I Just Loved You Chapter 18

But the pain seemed to evade him entirely.

Steven lay motionless, staring ahead in a daze.

"Gianna, look at me–I'm hurt this badly, and you still won't come back?"

"You used to be so unwilling to let me suffer even the slightest scratch. If I bled, you' d bandage me yourself. When my arm was nicked by a scalpel, you applied medicine to stop the bleeding. If I had a fever, you'd stay up all night by my side. Even if I only coughed lightly, you' dask me again and again if I was okay…"

"Gianna, I regret it. I regret everything. I can't believe I let you slip away."

He lay on the floor, numb, letting the shards of glass press deeper into his skin.

"Steven, what's wrong? Get up!"

A familiar voice called to him. Steven blinked through the haze, his vision blurred.

There she was Gianna, standing before him.

The same hairstyle, the same outfit, even the teardrop–shaped mole near the corner of her eye.

"Gianna, you' re back! You' re finally back! I've missed you I've missed you so much I've gone mad!"

Overcome with emotion, he threw his arms around her, holding her tightly. Hot tears streamed down his face, falling onto her shoulder. He wished he could melt her into himself, soaking in every bit of her scent.

"It's okay, I'm back now. I won't leave again," she said softly, patting his back. A sly smile crossed her face, unnoticed by him.

But in the next moment, Steven froze, at sharp clarity cutting through the fog of his mind.

Something was wrong.

Gianna never wore perfume, especially not this overly sweet, cloying scent.

He stepped back and looked closer. The face was only about half similar to Gianna' s–a calculated imitation.

It wasn' t Gianna.

It was Chloe.

Rage ignited in Steven' s alcohol–clouded brain. With a sudden surge of strength, he pushed Chloe away and pinned her to the ground.

"You dared to deceive me? You' re not Gianna. You'll never be Gianna!" he growled. His powerful hands closed around her neck, trembling with a murderous intent he hadn't felt before. He wanted to strangle her–to end her right there for this shameless impersonation.

Chloe' s face turned pale, her eyes rolling back as she struggled for air. In desperation, she grabbed a bottle and smashed it against the back of Steven' head. The impact dazed him just enough for her to shove him aside and scramble away.

Gasping for breath, Chloe stumbled out of the villa.

Outside, she threw her handbag to the ground in frustration, touching the deep red marks on her neck with gritted teeth.

"What's so special about Gianna?" she snarled. "How can she make Steven this obsessed with her?"

Her eyes narrowed with malice. "I refuse to believe the entire Thompson family is as charmed by her as he is."

The next morning, Steven was taken to the hospital.

News of his and Gianna' s relationship had reached the Thompson family.

When Steven, wrapped in layers of bandages and looking utterly drained, returned to the Thompson family home, he overheard Chloe badmouthing Gianna.

"Auntie Emily, Gianna is just too petty. Threatening to break off the engagement over such a trivial matter? If someone like her married into the Thompson family, poor Steven would suffer endlessly."

Steven' s mother, Emily, said nothing. Her eyes lingered on her son, battered and weary, standing silently by the door.

"Are you even a man?" she finally snapped. "You made a mistake, and all you can do is wallow in self–pity? If you' ve got any guts, you'll own up to your mistakes and bring her back. Look at you–pathetic! I can't even tell which side of the family you take after!"

Her gaze shifted briefly, pointedly, toward Steven' s father, who shrank back slightly.

"I heard the Médecins Sans Frontières group just left a conflict zone…

Before she could finish her sentence, Steven's eyes lit up with renewed determination. Without hesitation, he dropped to his knees in front of her.

"Mom, please help me. I have to find