer himself. Your fans are also proud of you, so are you sure you want to donate all the proceeds you earn from this to a charity organization?”

“Yes. I’ve made up my mind since the beginning. I don’t think most of us have ever been to an orphanage, but let me tell you something. The orphans deserve every ounce of our sympathy. I lost my father, but luckily, I have a

loving mother who takes great care of me. I can sympathize with them, and they need our love. That's why I want to provide for them as much as I can. I always pray for their happiness."

Sabrina slammed the table. "That b*tch!" she cursed coldly. "She doesn't know what shame is!"

I narrowed my eyes, and a deriding smile curled my lips. I guess some people just take everything for granted. Including stealing someone else's hard work. Then, the next scene came in, showing Isabelle in a glamorous dress as well. Even though Sabrina blocked my view, I still saw Isabelle standing together with Crystal the moment she showed up.

"What does she have to do in your case with the Lane family?" Sabrina was confused. I smacked my forehead and sighed. "You went on a vacation with Zachary back when Remington held his art exhibition, so you didn't know about it. My art's credit was stolen. It sold for an exorbitant price, and even art lovers overseas knew about it. You even congratulated me, but my name wasn't on that painting. Crystal's was. I told Sabrina briefly about Isabelle's demands, including why she was nice to Crystal. Sabrina didn't think it was serious at first, but she was shocked when I told her my own mother wanted me to give the painting to Crystal. When she heard that Isabelle wanted me to marry Tobey, she almost went on a rampage. "Yvonne, did you get dumber after your mother came back? You aren't even that smart in the first place, and now you've gotten worse. Just say no, woman. I know you don't want to make things tense, but that's how it is with relationships. You haven't seen her in years, so I know you want to get along with her, but giving in to her every demand is not going to work." I covered my face and sighed again. "What should I do then?" "Simple. Tell her what your boundaries are, why you're upset, and what you want her to do. It's important. If you give in, she'll just think you don't mind her controlling you. You need to be frank." Sabrina shrugged. "Sabby, it's a lot worse than you think it is. Just because I want to communicate, it doesn't mean she'd listen." I used to think Sabrina's advice was great, but it was useless when it came to Isabelle. Of course, I would like to talk to Mom, but she refused to listen. If she refused to listen, then there was no use. Sabrina, for once, was confused. "But that's how families work. If communication fails, then are you even a family?" She scratched her head. I looked at her solemnly. She made an offhand remark, but that gave me inspiration. There was this feeling welling up in me, and a crack slowly opened up in my rigid soul. "Don't look at me like that. I'm just kidding. Maybe it's just how you communicate. Just get a chance to talk with her." Sabrina stuck her tongue out, but when I still wouldn't talk, she said, "Don't get mad. I was just

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