

Midnight III 281

Chapter 1763 - 281: Please Make This Work

By the time Crystal was done feeding Eric and Nathan, she was exhausted. Her body was slick with sweat, and she was anxious to have some alone time. "Alright," she said as she prepared to leave, "Sleep well."

"Darling," Eric cried, "I need to go to the toilet."

Crystal's body stiffened. "I beg your pardon?"

"I have been tied up all night until now,"

Eric explained. "I have physiological needs." He raised his eyebrows. "This request is legitimate."

His request is reasonable - Crystal realized - But how can I let him pee without letting him go? And what will I do when he needs to take a shit...? She sighed and said, "For now, just piss yourself. I will figure something out by the end of the day."

"I haven't wet the bed since I was a five-year-old kid," Eric argued. "If I do that, then you will have to change my pants."

Crystal chuckled and said, "You mean, you were still wetting your bed when you were five? That is funny. And embarrassing. But if it helps, why don't you pretend that you are still a child. You act like one, anyway, so it should not be too much of a stretch. And I will send one of the servants up to change you."

Eric couldn't fake his smile anymore. "Mrs. Bush, you need to understand that you can't lock me away for much longer. Once I have been gone for 24 hours, my people will start looking for me. If you do not let me go right now, then when they find me, it will be your turn to be tied down. You will be the one pissing your pants like a child. What do you think about that?"

Crystal thought for a moment, and then she said, "Why don't we stuff your p***s into a bottle, create a seal, and strap it to your abdomen? That way, if you have to pee, you can pee, and you won't have to worry about soiling your clothes."

Eric was speechless, and by the time he thought of something to say, she was gone.

Crystal returned moments later, and she had a large bottle in her hand. Eric's eyes went wide, and his face lost its color. "You can't be serious!"

As Crystal undid his pants, he began to shout and curse, but she paid him no mind. She pulled his flaccid p***s out of his pants and shoved it into the bottle, and because it was such a tight fit, no sealant was necessary. Then she took off his belt and used it to secure the bottle to his abdomen.

Once the bottle was secure, Crystal took a step back. She examined her handiwork and saw that it was good. Then she looked Eric in the eyes and said, "Pee."

It took a moment for Eric to get a stream going, but once his urine came, it shot from his dickhole in a torrential outburst that caused the bottle to shake violently. As soon as his stream tapered off, Crystal

asked if he was done. He nodded, and she carefully removed the bottle from his p***s. It was nearly full, and she was extra careful not to spill it on herself.

The urine stank and Crystal quickly put the cap on it. She showed him a wicked smile and said, "I can tell that you've been holding that in!"

"F**k you," Eric grumbled. "You are one extreme bitch!"

"Yes, yes," Crystal replied amicably. "I know. F**k me. I am such a bitch. Whatever..."

Suddenly, Nathan called her name. "What do you need?" she asked. "And it had better be good. My patience is running thin."

"I also have to pee," Nathan replied.

This is too much - Crystal thought. "I will ask a servant to serve you."

"That's not fair," Nathan complained.

"I am her husband!" Eric exclaimed. "I get special treatment."

"Bollocks to your special treatment." Nathan laughed and said, "I guess it doesn't really matter. She may be your wife, but I was the one f*****g her all night long."

Crystal's face turned red, and she turned to the door that led to Nathan's room. "Shut up, you!" she shouted. "You can accept a servant's help, or you can piss yourself. I do not care which you chose to do." And without waiting for a reply, she left the room.

Once Noah was out of sight, Nancy was defenseless. So, when Paul threw her over his shoulder, there was nothing she could do except complaint. He carried her to his room, and then he assaulted her repeatedly until they both passed out from exhaustion.

Nancy woke up as evening turned to night, and for a moment, she thought that it had all been a terrible nightmare, but then she realized that she was still in Paul's arms. He was asleep, though, and she thought - Now is my chance to escape!

Unfortunately, she was so weak that she could barely move. Her eyes closed, and she fell back asleep.

Meanwhile, Crystal had been waiting for her in the living room. She had seen Paul carry Nancy into his room, and she had assumed that he was going to assault her. She had not expected it to take so long, though. Eventually, she got tired of waiting, so she asked Noah to take the incense burner from Eric's room and put it into Paul's room.

Once Crystal was sure that Nancy and Paul were asleep, she snuck up the stairs.

When she opened the door to Paul's room, the smell of incense mixed with the strong scent of intercourse hit her like a brick, and she had to cover her face with her hand to keep herself from gagging.

Before moving on, she took a vial of peppermint oil out of her pocket and took a sniff. This would replace the other smell in her nostrils, and it would prevent the dr*g from affecting her. Finally, she walked over to the side of the bed where Nancy was sleeping. Crystal dabbed some of the peppermint oil onto her finger and rubbed Nancy's philtrum. She looked up, and as she waited, she prayed to a God that she was not sure even existed. "Dear God," she whispered.. "Please make this work."

Chapter 1764 - 282: What A Good Idea

Almost immediately, Nancy woke up. Where am I? - she wondered. She looked up and was startled to see Crystal hovering over her. "What's going on?" she asked.

Crystal put away the oil and whispered, "Get up. The game is on, and I need you to be alert."

Nancy stood up dizzily. "I don't feel right," she muttered.

"What's wrong?" Crystal asked nervously. She was worried that the dr*gs might have had negative side effects.

That was not the problem, though. Nancy was having trouble making sense of what Paul had done to her earlier. This was not the first time that Paul had assaulted her - not by far - but it had been the first time that she had taken pleasure from the abuse.

What is wrong with me? - Nancy wondered. He had humiliated her, and she was ashamed of her body's response to what had happened. "It's nothing," she replied.

Before Crystal had a chance to call Nancy out on her lie, she began to cry. "There, there." Crystal? embraced her friend and said, "Whatever happened was not your fault, and it will never happen again. Now let's get down to business. Are you able to walk?"

Nancy nodded, and Crystal helped her get dressed. Unfortunately, they were not quite enough, and Paul stirred. Without opening his eyes, he reached out to where Nancy had been sleeping, only to find that she had slipped away. "What the Hell?" he grumbled, and when he opened his eyes, the first person that he saw was Crystal. Suddenly, it occurred to him that he was naked, and he pulled the sheet over his genitals.

Crystal saw this, and she laughed mockingly, "Do you think that I want to see your body?" she asked. "I would rather have my eyeballs burnt out with a hot poker. There really is not much to see, though. Is there? Haha! It is just a little worm..."

Paul's ire began to rise, and his face turned red from anger. He tried to stand up and was startled to discover that he lacked the strength. It was then that his senses detected the incense, and he realized what had happened. He turned to Nancy and shot her a dirty look. "How dare you do this to me?!?" he roared.

"That's enough," Crystal interjected. "This has nothing to do with Nancy. I did it."

Paul glared at Crystal, and then he looked at Nancy. "I don't care who did it," he said. "You are clearly in this together, so you will both pay!"

Crystal smirked. "Those are big words for a man that cannot even get out of bed. We could kill you now, and there would be nothing you could do to stop us, so maybe the time for making threats has passed. What do you think?"

The color drained from Paul's face, and the expression that was left there was a mixture of fear and rage. The girls could tell that he wanted to say something, but he did not quite dare to.

There was a soft knock on the door. Crystal knew that it was Noah, so she invited him in right away.

When Noah walked in, the scent of sex and incense struck his senses, and his face turned red from embarrassment. He looked at Nancy, and he could see that she had been through an ordeal, and he felt guilty. If he had known that Paul would assault Nancy, he never would have left her side. "What do you need me to do?" he asked. "Your word is my command."

"Wrap him in a quilt and carry him to the room below," Crystal replied.

Nancy glanced at Noah and said, "That won't work. He is an injured man."

Noah responded faintly: "I am fine."

Paul looked Crystal in the eye and said, "He had better not touch me."

"Is that so?" Crystal asked. As she spoke, she picked up his belt and whipped it across his chest.

Paul shrieked in pain.

Crystal wriggled her eyes playfully. "You still think you're in control, don't you? I think that's cute." She turned to Nancy. "Don't you think that's cute?"

"That's pretty cute," Nancy replied. "Let me try." Crystal handed her the belt, and she struck him three more times, once for herself, again for Clark, and the third time was for the pleasure of hurting him.

Paul's body was strong and firm, but it was little help to him when it came to Nancy's vengeance by the belt. By the time she was done, there were giant red welts all over his chest, and he was whimpering.

"P-P-Please," he stammered. "N-No m-m more..."

Nancy lifted the belt to strike him again, but Crystal stopped her. She gently took it away, saying, "I think that is enough. You have made your point."

Nancy nodded. "Alright," she said. Then she turned to Noah and told him to take Paul away.

As Noah rolled Paul up in the quilt, his whimpering began to taper off, and he began to curse. "Should I shove a dirty sock in his mouth?" Noah asked with a grin on his face. "I am sick of all this shouting. It is giving me a headache."

"Yes," Nancy replied. "What a good idea!"

"How dare you stuff a smelly sock in my mouth?" Paul shouted. "You are a fucking bitch!"

Nancy ignored the insult.

When Paul saw Noah's hand approaching his face with a balled-up, dirty sock, he closed his mouth as tightly as he could.

"I've got this!" Nancy exclaimed. She rushed over and punched Paul in the side of the head as hard as she could. His mouth opened, and Noah shoved the sock in.

Crystal was amazed. "How did you know to do that?"

"I'll never tell," Nancy replied.. In the past, when Nancy had refused to let him put his hard member in her mouth, this was what he would do to her to force her to open it for him, and it gave her great pleasure to show him how it felt.

Chapter 1765 - 283: How Did They Get You?

Paul was bundled up so tightly that Noah could walk past the bodyguards with him under his arms, and they were none the wiser. Nancy and Crystal were giggling, though, and although that seemed unusual, the guards did not think too much about it.

"What is up with them?" one of them asked. "They are just girls," the other replied.

"Nothing but space in their heads, as you know!" They both laughed.

Nancy smiled and leaned over so that she could whisper into Crystal's ear: "There is nothing worse than an idiot that doesn't know how dumb they are."

Crystal nodded, and once they were a safe distance from the guards, she said, "We are ready for the next phase of our plan."

Nancy was uncomfortable with the smell of Paul, and she proposed that they bathe him before they do anything else.

"We could do that," Crystal replied. Then she turned to Noah and said, "Bring Paul to Nathan's room. I will arrange a couple of servants to join us."

When Crystal entered Nathan's room, he was caught off guard by her cheerful disposition. "Why are you so happy?" he asked. He had rarely seen her so delighted.

Crystal went about her business without replying.

Nathan frowned. "Crystal, didn't you hear my question?" He had always been an arrogant man, and he could not stand to be ignored. She knew this, and she was acting deliberately. Despite his insistent tone of voice, she did not even look at him.

Noah arrived with Paul under his arm, and Crystal pointed at the swivel chair. "Put him here."

Noah frowned. "The chair is too small," he said.

"We'll have to unroll him," Crystal explained as she closed and locked the door. "Do you understand?"

"I do," Noah replied hesitantly. This idea did not seem prudent to him, but he followed the direction he had been given, and in a matter of minutes, Paul was sitting on the chair. He was naked, and there was a dirty sock stuck in his mouth. His face was red and blotchy, and he had a gloomy but furious expression on his face.

Crystal stood in front of him with her arms folded beneath her breasts. She looked him in the eyes and said, "If you try anything, I will poke out your eyeballs. And don't even think about trying to get that sock out of your mouth!"

While she was talking, Nancy had been rummaging through the dresser drawers. Once she found a pair of underwear, she passed it to a servant and said, "Get these on him, would you?"

The carpet had been bound by a hemp rope which Noah used to bind Paul to the chair. Instead of tying him up in a normal sitting position, though, he tied him upside down. His calves were flush against the armrest, and his head was resting uncomfortably on the floor.

As Noah completed this task, Crystal and Nancy-and even Nathan-burst into gales of uncontrollable laughter. "You had better pee yourself," Noah told Paul. "If you do, it will end up all over your face..."

Paul felt like he had gone from the frying pan and straight into the fire. He had never been so embarrassed in this life. He wanted to fight back, but he could not. And to make matters worse for him, Crystal pulled out her phone and took several pictures of him. "A little insurance," she said.

Once Noah's task was complete, he collapsed onto the floor, and Crystal suddenly realized how exhausted he was. She said, "Thank you so much... for everything. But how are you holding up? With all of your injuries, maybe you shouldn't have been doing all of this hard work..."

Noah smiled and said, "Don't worry. I'm fine. I'm just tired. That's all."

Crystal nodded knowingly. "You should get some rest. I will call you when we need you again."

Noah nodded, thanked them both, and left. Once the door was closed behind him, Nancy turned to Crystal and asked, "Do you think we might be going too far...?"

"I don't think we're going far enough," Crystal replied. "After everything that he has done to you, I am surprised that you would ask that. You are too kind. Do you know that?" "I have been told that," Nancy admitted.

"And, as usual, you are right."

"Of course, I am!" Crystal exclaimed. "This man deserves to be cut up and fed to Wolf. He should be grateful that we are showing him mercy!"

"This is what you call mercy?!?!" Nathan exclaimed.

Crystal "Boop's" him on the nose, and in a congenial tone of voice, she said, "Shut up, will you? You are not improving your situation." Nathan glared at Crystal, but he didn't say anything.

"So, what now?" Nancy asked.

"I think that it is time to let him see his good friend," Nancy replied. "If you open the door to the next room, I will push him in. I think you will like what I have in the next room."

Nancy's brow furrowed. What is she talking about?- she wondered.

Of course, nothing could have prepared Nancy for the sight of Eric chained to his bed. "We are a couple of bitches..." she muttered. "Every man in this house is bound to a bed or chair... What's wrong with us...?"

"What's wrong with us?" Crystal scoffed.

"There is nothing wrong with us. We have a right not to be abused, and not every man is bound. Noah is fine, and that is because he is a good man. These three are not!"

Nancy saw the truth in her friend's words, but she was too overwhelmed to say so.

Eric was shocked by the sight of Paul. He glared at Nancy and Crystal and said, "You two are crazy!" His face had lost all of its colors, and he looked terrified. "What are you going to do to us?"

Crystal walked over to him and smirked. "That is for me to know and you to find out."

Eric turned to Paul. "How did they get you?"

Paul tried to say something, but all that came out was a muffled mumble with the sock in his mouth. Crystal wanted to know what he was saying, so she pulled the sock out of his mouth.

After having been tied upside down for so long, he was barely hanging on to his consciousness, but after coughing a few times, he was able to speak. "They dr*gged me," he murmured. "And then they whipped me with a belt..."

"Oh my God." Eric's body began to tremble. "They dr*gged me too...." He was terrified. He thought - If they whipped Paul, what would they have planned for me?

Chapter 1766 - 284: Piss Off, You Evil Bitch!

Nancy looked at Paul, smiled, and said, "Now that he is up here, I am not as concerned about bathing him as I was. I would rather torture him. What do you think?"

"What do I think?" Crystal laughed. "I think that I like the way that you think. Let's do it!"

Nancy gently touched Crystal's arm. "Can you do me a favor?" she asked. "I would like to torcher Paul by myself. Would you mind torturing Eric or Nathan?"

"It's not a problem," Crystal replied. She winked at Paul and said, "Count your lucky stars. If it were me administering your punishment, it would be a thousand times worse than whatever Nancy has planned!"

Nancy uttered a frustrated humph.

"What's the matter?" Crystal asked. "Do you know how you want to punish Paul?"

"I have an idea," Nancy replied. "I want to shave a word into the side of his head and take a picture. Is it okay?"

"It's perfect!" Crystal replied. "Which word did you have in mind?"

"Bastard." She knew that Paul cared about his appearance a lot, especially his hair.

Eric glanced at Paul sympathetically. "I plan to mourn the loss of your hair."

"If you dare to cut my hair, I will kill you!" Paul shouted angrily.

Crystal gave Paul a nasty look and said, "Keep it up. I would love nothing more than to shove that sock back into your mouth."

Paul's mouth snapped shut.

Nancy went into the bathroom and quickly returned with the electric razor. She plugged it in, put a # 2 guard on it, turned it on, and slid it across Paul's head. Once his head was completely shaved, she took off the guard so that she could write the letters. When she was done, she took a step back, smiled, and asked Crystal? what she thought.

"I like it." Crystal? ran her fingers through his hair, and then she took a series of photos with her camera. "Do you have any harsher punishments in mind? I don't think he has suffered enough..."

"Can we just leave these guys here and go save Clark?" Nancy asked. "By the time someone sets them free, we could be long gone!"

"You wouldn't dare to leave me!" growled Eric. "Mrs. Bush, please remember that you are my wife. Vows were made!"

Paul lifted his head and shouted, "Nancy, you had better not abduct my son!"

"You aren't much of a father," Nancy argued. "You only acknowledge his existence when it suits your needs."

As if on cue, Clark appeared in the doorway. His hand was red and swollen, and he was crying. Nancy rushed over to Clark and picked him up, and without another word to anyone, she carried him downstairs. Crystal followed her friend, but she stuffed a sock into each of the men's mouths before she left.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I can't have you calling out for help. And just so you know, I will let the servants know that these rooms are empty and off-limits."

Downstairs, Nancy was examining her son's hand. She asked what had happened, and he said, "Mommy, my hand was burned."

"What happened? Does it hurt?" It hurt Nancy's heart to see her son in pain.

Clark hugged his mother. "Purr... Mommy. If you blow it...it won't hurt anymore."

Nancy blew on the wound. "What happened?" she asked again. "Mommy, I am fine. It's not painful. If you blow it again..."

As Nancy blew on his wound, she began to cry. When Clark saw this, he stretched out his small hand to wipe her eyes. "Mommy, don't cry!"

A servant entered the living room. She had a First Aid Kit with her. "Here," she said. I will apply medicine to the burn. It will help with the pain and reduce the likelihood of any scarring."

Nancy nodded and let the servant do her work. Once the ointment was applied to the wound, the servant wrapped his hand. "This is to keep it clean," she explained, "and prevent infection."

Almost immediately, Clark stopped crying, and Nancy thanked the servant. "Do you know what happened?" she wondered.

"The young master accidentally poured boiling tea on himself," the servant replied.

"That doesn't make sense." Nancy frowned. "Are you sure that is what happened?"

"I don't understand your meaning," the servant replied.

"You don't need to," Crystal interjected. She turned to Clark and said, "let me see your watch."

Clark nodded and obediently gave her his watch.

"Have you been wearing this all day?" Crystal asked.

"All day, every day," he replied. "Just like Aunty told me to. Am I a good boy?"

"The best!" Crystal replied. "The watch was special. It had a hidden camera built into it. Beneath the cover, there was a tiny screen. If you wanted to see what happened, you just turned back the time and pressed play."

Crystal set the clock back an hour and was not surprised to see that Michelle had been bullying the boy. "It is as I suspected," she muttered.

Noah returned as she was strapping the watch back on Clark's wrist. He had his bodyguards with him, and she asked him, "What are they for?"

"I don't know..." he admitted. "But I have a bad feeling, and I would rather have them on hand and not need them than need them and not have them."

And as it turned out, they would need them.

Michelle had been sleeping peacefully when she was woken by noise in the living room. She wondered what was going on, and she got up so that she could find out. She assumed that it was Paul and Eric getting up to their usual shenanigans, so she was surprised to see Nancy and Clark and Crystal, and she was taken aback by the angry expressions on their faces. She smirked and said, "What crawled up your asses and died?"

Nancy gritted her teeth. "Piss off, you evil bitch!"

"How dare you talk to me like that?" Michelle was furious. "Where is Paul?"

"Paul asked us to take Clark away."

"What do you mean, "away?" asked Michelle suspiciously.

"Away from you!" Nancy replied. "He has seen the video of you mistreating his son, and he is furious.. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes when he gets home...."

Chapter 1767 - 285: Seize Them

Michelle was not the type to give up without a fight. She turned to the servants and said, "Seize them!"

Luckily, Noah had the foresight to bring his bodyguards, and they intervened. They defeated the servants, and then they took Michelle as a prisoner.

Crystal? pointed at a servant and said, "You, go and get a pot of boiling water."

"Me?" The servant shook her head violently. "You can't boss me around."

"This is your chance to redeem yourself!" Crystal exclaimed. "Which side do you want to be on when your master returns?"

The servant thought for a moment, and then she hurried into the kitchen to boil water.

"This is bullshit," Michelle complained. By now, she had figured out that Clark's watch had a camera hidden in it, and she demanded to see it. When Crystal refused to show it to her, she made her hands into claws and lunged at her.

Luckily for Crystal, she had quick She stepped aside, stuck out her foot, and used Michelle's momentum to propel her to the floor. The angry woman landed on her face, and there was an audible crunch as the cartilage in her nose broke reflexes.

There was a moment of silence, and then Michelle sat up. The anger in her eyes turned to distress as she brought her hands up to her bleeding nose. She cried in pain: "Help me... Please..."

She tipped her head back to try to stop the bleeding, and when she opened her mouth, everyone gasped. Her two front teeth were shattered, and her mouth was full of blood. As she tried to talk, it

dribbled down her mouth and ran down her chin, mixed in with the blood. There were bits of flesh, enamel, dentin, and cementum.

Those are my teeth - Michelle thought sadly. She had always been proud of her smile.

Crystal frowned. This might be God's will - she thought - but it is a pity that I didn't knock out a whole row of teeth...

Michelle shouted for her bodyguards, but Crystal had commandeered Eric's men, and they had restrained Michelle's bodyguards.

Crystal smirked. "Nobody's coming for you."

She pulled out her phone, took a few photos, and said, "I had better document this. I am sure you understand. It's for posterity."

"You bitch!" Michelle snarled.

"I may be a bitch." Crystal shrugged. "But at least my face isn't ruined like yours. There is no way that Paul will want you now." She turned to Nancy and said, "If I remember correctly, she slapped you. Do you want to avenge yourself?"

Nancy looked at Clark and then at Michelle, and then she thought about it for a while. Finally, her lips formed a smile, and she said, "I will punish her; not for what she did to me, though. I want her to pay for what she did to Clark."

"Aye," Crystal chuckled. "Let Vengeance be thy name!"

Michelle's entire body began to tremble. "If you dare hurt me, Paul will make you pay!" she shouted.

Nancy rolled her eyes. "Look at you. What is done is done." She stood up, folded her arms beneath her, and said, "There is no going back."

"In for a penny, in for a pound," Crystal giggled. "Hurt her good, Nancy!"

Nancy asked Noah to wait outside with Clark. "He doesn't need to see this," she said.

Clark frowned, and he began to cry. "I want to be with you," he whined.

"I'll only be there a few minutes," Nancy promised. "Be a good boy for Mommy, okay."

Clark blew a kiss to her and said, "Okay, Mommy. I will wait for you."

Once Noah and Clark were gone, Nancy glared at Michelle. "I have been waiting for this for a long time," she said. "But that shouldn't surprise you."

"Wh-Wh-What are y-you g-going to d-do to m-me?" Michelle stammered.

"I want to slap you," Nancy replied, "But I don't want to get your blood on me. So, I guess I'll have to get you cleaned up first." She turned to one of the servants and asked if the pot of water was boiling yet.

"I like the way you think," Crystal said admiringly. "Even your kindness is cruel."

"She needs to pay for what she did to Clark," Nancy said coldly. "It is one thing to mistreat another adult, but it takes a real degenerate to hurt a child. After today, she will think again before she hurts anybody!"

The servant nodded and brought the pot of boiling water into the living room.

"If we had more time, I would strip her down to her skivvies and throw her into a tub of boiling water," Nancy explained. She looked at Michelle and said, "So, consider yourself lucky, and let this serve as a warning."

Nancy instructed the servants to hold Michelle in place. Once Michelle was secured, she slowly lifted the pot.

Michelle began to struggle frantically, but it was all for naught.

"Why are you scared?" Crystal asked. "You did this to a child, so you must not think it is that bad..."

"You will go to Hell for this!" Michelle hissed. "Both of you!"

By now, the pot was above Michelle's head, but as Nancy began to tip it, her consciousness spoke up in the back of her mind. It said, "You can't do this. It is wrong, and if you do it, you will be as much of a monster as she is."

Crystal frowned as she watched her friend straighten the pot. "What's wrong?" she asked.

"I'm sorry," Nancy replied. "I can't do it."

"Do you need my help?" Crystal asked.

"It's better to let the bodyguards do it," Nancy replied. "That way, our consciences will remain clean."

Crystal nodded and helped Nancy pass the pot to a bodyguard.

"That is some pretty fucked up reasoning," Michelle grumbled.

"Shut up!" Nancy hissed. "Nobody asked you!"

Nancy opened her mouth to object, but her screams cut off the words as the bodyguard poured the boiling water over her head. She squeezed her eyes shut, but she could not manage to keep her mouth closed, and some of the water rushed into her mouth. It burnt the inside of her mouth, her tongue, and her throat as it made its way into her stomach.

Michelle was in so much pain that she wished that she were dead. Finally, mercifully, she lost consciousness.

Crystal? turned to Nancy, smiled, and said, "Let's go."

Chapter 1768 - 286: How Did You Know?

By the time Nancy and Crystal? made it to the car, Clark was half asleep. But after all that he had been through, this was no surprise. Not only had Michelle burned the boy's arm and beaten him, but she had also deprived him of sleep and nutritional food. When he heard his mother's voice, though, he opened his eyes and sat up straight. He nuzzled up against her and said, "Thank you for saving me, Mommy."

Nancy ran her fingers through his hair and said, "Clark, my sweetie, we are going to leave all the bad people behind us, and they will never find us. We will live together forever, and we will be happy."

Having rescued Clark, the next step was to rescue Nathan from the castle and meet up with the ship that Noah had arranged for them. After crossing the border of Kuerto, Vic would send a helicopter to greet them. Then, they would go their separate ways. Nathan would go off on his own, Noah would return to the island, and the other three would proceed to Seattle.

Noah was sitting in the driver's seat, and Crystal? was sitting behind him. After they had been on the road for a while, she tapped him on the shoulder. "Are we going to the port now?" she asked.

Noah smiled and nodded.

Crystal? frowned. "But what about Nathan?"

"I have sent some of my men to rescue him," Noah replied. "He will meet us at the port."

"Are you sure that everything will work out okay?" Crystal? asked.

"If there are any problems, my men will contact me. Don't worry."

Crystal? had been tempted to leave Nathan behind, but she knew that once Paul and Eric were set free, they would be out for blood. She did not think Noah would be any safer, though. She met his eyes in the rearview mirror. "I still think that you should come with us," she said. "I worry for your safety."

Noah sighed and said, "I wish that I could, but there is something that I still have to deal with."

Crystal? begged him. "This may be your only chance to escape. If you are on the island, Eric and Paul will not let you go, and there is no knowing what kind of torture you will be forced to endure."

"I am aware." Noah lowered his eyes. He sighed and said, "If I could go, I would. Please don't make this any harder for me than it already is."

Nancy began to cry. "You have done so much for us; too much, really. If I had known how much helping me would cost you, I never would have let you get involved. This is all my fault, and I am so sorry."

Noah smiled. "No matter what happens, I am glad to have helped."

"Mr. Laurent, will you please leave with us?" Crystal? asked again.

Noah sighed, and a tear ran down from his eyes.

Suddenly, it occurred to Crystal? that she may know what was holding Noah back. She turned to Nancy but did not say anything. It was not long before Nancy's brow furrowed.

Nancy was confused, "Why are you staring at me?"

Before Crystal? could reply, Noah interrupted, and for the first time since they had met him, he sounded angry. "Won't you let the matter rest?" he asked. "I would like to go, but I cannot. Now stop going on about it!"

Crystal? and Nancy were taken aback.

The car remained silent for a long time. Nancy was not ready to let the matter go, though, and she leaned over to whisper in Crystal 's ear: "What should we do? I don't want him to get hurt."

"Maybe he has his own principles," Crystal? suggested. "Maybe we shouldn't force him..."

"But..."

Crystal? smiled. "On the other hand..." she whispered. "...if you insist on ensuring his safety, we could knock him out and take him with us."

Nancy's eyes lit up, and she thought Crystal? always had the best ideas!

Crystal? put her hand on her friend's tight and said, "Don't get too excited. You may save his life, but he might resent you for it..."

"That is a risk that I am willing to take."

Back at the castle, Paul and Eric, and Nathan were all asleep. After having struggled for so long, their energy was completely depleted, and they passed out almost immediately after the women left.

Time passed without incident, and Paul was the first to wake up. Then, because he was hanging upside down, the sock in his mouth had loosened up, and he was able to spit it out. He saw that Eric and Nathan were asleep, and he shouted at them until they woke up, and they were also able to get the socks out of their mouths.

"I wish you hadn't woken me up," Nathan groaned. "I had a wonderful dream."

"You and I both," Eric complained.

"Never mind that!" Paul exclaimed. "You sound like a couple of little girls! We need to work together and find a way to escape." He turned to Eric. "If we shout loud enough, your subordinates are sure to come. Right?"

"I doubt it," Eric replied despondently. "I believe they have been compromised..."

"How did it come to this?" Paul whined. "I have always been the master of my universe, but now look at me. Tied up like this - upside-down - I cannot even take a piss! It is so humiliating."

"We definitely underestimated the girls," Paul replied. "And I never would have guessed that Noah had recovered to such an extent."

Eric sighed. "I don't get it either. One minute he is on his deathbed, and the next, he is hauling you about the house like some strong man. It makes no sense!"

Paul smiled and said, "At least they can't escape."

"I have this island in my back pocket," Paul explained. "Nobody comes or goes without me saying so."

"That's all good and well," Eric scoffed. "But if nobody comes to our aid, we will surely die here. After having that sock stuck in my mouth for so long, my body is already dehydrated. I am so thirsty!"

"Someone will bring us water soon," Paul predicted.

Just as Eric opened his mouth to argue Paul's prophecy, a guard opened the door and walked in, and he had a bottle of water in his hand. There was another guard behind him, and Paul recognized them as belonging to Eric.

Eric's jaw dropped open.. "How did you know?" he asked.

Chapter 1769 - 287: Will You Finally Admit

The guards offered the three prisoners the bottled water, and they drank the liquid of life with unadulterated pleasure. But when Eric asked the guards to release them, they ignored his request.

Paul stared at Eric sullenly. "Aren't these your subordinates?" he asked. "What is going on?"

Eric said nothing. There was nothing to be said. He had no idea how his servants had been turned against him.

Once the guards had finished giving them water, they left the room without having said a single word.

For Paul, the worst of it was having to be upside down, and he almost wished that they had not been given water. A part of him wished for death, and the water would just extend his life.

Eric saw that Paul had fallen into a funk, and he said, "Cheer up, bro. They will release us in two days."

Paul eyed him suspiciously. "How do you know that?"

"We have been given water, which means they want us alive," Eric explained. "The ladies just want time to run away. Once they think that they are safe, they will call the guards and order them to set us free."

Paul smirked and said, "They will regret that. Once we are free, there is nowhere in the world that they can go that I cannot find them.

Suddenly, two strong men walked into Nathan's room. They went to the side of the bed and began to untie him.

"Thank God!" Eric exclaimed. "We are saved."

"I am afraid not." Nathan chuckled and said, "This is my exit. I'll see you both in Hell, suckers!"

Noah got his group to the pier without incident, and Nathan arrived shortly after. The cruise ship was ready, and as soon as they boarded, it set sail. For the moment, Noah was still with them. Once they were out of sight, he would take one of the smaller boats back to the island. Crystal's only regret was that they had not been able to torture Eric and Paul any more than they had. However, the smiles on Nancy and Clark's faces made it all worth it. If they were happy, nothing else mattered.

Crystal? looked at the food in front of her and asked Clark if he liked sea crabs. He said that he did, so she invited him to help her peel them. After peeling one, she smiled and said, "This is really relaxing. I am glad that you are doing it with me."

Clark nodded and said, "I like seafood."

Crystal? selected another crab, but Clark took it out of her hand. "I'll do it," he said.

Crystal? smiled. "Alright."

When he was done, he held it in the air and said, "This one's for me. Uncle Noah can have the bigger one."

Crystal? was startled. Clark had never called Noah his Uncle before. Before she could put too much thought into what that meant, one of the guards came running from below deck. "What's the matter?" she asked.

It took a moment for the guard to get his breath, and then he said, "Master Davis has refused to eat. He said that his stomach hurts, and he wants to see you, Miss Smith."

Crystal? cursed under her breath. She raised her eyebrows and thought - This man's arrogance knows no bounds!

He knew that she cared whether he lived or died, and he was using that knowledge against her. By mentioning his stomach problems, Nathan knew that she was sure to come. She sighed and said, "Go back and tell him that if he doesn't eat, I will throw him into the sea. He can feed the sharks for all I care. Tell him those exact words."

The guard's face turned white, and he hurried back the way he had come. Crystal? chuckled, but when she turned back to Clark, she saw that he looked as afraid as the guard had.

"Will you really feed him to the sharks," the boy asked.

"No, no!" Crystal? laughed jovially. "I was just kidding," she explained. "Do you understand?"

Clark nodded and said, "That is good because I don't think he would like it very much..."

"He definitely wouldn't," Crystal? agreed.

"Now, let's get back to these crabs."

Within minutes, the troublesome guard returned.

"What now?" Crystal? sighed.

The guard looked desperate. "Miss Smith, Master Davis still won't eat. He says that he is in a lot of pain."

"Fine." Crystal? sighed and said, "I'm on my way."

Nancy smiled and said, "You still care about Master Davis, don't you?"

"I care for him," Crystal? admitted. "But not in the way that you are thinking. Nobody deserves to fall into the hands of Paul and Eric!"

Nancy nodded and said, "Good thing we remembered Wolf!"

"Good thing!"

Wolf was laying down, gnawing a bone, and he barked amicably when he heard his name.

Crystal? stood up and went below deck, and when she got to Nathan's room, she went in without knocking. He had one of the ship's larger rooms and was luxurious. He was lying in bed, and there was a steak on his night table.

Crystal? sighed and said, "I can't believe that you are still giving me a hard time. After having been on a limited diet for so long, I would have thought that you would be anxious to eat such a choice cut of beef. I ordered this especially for you, and you refuse to eat it. Is there something wrong with your stomach? Do you want me to find a doctor for you?"

Nathan did not reply. He had his hand on his stomach, but his face was expressionless.

"Have you taken your medicine?" Crystal? asked. She walked to the side of his bed and checked his temperature with the back of her hand. "You look fine... and your forehead isn't warm."

Nathan smiled and grabbed her wrist. "You have finally come," he said.

"You tricked me!" Crystal? sneered. "You don't have a stomach ache at all, do you?"

"I only said that I did to prove a point," Nathan replied. "You wouldn't have come if you didn't care for me. Don't you think that it is about time you stopped lying to yourself?"

Crystal? felt like he could see into her heart, and she quickly turned away so that he would not see how exposed she felt. "I just don't want you to die on the boat," she said. "Your death would bring us bad luck!"

"You could have let me die in the castle..." Nathan let the sentence hang.

"Don't put too much stock in that. I also saved Nancy's dog." She shrugged and said, "It is not in me to let a person die if I can save them. Even if I don't like them!"

"Am I nothing more than a dog to you?" Nathan asked.

"Exactly."

"I am fine with that." Nathan grinned and said, "So long as I can be your dog. What do you think about that?"

"I don't think very much about that," Crystal? replied. "Even if you were a dog, I wouldn't want you. I would nurse you back to health, and then I would send you to the pound."

Nathan was still holding her hand, and when she tried to pull away, not only did he increase his grip, but he pulled her forward so that she fell into his arms.

Crystal's ire began to rise as he wrapped his other arm around her. "Let me go!" she growled.

When Nathan saw that she was getting angry, he softened his tone and said, "If I let you go, will you finally admit that you care about me....?"

Chapter 1770 - 288: Do You Have Any Evidence?

8-10 minutes

Crystal did not know what to say. She felt like she was in a real bind. She thought - I don't want to tell him that I care about him, but if I refuse, he may never let me go...

"I'll be happy if you say that you care about me," Nathan continued. "Why must you torture me so...? Haven't I done enough to prove my love for you?"

"You have done enough for me," Crystal admitted. She glared at him and said, "Similarly, you have done enough for Helen. Do you deny it?"

Nathan rolled his eyes and said, "You have always been jealous. I forgot about that."

"Jealous?" Crystal scoffed. "I am not jealous. I am hurt... You hurt me..."

"That's not my fault," Nathan argued. "If you had told me that you minded, instead of pretending that you didn't, things would have been different. Besides, Helen is not pregnant with my child."

"Now, who's lying to themselves?" Crystal growled. "If that were the case, you would not have hidden so many things from me."

Nathan's eyes filled with tears, and he said, "I will tell you everything, starting now. Perhaps it will make a difference. Let me tell you what happened."

Crystal thought about it for a second, and then she said, "If you let me go, I will listen. I can't think of anything you could say to change anything, though..."

Nathan let her go, and then he slowly told her the whole story. He explained why he pretended to be sick, treated her cold, and pretended to be nice to Helen. Then he told her about the paternity test of the child and that he had not instructed his guards to crucify and whip her. "They should never have done that," he said sadly. "My Grandfather ordered them to do that."

When he was done talking, he looked Crystal in the eyes and waited to hear what she would say.

"This story sounds moving, but I don't believe it," Crystal murmured. "I don't think there is such a ruthless Grandpa in the world."

Nathan grimaced. "You have seen him," he

argued. "You have seen how horrible he is. How can you doubt that he is capable of this?"

Crystal frowned. "Do you have any evidence?" she asked. "I only have your word... and that is not enough."

"I am your evidence," Nathan replied. "I was captured by Eric. That should be all the evidence that you need."

"What does that have to do with anything?" Crystal asked.

"It is everything!" Nathan exclaimed. "Don't you see?!?!"

She did not. He seemed so sad and sincere, though, that it broke her heart to deny him. "I am sorry," she said, "but I need more evidence; real evidence, not this flimsy, nonsensical explanation...."

"Please," Nathan begged. "Give me a chance to show you some evidence. Come back home with me, and I will prove to you that I am not lying."

"Okay, I'll go home with you!" Crystal said sarcastically. "Sure! That sounds like a great f*****g idea. Once we are there, you would never let me out of your sight. Isn't that so? Do you think that I'm a fool?"

Nathan's face turned white. "I have never thought that you were a fool," he said. "On the contrary, you are very smart!"

Crystal gave him a dirty look and said, "I don't need you sucking up to me, and you may as well not bother because it won't change anything."

"I wasn't sucking up," Nathan argued. "But never mind that. If you aren't going to come home with me, then where will you go?"

"As if I would tell you!" Crystal laughed cruelly.

"I'm only asking because I care about you," Nathan murmured.

Hearing this, Crystal felt like her heart was being stabbed. "Bullshit... You do not care... You are just trying to get me to let my guard down."

Tears began to stream down Nathan's face.

"I care for you deeply," he said.

"Bullshit, I don't believe you!"

"You have to believe me," Nathan cried.

"My heart was rent asunder when I learned about what happened to you! If I had a knife, I would cut my heart out of my chest and show you!"

"Cut it out." Crystal rolled her eyes and said, "Don't be such a drama queen." It hurt her to see him hurting, but this was more than she could handle.

"Please don't roll your eyes at me," Nathan begged. "I am bearing my soul here, and you dare to make a jest of it! And why is that? You are reluctant to let me plunge a knife into my chest. Is that because you

love me? Crystal, I thought you were extraordinarily strong, but now I find out you are a coward. Only a coward would be too afraid to profess their love!"

"It has nothing to do with fear!" Crystal exclaimed. She took a deep breath and said, "You are egomaniac, and you live in a fantasy world. I do not love you. In fact, I am sick of you!"

"Since you don't love me, why do you care if I die?" Nathan demanded.

"We have been over this, and it is getting old," Crystal replied. "But if you insist..." She walked to the coffee table and picked up the knife that was sitting beside a fruit plate. He asked for it - she thought bitterly as she walked back. She offered him the blade without saying anything.

Nathan took the knife from her hand and aimed the sharp end at his chest. He began to apply pressure, and a small pool of blood appeared and ran down his chest. "So be it," he said. "I will show you my heart. But Crystal... once I take it out, I cannot put it back."

"Don't think that I'm going to stop you." Crystal glared at him.

Men are so stupid - she thought as she picked up a wastebasket. She handed it to him and said, "You can put your heart here, where it has always belonged. Oh, and try not to stain my sheets with your blood." She hoped that her indifferent attitude would give him cause to pause.

It did not, though. Without looking up, Nathan increased the pressure. The flow of blood increased, and a groan passed through his lips. It was clear that he was in an incredible amount of pain.

"You're crazy!" Crystal muttered. Tears began to trickle from her eyes and down her cheeks.

"I'm not," Nathan argued. "My thinking is crystal clear. I would rather die than live without your love."

The knife scraped across Nathan's sternum and created a sound reminiscent of nails on a chalkboard. Suddenly, blood began to gush out of the wound. The sound turned Crystal's stomach, and she began to feel dizzy. Her lower lip started trembling, and tears welled up in her eyes.

Finally, Crystal could not take it anymore. This is one game of chicken that has gone too far - she thought. "You can stop that now," she said. "Please..."

"Why?" Nathan's brow furrowed as he looked up.

"I just don't want you to do this!" Crystal exclaimed. "It is disturbing, and I don't like it. You say you love me. Well, if you do, prove it by not putting me through this ordeal...."

Nathan nodded, and as he withdrew the blade, he used his free hand to stop the bleeding. When he saw how upset she was, he smiled, patted the bed, and said, "Come here. Sit down."

Crystal nodded, and without overthinking it, she sat down beside him. Her hands were trembling, and he held them and gave them a reassuring squeeze. "What were you afraid of?" he asked. "Were you afraid that I would kill myself? Is that it?"

Crystal looked away. She was crying uncontrollably by now, and she was ashamed. "Why do you care if I live or if I die?" Nathan wondered. "Is it because I have a position in your heart?"

Crystal continued to sob silently. By now, she had covered her face with her hands, and she felt the beginnings of a panic attack coming on.

Despite her despondence, Nathan carried on with his little speech.. He said, "I have died once, and the fear of death has no hold on me. But if you admit that you care for me, then I will live for you! Please, love me once, and I will be at your disposal!"

Chapter 1771 - 289: I Love You Very Much

Crystal was a little startled by just how cheeky, and sly Nathan was, not to mention how manipulative. He had set a trap for her, and he was so confident that she would fall into it that he had put his life on the line - Supposedly. Now that she realized that his suicide attempt was nothing but a game, she was able to compose herself. She would not allow herself to fall victim to his devious plan.

She wiped her eyes with her sleeve, shook her head, and said, "I don't love you. I never did, and I never will."

To Crystal's surprise, Nathan pressed the knife back into his chest, and he twisted it so that the bloody wound became bigger. He was gripping the handle so tightly that his knuckles turned white.

There was an evil shine in Nathan's eyes and a creepy little smile on his face. "What did you say?" he asked.

"I said..." Crystal began to sob again, and in a hoarse voice, she said, "I said I didn't love you... but I lied."

Nathan's eyebrows wriggled. "How so?"

"How could I not love you?" Crystal whispered.

"What do you mean?" Blood began spurting out of Nathan's chest, but he seemed not to care. "Do you love me or don't you? You still haven't answered my question."

"Let me get you some help," Crystal cried. "I'm begging you. Your wound is bleeding badly..."

"If you don't answer my question, it'll bleed more," Nathan threatened.

Crystal stared at him in anger. "Haven't you achieved your goal?" she shouted. "Isn't what I'm doing an obvious answer? Why do you have to force me like this?" She could not stand the sight of so much blood, and she began to panic.

Curiously, Nathan was as cool as a cucumber. He had lost a lot of blood, though, and he was growing weaker by the minute. He said, "You are being ridiculous. Why is it so hard for you to say that you love me?"

"You know that I do," Crystal replied. "So, what is the big deal?"

"I want to hear you say it." His voice was unsteady. "And if you don't say it now, you will not be able to say it later. This is your last chance..."

Crystal lowered her eyes, and she finally admitted that she loved him.

Nathan's eyes lit up, and he said, "Your words sound as sweet as the most beautiful song in the world."

"Alright." Crystal sighed and said, "I'll call Noah in now."

Crystal began to shout for help, but when no one came, it occurred to her that she was not being heard. She told Nathan that she would go get Noah herself, but he would not let her go. Now that she had professed her love for him, he wanted to hear her say it again and again until it seemed that she had said "I love you" a million times, and still he wanted more!

He is acting like a spoiled child - Crystal thought. "I love you! I love you! I love you! I love you! Now can I go get Noah?!?!"

"Not yet. Tell me who it is that you love." Nathan puckered his lips and said, "Say my name."

"Nathan Davis, I love you."

"Crystal," Nathan whispered her name. "I love you too. I love you very much. I'll go on loving you for the rest of my life." And tears were streaming down his eyes. "I love you very much!"

Crystal wanted to hit him for the grievances she had suffered, for the lost time that they could have spent together, and for what he had just done to himself. In the condition that he was in, though, she didn't dare. All she could do was cry.

"Silly girl, what are you crying for?" he asked while wiping her tears away with his thumb.

"Are you an idiot?" Crystal shouted. "Who would stab themselves to make a point. That was so stupid of you, and now you won't even let me get a doctor!"

"I did what I did to prove my sincerity so that you would feel safe enough to proclaim your love for me," Nathan explained. "I had tried every other way that I could think of, but nothing else worked. This was my last-ditch effort. And now that you have said that you love me, even if I die, I will die happy." He tried to kiss her, but he lacked the strength."

Crystal leaned over and kissed Nathan, and she was taken aback by how cold his skin was. She felt like she had kissed a corpse. She pulled away from him and said, "You've lost too much blood. If you don't let me go and get Noah, you are going to die."

"Say you love me one more time," Nathan whispered. "Then you may go."

"Why do you have to be so stubborn?"

"Will you ever say it again?"

"Yes, I will as many times as you like. I will say it to you every day, okay! Now let me go, you big lummo!"

"Yes..." Nathan murmured. "Go... But... come... back..." His eyes closed as she dashed out of the room, and within seconds he lost consciousness.

"How is he?" Crystal asked. "Will he live?"

"He'll be fine," Noah replied. When he had arrived, the first thing that he did was check Nathan's breathing. It was very shallow, but Noah was optimistic. Next, he checked Nathan's circulation. Then he began to treat the wound, and as he worked, he kept Crystal up to date on the situation.

"Don't worry," Noah continued. "The blade didn't hit any key organs. My only real concern is with how much blood he has lost."

"Can we give him a blood transfusion?" Crystal asked.

"We could, if we were at a hospital, but we don't have the right equipment on this ship." Noah sighed. "Mostly, not having the transfusion just means that his recovery will take longer. His prognosis is good, though. As long as there is no infection, he should be up and about in no time."

Noah cleaned the wound, gave it six stitches, applied Polysporin, and bound it uptight. "You will need to help him for the next week or so," he explained. "He will need assistance eating, bathing, and going to the washroom. Are you up to the task?"

Crystal nodded.

There was a knock on the door, and Nancy came in, and when she saw Nathan all neatly bound up, she asked, "How is your patient, Doctor?"

Noah smiled and said, "He'll be fine. I just can't believe that he stabbed himself to force Crystal to say that she loved him. What a Neanderthal!"

"Not to mention a manipulative bastard!" Nancy added.

Luckily, Nathan was still unconscious. If he had heard what was being said about him, he would have blown a gasket.

"Never mind that," Crystal muttered. "Can we talk about something else?"

"Sure.." Nancy smiled and said, "Your wish is my command. What would you like to talk about?"

Chapter 1772 - 290: Say My Name

Crystal wriggled her eyebrows playfully as she turned and returned Nancy's smile. "What's going on between you and Noah?" she wondered.

Nancy's smile turned to a frown, and she said, "I don't know what you mean."

"Don't play coy with me," Crystal chided her. "Clark likes him, and he relies on him. I always see him following Noah around. The boy may as well be his shadow. So, please tell me what you think about him! You must have some feelings for him. After all, you married him!"

Noah's back was stiff. He was pretending that he could not hear their conversation, but it was getting harder by the minute.

"Well..." Nancy sighed. "I didn't expect him and Clark to become so close. Normally, my son is standoffish around men."

"Friends?" Crystal scoffed. "Is that what you think they are? I feel like they act more like a father and son than a couple of buddies." Noah's back became stiffer.

Nancy was taken aback by her friend's words. "Are you suggesting that I let Noah be Clark's Godfather?" she asked.

"Godfather...?" Crystal was speechless. Is Nancy really this dull? - she wondered. Before she could say anything more, though, Nathan stirred, and his eyes opened. He looked around the room, and when he saw Crystal, he smiled and said, "You're still here."

Crystal shrugged. "I was waiting to see if you would die."

Nathan sighed and said, "You care about me. You cried for me. You said that you love me. Are you going to deny it?" He seemed to not see the other people in the room. He only had eyes for Crystal, and the expression on his face made her feel slightly embarrassed.

Crystal rolled her eyes. "Nathan Davis, you are such a jerk!"

"I may be a jerk." Nathan chuckled. "But you love this jerk!"

"This is neither the time nor the place for this conversation!" Crystal scolded him.

"Are you afraid to let your friends know that you love me?" Nathan asked. His chummy words left her tongue-tied, and she could only stare at him in silent protest.

Crystal was starting to regret saving his life. I should have given him to the sea like I'd threatened to do - she thought.

Nancy was beginning to feel awkward, so she cleared her throat and said, "You two seem like you need some privacy." She nodded to Noah. "Let's leave these two love birds alone."

"Of course." Noah closed his medicine bag, turned to Nathan, and said, "If you need anything, have one of the girls call me. In the meantime, we will start thinking about dinner."

Before Crystal knew what was happening, she was alone with Nathan. She coughed nervously, and then she got up to change the water. As she picked up the basin, she asked Nathan how he was feeling, and he said that he thought he had a fever.

Crystal's brow furrowed, and she set the basin down. "Let me see," she said as she reached out to touch Nathan's forehead. Then, as their skin touched, he grabbed her hand.

"F**k that noise!" Crystal growled as she tried to pull away. "How dare you try to trick me again?!?"

"I just wanted to see if you cared," he replied. He refused to let her hand go. He brought it to his heart and pressed her palm flat against his chest. "Can you feel my heart?" he asked. "It's beating super-fast. You caused that..."

"You are too much." Crystal sighed. "Are you ready to eat yet?"

"I am," Nathan replied. "I want you to feed me, though. Will you do that?"

"You wish!" Crystal replied. "You have enough strength to feed yourself, and your hands are fine."

"Then say you love me." Nathan bargained with her.

Crystal smirked. "Why should I do that?"

"You know why," Nathan replied. "You promised me that you would say it as many times as I like!"

"You believed that?" Crystal scoffed. "I said that because you were in danger. Nathan Davis, when did you become so silly?"

Nathan's pupils dilated, and his face turned red. "Crystal Smith! How dare you go back on your word?"

Crystal smirked. "You can't prove that I said anything!"

"Can't I?" A shark-like Cheshire grin appeared on his face, and he said, "I recorded everything that you said." To prove it, he stretched his arm, pressed a button on his watch, and Crystal's words came back to haunt her.

Oh, f**k! - thought Crystal. The recording started, and she was embarrassed by the sound of her begging and sobbing. "How dare you record this?!?!" She was infuriated.

"I couldn't miss such an important opportunity," he replied. "You were finally being honest. I've never heard such a touching declaration of love."

"Turn it off!" Crystal shouted. The recording made her feel uncomfortable. He paid no mind to her complaints, though. Instead, when the recording ended, he started it over from the beginning.

"Enough!" Crystal shouted. "I'm ordering you to turn it off!"

The recording continued without interruption -

(Tell me who it is that you love," Nathan; Say my name."

Crystal sighed and said, "Nathan Davis, I love you.")

"That is the most beautiful sound that I have ever heard," Nathan said, and he rewound it so that he could hear that part again -

(Crystal sighed and said, "Nathan Davis, I love you.")

"Whatever," Crystal hissed. She picked up the basin and went to the bathroom to change the water. She took her time, hoping that he would fall asleep while she was gone, but when she returned, she found him as attentive as he had been when she left him.

Crystal had to clench her fists to suppress the impulse to beat him up. She could not see how devious his plan had been. She thought - What a scheming bastard! He had known that she still cared about him, and he had used her feelings - her weakness - against her. "That will be enough of that," she said. "I am going to leave now."

"Don't go." Nathan pleaded with her. "Say it again, and I'll turn it off right away. What do you say?"

"Those three words become cheap if they are said too often," Crystal replied. "When those words are spoken casually, they are meaningless. I am not like you."

"I do not say them casually either," Nathan argued, "and I do not believe that you did either. Obviously, the love that you have for me will last a lifetime!"

"You don't know what you're talking about." Crystal looked him over and grimaced. "I don't intend to spend my life with such an overbearing, unreasonable man. You bring nothing but bad luck, and getting together with you was the biggest mistake of my life!"

There was a knock at the door, and Nancy walked in. She smiled and said, "Dinner is ready. Shall we all eat in here with Nathan?"

"Sure, come on in. I didn't expect it to be done so soon."

Nancy pushed the door fully open to make room for Noah and the small dining car that he was pulling. Clark and Wolf followed behind them.

"With Nathan's stomach problem, I thought I should get dinner on as quickly as possible. I noticed that he didn't touch the steak, so I made a simple soup with pasta."

Crystal nodded and said, "I'm sure that he will appreciate your thoughtfulness."

Meanwhile, Nathan continued to play the recording on repeat.