

My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 536

Chapter 536

Chapter 536 Missing

The air was saturated with the smell of smoke from the explosion. It was causing my vision to blur. I didn't see the scene clearly until the smoke dissipated. The cliff was towering so high above the sea, that just looking at the height of the fall made me feel dizzy. Below it were the rough, turbulent waves of the sea. There was no trace of Ady anywhere to be seen.

Everyone was standing at the edge of the cliff now. Timmy came out of nowhere with a gun in his hand. It seemed like he was the one who had just fired the gun.

When Luther's cohorts saw that their leader was no more, they had no intention of fighting back anymore. Alvaro knelt on one knee at the edge of the cliff, with his bleeding hand on his knee. He looked at the bottom of the cliff, both shocked and heartbroken.

A policeman asked Alvaro to go to the hospital to have his finger reattached. Alvaro, however, insisted on going with the police to search for Ady.

I followed them down the cliff and arrived at the rocks at the bottom of the cliff.

The wind was whipping wildly. The waves lashed violently against the rocks. There seemed to be the smell of blood lingering in the sea wind, mixed in with the fishy smell.

Shreds of burnt remnants of clothing littered the area. I also saw a broken arm. It belonged to Luther.

Everyone looked around urgently, but we didn't find Ady.

At this moment, Alvaro had recovered from the pain of his injury. He stood on a rock and looked at the sea motionlessly. The police and Timmy were searching for Ady in the water.

Suddenly, Alvaro jumped headlong into the sea.

“Alvaro!” I cried out desperately after him.

His hand was so severely hurt, and it was icy in the sea. How could he possibly withstand such conditions? But he dived deep into the sea’s depths quite quickly. The waves were completely rogue. I looked at the sea, overwhelmed by anxiety. The policemen came back without finding a thing. But Alvaro hadn’t resurfaced yet.

After a while, he popped his head out of the sea.

He swam towards the shore. Then he sat on the shore and looked at the open sea. He looked completely exhausted.

He was calm, exceptionally calm. It seemed like the more pain he felt, the calmer he became.

While he was suppressing his pain and feeling guilty about everything, he lost consciousness.

His wound hadn’t been treated timeously and he had been soaked from his long dive in the cold sea. When he was sent to the hospital, they found that he had a high fever.

I stayed with him and didn’t leave his side. He was unconscious because of the raging fever his body was fighting against. His body twitched from time to time and he sometimes uttered a few words in his sleep. The hand with the little finger cut off trembled every now and then. It must be excruciatingly painful.

He used to be such a joker. Sometimes he acted like a playboy for amusement purposes. This was the first time I had seen him so weak and fragile. I felt so sorry for him when I saw him involuntarily twitch in his coma.

He was in agony, and I was a fellow sufferer.

When he woke up, it was already pitch dark. He opened his vacuous eyes and no one could tell what he was thinking.

I said with heavy guilt, "I'm sorry. This is all my fault..." With his pale face, he looked at me and shook his head slightly with the little strength that he could muster.

"It's all my fault."

When he raised his hand, he saw the thick gauze on it. For a moment, he seemed a little confused by the sight. It took him some time to remember that his finger had been cut off.

"I am so sincerely sorry about your finger!"

At this moment, I didn't know what to say except apologizing.

He slowly put down his hand and chuckled lightly.

"It doesn't matter if one of the ten fingers is gone. Besides, it's worth it. Luther is no more," he said, seeing the silver lining.

But Ady also paid a heavy price with her life.

Her dead body was still missing. The police had searched for an inordinately long time, but they still couldn't find her body. So we were quite certain that she was dead.

Because I was so overwhelmed by pangs of guilt, I was finally able to lift myself out of the grief that had enveloped me, and finally, I could accept that Derek had passed away.

When it came to things that could not be changed, I could only accept the truth.

A few days after Alvaro was discharged from the hospital, a strange man called at the villa and said he was a lawyer for Dere International. My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 537

Chapter 537

Chapter 537 The CEO

According to the lawyer, Derek had made arrangements to transfer all of his shares of Dere International. He owned fifty-one percent—twenty- one of which were given to me, twenty for Lean, and ten for Aaron.

The news of Derek's death caused an uproar. With such a massive company deprived of a head, tension and anxiousness pervaded the entire group.

A board meeting would be held to find his successor. I now possessed a large proportion of the entirety of shares, which gave me greater power to influence the election results. So, the lawyer hoped that I could attend the meeting.

The day of the board meeting came. I had especially selected a business suit from the wardrobe. I put the clothes on and turned to the mirror, fixing my hair and putting on make-up. The whole ensemble had the desired effect. Gone was the pale, tired face I had been so accustomed to seeing recently. A fierce, powerful woman stared back at me.

Derek built Dere International from the ground up. He had passed away, but his legacy would remain standing. I could never forgive myself if I failed him now.

At long last, I understood why he had chosen to guide and encourage me. He was a true mentor, teaching me everything he knew. It was all to make sure I was ready.

Even now, he was one step ahead of me, clearing my path. Derek had made arrangements beforehand, having already foreseen the troubles that lay in wait. I knew he had high hopes for me, and he had made sure to arm me well—my arsenal loaded with all his teachings so that I would be able to find a way through any problem.

I was ready. With one final glance at my reflection, I left and drove straight to Dere International.

I had already braced myself for this day. I knew exactly what it was that I was getting into, but no amount of readiness could stop the dampening of my mood when I stepped inside the company.

I had been here a thousand times before. In the past, I went here just to look for him, but he was no longer here.

The staff murmured polite greetings, one of them pressing the elevator button.

I went straight to the top floor where the meeting room was.

The door was closed. The others were inside, probably already discussing matters. I walked closer to the door and heard muffled sounds.

I took a deep breath, then pushed the door open.

A hush fell in the room, all their gazes fixed on me as I walked inside. I kept my back straight and my head held high.

Lean sat in the chair that used to be Derek's. I could already tell that the major shareholders were dissatisfied with the fact that Lean was in charge of the whole Dere International. The muted sounds from earlier were from an argument that they were having just before I entered.

"My apologies for being late."

I pulled out an empty chair next to Lean and sat down.

Confused glances were exchanged among the occupants of the room. As if on cue, the lawyer stood up to explain my appearance immediately.

"Eveline Stone holds twenty-one percent of the shares of Dere International, hence her attendance in this meeting."

The other shareholders broke off into loud expressions of disagreement. Most of them criticized Lean for being incompetent and having nothing to show for his achievements. There was no way they were

letting him become the head. Someone else would be a better fit for such a high position, and they already had a recommendation in mind.

Lean was uncharacteristically silent as he listened to their disparagement.

I understood how he was feeling. No one could blame him for feeling trapped and helpless. He was at the center of everyone's disapproval, and it was not as if their words were empty accusations. It was true that Lean was young, and he had only been in the company for a short time. He had yet to accomplish anything substantial to be recognized. To the others, being empty-handed and falling short of achievements meant a lack of ambition. It was not unreasonable for the shareholders not to trust him.

I listened to them ramble until I decided I had enough. Calmly, I stood up and said, "I'll be transferring my shares to Lean."

Lean's head whipped toward me in wide-eyed shock.

"I will also be transferring my shares to him!"

A voice suddenly came from the door.

Once again, silence prevailed in the room as Aaron walked inside.

The lawyer dutifully announced that Lean now held fifty-one percent of the shares of Dere International and had absolute control over the entire company.

The other shareholders had concocted their own plans, but they should have come better equipped if they wanted to prevent Lean from being named as the next CEO. I bet they had never seen it coming that Aaron and I would back Lean up.

Some of them stubbornly opposed the decision and even threatened to withdraw their shares.

My lips curved into a faint smile. "Of course, you can do as you like with your shares. The Jolly & Mayer Company would be more than happy to support Dere International."

I watched with great satisfaction as recognition dawned on the shareholders' faces. It seemed that they had finally realized that the CEO of the Jolly & Mayer Company was none other than me. Their mouths gaped wordlessly, too dumbfounded to come up with anything to say. My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 538

Chapter 538

Chapter 538 A Surprise

After the meeting, Lean still remained seated there. He didn't show much joy for the victory.

I said to him, "Lean, Derek and you have the same surname. While it's easy to start a business, it is quite difficult to maintain it. I gave Dere International to you. I hope you can run it with great efficacy and don't let him down."

When Lean raised his head, his eyes were ever so slightly bloodshot. He pursed his lips for some time, before he eventually said, "Thank you, Eveline, Aaron." The smallest trace of relief rose in my mind. "This is the first instance that you've thanked me with such sincerity."

With a guilty look on his face, Lean said, "I must admit that I've been unreasonable in the past, and did a lot of incredibly stupid things. Please forgive me."

I smiled faintly. "If I ever hated you, I wouldn't have supported you today."

Lean nodded and took a deep, steady breath, as if he had just made an important decision.

"I won't let you and Derek down," he reassured me.

I left the conference room with Aaron. As I walked to the elevator, I looked at the familiar office, lost in my own thoughts.

“Mr. Sullivan,” a voice said.

When I heard someone speak, I was quite surprised. The words “Mr. Sullivan” made my heart skip a beat and jump straight to my throat.

I turned around and saw Lean walking in my direction. Lean had become the current Mr. Sullivan of this company. How could I forget that already?

Perhaps my excitement and disappointment were written on my face, but Lean walked up to me and said, “Eveline, I’m truly sorry for your loss.”

I still held onto a little hopeful fantasy in the depths of my heart. What if Derek suddenly appeared in front of me one day?

It was snowing when I walked out of the Dere International offices.

Aaron said to me encouragingly, “Eveline, be strong.”

I nodded and asserted, “I will.”

I would be strong, but I would also be sad at the same time. I would miss Derek so much that I would never be able to forget his memory.

Another year was going to pass. I still remembered what he said on the first New Year’s Eve that we had spent together. He said that he would spend New Year’s Eve with me every year from that point onwards.

when you just hold the glass.” 2

I put down the glass, my hands tremblingly. My eyes were blurred, and I couldn’t control my emotions. I threw myself into her arms and held onto her tightly. “Lulu! I’ve missed you so much!”

Louise chuckled appreciatively.

“If you hold me and cry like this, others will suspect that we’re a couple. I’m the unfaithful man, and you’re the woman who is being bullied by your husband.”

She still liked to have a joke, just as she had always enjoyed.

I looked up from her arms, tears filling my eyes to the brim. I looked at her with a great sense of pity.

She was significantly thinner and more haggard than before. Even faint crow’s feet could now be seen at the corners of her eyes. It was gratifying that her personality had not changed at all.

“Lulu,” I said gently.

I hadn’t uttered her nickname for such a long time. I thought I would never have the opportunity to say it again.

But she suddenly appeared in front of me. Just calling out her name made my heart ache. Tears kept rolling down my cheeks of their own volition.

She pinched my cheek and said, “Silly girl.” My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch
Chapter 539

Chapter 539

Chapter 539 Tracking Chip

We found a quiet booth and sat together with the wine we had ordered.

“Lulu, how have you been keeping?” I enquired.

She took a sip of the wine, placed the glass down and answered calmly, “All is well with me.”

It was quite apparent that she had no desire to discuss her life in any further detail.

It seemed like both of us had experienced quite a bit over the past two years. We would never be able to chatter and laugh in the carefree manner we had done so previously.

“Eve, I really hold great admiration for you. From the bottom of my heart, I am truly happy to see you so successful,” said Louise.

I looked at her sadly. “Lulu, why weren’t you willing to contact me?”

Louise didn’t say anything for a long time. After an inordinately long pause, she finally took out a necklace from her pocket. It looked exactly like the one I had gifted her. The pendant, however, was missing.

“Eve, you gave me this necklace. I never took it off—I even wore it when I took a shower, even when I slept. I didn’t want to take it off, because it was a gift from you.

However, when I walked on the road one day last year, the chain broke and the pendant fell and broke too. Even if it was broken, I still wanted to keep it safely. But there was something peculiar that I found in the pendant.”

She took out a small bag. Inside it, there was a small device that looked like some sort of electronic chip.

“What’s this?” I asked.

She said, “At that time, out of sheer curiosity, I asked a person who was knowledgeable. He told me that it was a tracking chip.”

I was utterly flummoxed. “A tracking chip?”

Louise smiled faintly when she saw the look of genuine shock horror on my face.

“So you have been kept in the dark too, haven’t you? Look, I don’t believe that you’re the one behind it. However, I absolutely believe with good grounding that Derek was behind this.

Layne and I had hidden ourselves in a secret hideout. He said that it was quite difficult to find US there. However, the police managed to locate our whereabouts quite easily.”

I was just too astonished to string a sentence together in reply.

I recalled that Derek specially gave me that necklace to give to Louise. I didn’t really think anything of it. I really thought that since he hadn’t helped her father, he bought a gift for her to express how apologetic he was.

“Lulu, I really don’t know anything about this. And in my eyes, Derek has always just been a businessman. I’m sorry. You must hate me to death, huh? You can berate me, even hit me if you like. I’m sorry that I caused Layne to be arrested.”

Louise couldn’t help but laugh, she picked up the glass of wine and gulped it down.

“What reason do you have to apologize to me? It is common knowledge that there is no escape from the long arm of the law.

In any event, while Layne had carried out many atrocities that harmed numerous people, he didn’t do anything wrong to me. He risked his life to be good to me, and I will be unable to repay him for that all my life.”

When Layne was caught and detained, it was a very trying time for Louise. After that, she couldn’t lead a peaceful life.

“Lulu, so you don’t hate or blame me? But then, why hadn’t you tried to contact me in the past two years?” Louise snapped her fingers and asked the waiter to serve us more wine.

"I didn't blame you. I just didn't know how I could possibly face you. If I blamed you, I wouldn't have come to see you now."

My nose twitched. I intertwined my arm with hers and leaned against her shoulder.

"Lulu, so you came here specifically to meet me?"

She poked my forehead with her finger.

"What do you think? I heard about what happened to Derek. Of course I knew that you'd be depressed. I'm worried about you, so I came to see you," she said.

I nuzzled my face into her shoulder and her clothes were dampened by my tears.

"Lulu, thank you. If you weren't talking to me and were ignoring me instead, I wouldn't know what to do." Louise smiled sadly.

"Eve, you married an anti-drug policeman, and I married a drug dealer. Such is fate! God's arrangement is very cruel. If we hate each other still, it means that we are seeking out more trouble, right? We used to be such good friends, but God wants US to break our relationship. We should never let anyone take control of our own fate!"

Louise still made remarks in a wholly unrestrained manner, just like she usually did. Meanwhile, I had been crying so hard that I couldn't speak.

We drank a hell of a lot that night. We laughed out loud, as if we had temporarily forgotten all the sadness and pain that enveloped our lives.

At the moment, we were alone, but we were alone with each other for company. We seemed to be back to the past. Back then, we were still single, and were still very carefree. We hadn't suffered such trying tribulations, and we did not experience the heartbreaking relationship that a woman had with a man.

We staggered out of the bar with each other's help and managed to take a taxi. I took her back home.
My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 540

Chapter 540

Chapter 540 Warmth

I had moved back to Derek's villa and left the apartment I bought to Tina.

Louise said she wanted to see the kids when we went back.

The children were already asleep. Quietly, so as not to disturb them, we walked into the room. The soft pad of our footsteps woke the nanny, she got up, moving to turn on the light, but Louise waved a hand to stop her.

For a few moments, we stood beside the bed, watching the children as they slept peacefully. Then, leaving them in the care of their dreams, we walked out.

We went to my room and slept in the same bed as before.

Since Derek had passed away, sleep had been elusive. I would lie in the room awake for long hours, unable to get rest in the empty room. Louise's presence soothed me. Her being here lulled my restlessness and warded off the chill.

She took out two silver bracelets from her bag and gave them to me. "For the children," she said.

"I'm happy that you came to see me. I didn't want you to spend money," I said.

Louise pressed the gifts into my hands and lay down, wrapping the quilt around her.

"I know you don't have anything you would want for now. They are just small gifts. I want you to have them." Her sincerity was more than enough, and I could not refuse her after her words.

I wrapped my arms around her.

“Lulu, where is your kid?”

“I didn’t take him with me. It wouldn’t be ideal for me to bring a child when I go out,” she said.

“Who takes care of him when you leave?”

Louise answered, “Gina is on holidays now. She’s good with children and my son has taken a liking to her, so I leave him in her care when I’m away. I know she would take good care of him.”

She took out her phone and showed me her son’s photo.

The boy was the spitting image of his mother. His round eyes looked back at me from the image—lovely in its innocence.

He should not be too far apart from my own children in age. Back then, not long after the news of Louise’s pregnancy, I had found out that I was in the same boat as her.

Felix came to mind, and I couldn’t help but ask, “Felix. Did he find you? Did you see him?”

Louise nodded without saying anything more. Her eyes were fixed on the ceiling. A few moments went by before she spoke again. “As long as Layne is alive, I will wait for him. He will come out of the prison and we will all be together one day.”

The two of us talked long and deep into the night.

As we were having breakfast the next day, something else tugged on my mind. I hesitated on the words, but in the end, I expressed them. “Lulu, go and visit your father. Don’t leave any regrets.”

Louise looked at me. To my surprise, she burst into laughter the next moment. "You don't have to look at me like that," she said lightly. "I'll go to see him later." After breakfast, she left. The next day, she called me, saying that she was taking the train back home.

I had not expected her to leave so quickly. I had even planned to buy gifts for her kid, too.

Our realities were different now from how they were in the past. We had both grown and changed, especially after having our own families.

In the afternoon, Alvaro visited.

The Alvaro I knew had been a stranger to silence. He was constantly filling space with words, to the point of being glib and mischievous.

But the man I saw now was someone very different. After what happened to Ady, it was as if words had fled.

He used to drive me crazy with his noise, but I found his silence even more unbearable. A heaviness settled in my chest as the minutes stretched with no sound. I went to the kitchen to cook, refusing Alvaro's offer to help.

He followed me to the kitchen. After a brief moment of silence, he gave me a faint smile.

"I just lost a finger. It's not as if I'm disabled."

He placed vegetables into the sink and turned on the tap to wash them.

My eyes went to his hands as he worked. He had such beautiful hands, but now one of them was ruined.

"I'm sorry," I uttered, my voice thick with guilt.

He turned off the tap and raised a wet hand to tuck a stray strand of hair behind my ear.

He was looking at me with a deep gaze, as if he wanted to say something. But in the end, no words came out of his mouth. With another smile, he continued to wash the vegetables.

At dinner, I filled a bowl with soup and sat across from him. My hand was holding my spoon, but I made no move to eat the soup.

Alvaro noticed my unease and smiled gently.

“What is it? You know you can tell me anything.”

I fixed my eyes on him, consciously avoiding looking at his injured hand. Guilt washed over me every time I saw it.

“Alvaro, you should go and do whatever you want. You have no obligation to stay with me all the time.” Some of the light in his eyes dimmed.

“Do you want to push me away that badly?”

I shook my head. “No, it’s not like that. I just don’t want to get in your way. You should be with a woman you could have a life with, someone who could give you a future and children. I...”

I looked down, sorrow weighing heavily on my shoulders.

“I’m not going to marry again.” My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 541

Chapter 541

Chapter 541 Saying Goodbye

Alvaro leaned back in his chair, tilted his head to one side, smiled and said half-jokingly, “If we get married, we’ll get a marriage certificate. You know, effectively it is just a piece of paper. If we don’t,

then we won't have that paper. That's practically the only difference. Your children will have a father, and you know that they need a father. I promise that I won't force you to sleep with me."

"Alvaro!" I looked at him with an air of resignation.

He shrugged and smiled bitterly, "Well, I was just kidding anyway. I know you don't need me though. Well then, I'll leave!"

The meal was quite unpleasant to sit through. There seemed to be a kind of heavy sadness hanging in the air. It flowed into the dishes and stimulated our taste buds in a negative way.

After dinner, I washed the dishes, when I returned from the kitchen, Alvaro was sitting still on the couch. There was faint smoke hovering in front of him.

Just then, the two nannies came down with my children in their arms. Alvaro snubbed out his cigarette immediately and walked towards them.

The twins had known him for such a long time and were very familiar with him. They opened their arms, reaching out to him from a distance. It was clear that they wanted to hold and hug him.

Alvaro squatted down on his haunches, held the two children in his arms and kissed their faces lovingly.

His true feelings could not be disguised. He really loved the two kids with his whole heart.

Alvaro let go of the kids and they soon went to play with their toys. The children's world was simple. There weren't so many sorrowful things for them. They found it easy to be perpetually happy.

Even when I asked them to wave goodbye to Alvaro, they were bubbly and joyful. Their waves were perfunctory. They didn't feel any sadness when saying goodbye.

I saw Alvaro out. It was snowing heavily outside. Snowflakes whirled wildly in the sky like a myriad of feathers.

Soon, thousands of snowflakes fell onto Alvaro's hair. I figured that I must be in the same situation.

When he reached his car, he turned around and said half-jokingly, "Why don't you kiss me goodbye?"

Although he was smiling, I could clearly sense the sadness in his smile.

When he realized I didn't answer his question, he said, "At least give me a departing hug."

He moved closer to me and hugged me tenderly. This embrace wasn't as masterful and passionate as before, nor did it have an undertone of lustful desire. It only showed his reluctance to part with me.

After hugging me for quite some time, he let go of me. He gently brushed away the snowflakes on my hair, and said in a soft voice, "Take good care of yourself."

I nodded.

I stood there for a long time as I watched his car drive off.

I knew I owed him more than just one finger, but I couldn't repay it in my life.

After changing into a thick down jacket, I braved the wind and snow and paid a visit to the Martyrs ' Cemetery.

The ground was covered with snow and had become a vast expanse of whiteness.

In fact, I had been dreaming longingly that Derek would come back and appear in front of me one day. But as time went by, I had no options but to accept the hard truth.

He had really left our children and me. He wouldn't come back.

When I walked into the cemetery with the flowers in my arms, I saw a figure standing in the wind and snow from a distance. It was none other than Felix.

I placed the flowers reverentially in front of the tombstone and summoned up the courage to look at the picture on it.

At a single glance, my heart ached with such great anguish.

In the picture, Derek looked so handsome and youthful.

But the fact of the matter was that he was really dead. He would never come back again.

“Until now, I found that I have never really known my friend,” Felix said.

A bitter laugh floated through the wind and snow.

I stood up and looked at the tombstone, feeling heartbroken.

“I don’t think anyone really knew him. Only he knew what kind of mission he was undertaking, so no one could understand the distress he endured. He could only bear it by himself until the day came when he could no longer bear it. It was sad that he had never truly been understood.”

With his hands in his pockets, Felix stared at the tombstone. He seemed to have mixed feelings, but in the end, all he did was sigh heavily.

He didn’t leave until his shoulders and hair were completely covered with snow.

I stayed a little longer at the grave before I left.

The New Year was fast approaching. I decided to go to the supermarket on my own.

Everyone was carrying numerous New Year's gifts. Their faces were lit up with joy. Their joy, however, caused me to become somewhat sad. Only I was alone and I felt utterly desolated.

I walked around the supermarket blankly and seemed to forget what I had ventured there to buy.

I passed by the clothing department. The clothes were on sale. Many old women were choosing items from there. Suddenly, I spotted Becky among the crowd of women.

Chapter 542

Chapter 542 Regret

Becky wore sunglasses to conceal the greater part of her face, and she drowned herself in the crowd. She found a down jacket in a pile of clothes on special offer. The color and style of the down jacket were only suitable for a middle-aged person.

She took the jacket to the checkout counter. She got out a bank card and handed it to the cashier. The cashier swiped it and then returned the card to her.

"Ma'am, I'm sorry. Your card has been declined. Do you have other cards?"

Shaken momentarily, she retrieved another card and handed it over. But again, the cashier advised her that it was declined.

Becky rummaged around in her bag awkwardly, her ears turning red in embarrassment.

The queue behind her was getting longer, and people began to mutter among themselves in low, judgmental tones.

"How much is it?" I asked.

Becky must have heard the sound of my voice and suddenly turned around to face me. I couldn't see the look in her eyes because of the sunglasses, but I thought she must be astonished and mortified at that moment.

"Two hundred and sixty-eight," the cashier advised.

I nodded, took out a card and handed it over.

"Use my card," I said.

The cashier took it and quickly swiped it. Then she returned the card to me and handed the down jacket over to Becky.

Becky hesitated for a moment, then she accepted the jacket.

We walked out of the supermarket together. Then we found a cafe and sat down. 1

I didn't say anything at first, nor did I ask her how she was doing. I didn't want to hurt her already bruised pride.

After sitting together for some time, our bodies began to thaw out from the frigid cold. Becky finally initiated a conversation in an anxious, uneasy voice.

"Thank you for that. I will pay it back to you," she said.

I shook my head lightly. "No, you don't need to return the money. If it were a stranger, I would still have paid for the items. I have known what it is like to be poor. I have also found myself in a similar situation in the past. I understand how embarrassing it is and just how helpless it makes you feel."

Becky lowered her head and didn't say a word.

After a while, she raised her head again to look at me. "I heard about Derek. I didn't expect him to..." she said, drifting off in midsentence.

Her voice became hoarse when she spoke about Derek. It was as if she were too overwhelmed by emotion to continue talking. Tears escaped from under her sunglasses and rolled down her cheeks.

"I know that I did things that were just completely wrong in the past. Derek became really infuriated with me back then. I had planned on apologizing after giving him sufficient time to cool down. I was going to beg for his forgiveness for what I had done. But he passed so suddenly, without any warning, and I never have the chance to offer my heartfelt apology to him." I turned to look at the snow falling just outside the glass window. My eyes were blurred in an instant from the tears welling up in them.

"It's not important. It doesn't matter. Nothing is more important than his life," I said.

Tears kept running down from under Becky's sunglasses, she said sadly with a nasal voice, "Sorry, I deeply regret what I did. I used to make him angry and place him in such awkward positions. If I had another chance, I would never have done those things in a million years. There aren't many people in the world who are good to me. So I felt so happy when Derek doted on me. I was just afraid that he would be taken away and he would wholly forget me."

I sighed slightly. "Although he sometimes scolded you and blamed you for things, he always wanted you to live a good, happy life. He had always treated you as his very own sister."

Becky suddenly covered her mouth and cried as if I had struck a very sensitive nerve.

"Yet I failed him so dismally," she lamented.

After crying for a while, she finally took the sunglasses off her face to reveal the bruises on the corners of her eyes and the bridge of her nose.

"Did your husband hit you?" I asked with concern. My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 542

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Chapter 542 Regret

Becky wore sunglasses to conceal the greater part of her face, and she drowned herself in the crowd. She found a down jacket in a pile of clothes on special offer. The color and style of the down jacket were only suitable for a middle-aged person.

She took the jacket to the checkout counter. She got out a bank card and handed it to the cashier. The cashier swiped it and then returned the card to her.

“Ma’am, I’m sorry. Your card has been declined. Do you have other cards?”

Shaken momentarily, she retrieved another card and handed it over. But again, the cashier advised her that it was declined.

Becky rummaged around in her bag awkwardly, her ears turning red in embarrassment.

The queue behind her was getting longer, and people began to mutter among themselves in low, judgmental tones.

“How much is it?” I asked.

Becky must have heard the sound of my voice and suddenly turned around to face me. I couldn’t see the look in her eyes because of the sunglasses, but I thought she must be astonished and mortified at that moment.

“Two hundred and sixty-eight,” the cashier advised.

I nodded, took out a card and handed it over.

“Use my card,” I said.

The cashier took it and quickly swiped it. Then she returned the card to me and handed the down jacket over to Becky.

Becky hesitated for a moment, then she accepted the jacket.

We walked out of the supermarket together. Then we found a cafe and sat down. 1

I didn't say anything at first, nor did I ask her how she was doing. I didn't want to hurt her already bruised pride.

After sitting together for some time, our bodies began to thaw out from the frigid cold. Becky finally initiated a conversation in an anxious, uneasy voice.

"Thank you for that. I will pay it back to you," she said.

I shook my head lightly. "No, you don't need to return the money. If it were a stranger, I would still have paid for the items. I have known what it is like to be poor. I have also found myself in a similar situation in the past. I understand how embarrassing it is and just how helpless it makes you feel."

Becky lowered her head and didn't say a word.

After a while, she raised her head again to look at me. "I heard about Derek. I didn't expect him to..." she said, drifting off in midsentence.

Her voice became hoarse when she spoke about Derek. It was as if she were too overwhelmed by emotion to continue talking. Tears escaped from under her sunglasses and rolled down her cheeks.

"I know that I did things that were just completely wrong in the past. Derek became really infuriated with me back then. I had planned on apologizing after giving him sufficient time to cool down. I was going to beg for his forgiveness for what I had done. But he passed so suddenly, without any warning, and I never have the chance to offer my heartfelt apology to him." I turned to look at the snow falling just outside the glass window. My eyes were blurred in an instant from the tears welling up in them.

"It's not important. It doesn't matter. Nothing is more important than his life," I said.

Tears kept running down from under Becky's sunglasses, she said sadly with a nasal voice, "Sorry, I deeply regret what I did. I used to make him angry and place him in such awkward positions. If I had another chance, I would never have done those things in a million years. There aren't many people in the world who are good to me. So I felt so happy when Derek doted on me. I was just afraid that he would be taken away and he would wholly forget me."

I sighed slightly. "Although he sometimes scolded you and blamed you for things, he always wanted you to live a good, happy life. He had always treated you as his very own sister."

Becky suddenly covered her mouth and cried as if I had struck a very sensitive nerve.

"Yet I failed him so dismally," she lamented.

After crying for a while, she finally took the sunglasses off her face to reveal the bruises on the corners of her eyes and the bridge of her nose.

"Did your husband hit you?" I asked with concern. My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 543

Chapter 543

Chapter 543 Start All Over Again

Becky took out a tissue and used it to wipe her tears away. While sniffing, she said, "We had just seen each other a few times before we got married. Honestly, I don't know him that well. Back when we first got married, he was really nice to me. But within less than a month, his feelings toward me became stale. He would always go out drinking until late in the night. And whenever he's drunk, he would beat me up. He didn't even treat me like a human being!" I remembered the day Becky came to Jolly & Mayer Company's main store. Back then, she acted all high and mighty. Because of that, I never thought that she'd been living a miserable life after marrying a rich man.

Not bothering to wipe her tears anymore, she smiled bitterly and said, "I used to be so antagonistic towards you. I'm sure you must be happy to see me like this, huh?"

I looked into her eyes and shook my head. “No, it doesn’t make me happy. I feel sad for Derek. He spent a lot of time and effort to help you realize your dream, but you didn’t work hard enough and even ruined your own career. Be honest. Did you really marry your husband for love? I don’t believe so. I believe you only married him because of your vanity.” If this had happened in the past, my comment would’ve merited a sarcastic remark from her. But to my surprise, she didn’t.

Tears continued to stream down her face. The rims of her eyes and the tip of her nose had become red from crying.

“I deserve whatever is happening to me. I thought I’d live a comfortable life after marrying a rich man. A few days ago, he brought home a woman openly. I was so mad that I argued with him. During the argument, he told me that he’d freeze all of my bank cards. I thought he was just saying it on the spur of the moment, but I didn’t expect that he’d be ruthless enough to actually do it.

I bought this down jacket for my mother. And now, I’m faced with financial problems. If I want to buy stuff for my mom, I have to be subservient towards him. I’m too scared of buying expensive clothes because he’ll check my accounts. If he finds out that I’m spending too much money, he’ll scold me again.”

As I held the cup of coffee in my hand, I sighed. “That’s why women should never lose their livelihood for whatever reason.”

Becky lowered her head, visibly dejected. “It’s been so long since I last worked on a movie. I don’t think I can even get a chance to play as an extra anymore.” “From now on, try not to be so hoity-toity. Don’t view yourself as above the others. You can always start from scratch, and that’s not a bad thing. Many A-list stars began their career working as extras. Go back to square one and make a fresh start. Be brave and work hard. I’m sure you can rally back from this,” I advised. Becky raised her head, staring at me as tears continued to fall from her eyes.

I placed some money on the table, picked up my purse, and left.

It was so cold outside when I walked out of the cafe. The cold was enough for me to instinctively snuggle into my coat.

In my opinion, people weren't scared of starting all over again, what they feared was not having enough courage to make a fresh start. I had enough courage to start all over again. But sadly, I didn't have a chance to do so.

If I could start all over again, there was nothing for me to fear. I wouldn't care about trivial things. If God were kind enough to send Derek back to me, I would trade everything to have him again.

Sadly, the chance to start all over again was a luxury I didn't have.

On New Year's Eve, Aaron invited his friends to his house for dinner.

I knew he merely wanted to distract me from my overwhelming sadness.

And I must admit, it was indeed a lively dinner party. Lean, Tina, Eric, and Megan came. I thought that Alvaro was also alone, so I asked him to come as well. Fortunately, he hadn't left Sousen yet.

None of us mentioned anything unhappy during the dinner. It was as if everyone had lost a part of their memory and had forgotten about a certain someone. But I could never forget him. No matter how lively this reunion dinner was, without him, my heart felt empty.

After dinner, I stood outside the living room, watching the snow fall. From afar, I could hear the sound of fireworks crackling. Their mere sounds made me remember a distant memory.

It was then that I went back to the living room to grab my bag, and left the house.

They all chased after me, but I had already gotten into my car. I knew they were worried about me, so I forced a smile to put them at ease. "Don't worry. I'm just going somewhere. Nothing bad will happen."
My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 544

Chapter 544

Chapter 544 A Promise

There were very few cars along the road. By now, people must've gone back to their respective homes for their family reunions.

Contrary to everyone's plans, I was now driving around anxiously as though I was hurrying off for a date.

I drove to Dere International. The security guard on duty knew who I was, so he let me in.

At this time, the building of the company was empty.

I went straight to the rooftop.

Once there, I stood before the railing, staring at the city from above.

I remembered how New Year's Eve happened that year. We were right here, watching the fireworks display, when the New Year's Bell resonated, we hugged and kissed each other and welcomed the arrival of the brand new year.

Derek told me that we would celebrate New Year's Eve right here every single year.

"Derek, you promise me that you'd be here with me every year. Well, I'm here now, but where are you?" At this moment, fireworks were set off from almost all directions.

The sky was filled with varying colors of fireworks. My vision was starting to blur. Despite the festive ambiance exuded by the fireworks, I still felt forlorn.

I really missed him. I missed him so damn much.

"Derek, can you please come back? I really miss you!" On the empty rooftop, tears streamed down my face, while the city was bustling with excitement.

Suddenly, the rooftop's iron door was pushed open.

I thought that nobody would come here, considering how everyone was probably at his or her home celebrating a family reunion.

Slowly, I turned around and stared at the open door.

I felt a strong hunch at the pit of my stomach; or perhaps it was better called a fantastical expectation. But whichever it was, the feeling made me nervous.

As I stared at the door, the first thing I saw was a crutch, followed by a leather shoe and a long leg in suit pants.

When the tall man finally appeared, my eyes widened in shock. My heart skipped a beat. And for a moment, I couldn't breathe.

Slowly but surely, he turned his gaze towards me.

Splendid fireworks rose from the dark skies behind him, illuminating the night.

He was wearing a black suit tonight. His handsome face was even more beautiful than any of these fireworks.

His very image was so ethereal that I felt like I was in a trance.

Was I hallucinating? Was this because I longed for him?

I couldn't bring myself to move, let alone approach him. I even tried to stop myself from breathing, for fear that I would wake myself up from this beautiful dream.

Fireworks were being set off around US one after another. But even their loud noise weren't enough to drown out the sound of my strong heartbeat.

The person that I had been yearning for day and night was finally standing before my very eyes. And at this moment, my heart was beating like a drum.

With the aid of his crutch, he walked towards me. He was having a hard time reaching me, but he was determined to do so.

If this were a dream, it would be strange that the tears from my eyes felt so real. Furthermore, his loving gaze appeared so real at the moment.

About two meters away from me, he finally stopped in his tracks and we just stared into each other's eyes.

I couldn't bring myself to speak, fearing that this fantastical dream might end.

As he pursed his lips and swallowed, he finally gathered enough strength to speak.

"I once promised you that we'd celebrate New Year's Eve on this rooftop together. I never once forgot that promise." 1

Upon hearing those words, tears streamed down my eyes like a broken dam.

When he saw me cry, he was on the verge of tears too.

"Am I too late?" he asked in a slightly choked voice.

I plucked up enough courage to approach him. Right now, I felt excited, but I proceeded with caution.

As I stopped in front of him, I stared him, unblinking. With trembling hands, I touched his arm.

It was not a dream! He was real!

“You’re not too late,” I said in a hoarse voice as tears welled up in my eyes again.

He touched my face and wiped my tears away. But then, his own tears streamed down his cheeks.

His palm felt warm, and his even warmer tears fell on my face.

“You’re back, huh?”

I paused so many times before I finished my sentence. I tried to speak as clearly as I could, but I couldn’t control my tears from falling.

“Yeah. Here I am,” he said softly.

He stroked my face, and gazed into my eyes.

I bit my trembling lips. Unable to control my surging emotions anymore, I grabbed his arms.

“Why didn’t you come back sooner? Why didn’t you come back until my heart was broken? Why, Derek? Why?”

At this moment, his crutch fell to the ground.

Because he was embracing me, he couldn’t stand steady, resulting in him falling backwards.

“Derek!” I shouted. My Unexpected Marriage to the CEO by Pumpkin Witch Chapter 545

Chapter 545

Chapter 545 A Miracle

I held Derek up, but I couldn't keep him steady.

Just then, several people came to support him. It was Timmy, along with two doctors in white coats.

Several others had already brought a wide chair, which they used to help Derek sit down.

Right after that, they left without a word.

I squatted in front of him, staring at his legs.

"What happened to your legs?"

He took my hand, helped me up, and sat me down with him. Then, he placed his arm around my shoulders.

"Even if I didn't have any legs, I would crawl up here just so I could celebrate New Year's Eve with you," he said.

What a joke! That was what I told myself, but deep down, I liked it. Thank God, it was just a joke!

I leaned against his shoulder, asking no further questions.

As long as he was by my side, I felt happy. It didn't even matter if the world was destroyed the very next second.

We put our arms around each other in silence, watching the beautiful fireworks engulf the night sky and listening to the ringing of the New Year's bell. 1 When the new year finally came, he broke our silence. "Eveline, from the bottom of my heart, I love you!" 2 The sound of his husky voice was music to my ears. I looked into his eyes, gazing into his very soul. He locked me in his gaze, and I did the same for him.

This moment was so perfect that I was content, even though we were just staring at each other in silence. "I love you too. I love you so much!"

I cupped his face with my hands and kissed him. He responded to my kiss gently.

A salty, bitter taste lingered in our kiss because of our tears. We had been in pain, and we'd both been desperately longing to see each other. 2

All of a sudden, he groaned, causing me to let him go. When I saw the pain on his face, I felt nervous.

"What's wrong?"

He clutched his chest with his hand, trying his best to put on a smile for me.

"There's no need to be nervous. I'm just so happy to finally have you by my side." 2

It was snowing heavily today, but he was wearing rather thin clothes. I could see that there was blood seeping from his chest.

Frightened, I screamed, "Timmy!"

Upon hearing my voice, Timmy rushed over along with the doctors.

The doctors immediately put Derek on the stretcher. Afterwards, they plugged him into the life-support machine and carried him downstairs.

I was so scared that I briskly followed behind him. From time to time, I glanced at Derek's pale face as he lay on the stretcher.

I got into their car, and went to the military hospital with them. Once there, they wheeled him into the emergency room.

As I waited outside the ER, Timmy told me that Derek was severely injured and had been comatose all this time. The reason he didn't tell me about this was because even the doctors believed that there was little hope for Derek to ever wake up again. But a few hours ago, Derek suddenly woke up and asked him what day it was today.

Upon finding out that it was New Year's Eve, he insisted on changing into a suit and going to the rooftop of the company. Timmy and the others knew him well, and there was nothing they could do to change his mind. Thus, they just had to do as he said and followed him to the rooftop. 1

As I listened to Timmy's story, tears streamed down my face.

Even when his life was hanging in the balance, Derek never forgot his promise.

I gripped the door of the emergency room tightly. Right now, I couldn't describe how I felt.

I was so scared for him. I had already lost Derek once. I didn't want to lose him again!

Two long, harrowing hours later, the door finally opened.

When I saw the doctors come out, I grabbed one of the doctors' arms immediately.

"Doctor, how is he?"

God knew just how scared and conflicted I was at this moment. I was looking forward to an answer, but at the same time, I was scared to hear it.

The doctor took off his mask and smiled with relief. "It's a miracle! His vital signs are stable and within the normal limits. Mr. Sullivan is out of danger!"

Chapter 546 God Sent Me Back

The doctor's words had me weeping in joy. Timmy looked emotional, too, and we ended up laughing and crying at the same time.

Derek was conscious when he was wheeled back into the ward. I sat by the bed and clutched his hand tightly. I didn't want to look away from his face for even a second.

He mustered a weak smile as he reached out with his other hand and gently stroked my hair.

"As a matter of fact, I've already stepped through the gates of heaven and met God. He refused me further passage, saying that I needed to treat my wife and children better. He said I still needed to fulfill my responsibilities as a husband and father, and sent me back to take good care of you and our kids."

I was a sobbing mess. Despite myself, I grabbed the sleeve of his hospital gown and used it to wipe my tears.

"Don't scare me like that anymore, okay? I'm just a simple woman. I don't care for thrill and excitement. My fragile heart can't take another scare like this."

Derek smiled and pulled me close, letting me lay my head on his chest.

"Don't worry. I'm not leaving you. There's no way you can drive me away in the future, either, no matter how hard you try."

Maldives, half a year later

A small concert was playing on the beach, featuring the band, Thorn Birds.

"I want you to be with me. I want you to watch the turtles swim in the sea and slowly creep on the beach. We can count the waves together. Don't be afraid. You won't be lonely. I will always be with you. I will make you happy..."

Derek and Felix were having fun with their guitars, while Eric played the bass and Aaron was on the drums. All of them were halfway into their thirties now, but they were having the time of their life performing for their audience. The tourists loved them as well, especially their attractive faces.

I was holding Dexter in my lap, while Megan had Edith in her arms not too far away.

From time to time, Derek would glance at me, his eyes sparkling. I knew he was singing to me. My heart warmed, and before I knew it, I was singing along under my breath.

“Time flies, and doesn’t look back. A beautiful woman becomes an old woman. Oh, at that time, I am also an old man...”

All of a sudden, Dexter jumped off my legs and ran toward the small stage up front. He made a beeline for Derek and plucked a string on his guitar, then scampered off to Aaron and tried to grab one of his drumstick. Aaron obliged, giving a stick to the little rascal before picking him up.

It was all the encouragement Dexter needed. He brandished his stick and tapped it on the first drum he saw, much to the tourists’ amusement.

Derek came over shortly after and plucked our son out of Aaron’s arms. He pressed a kiss on Dexter’s plump cheek before holding him up in the air and twirling around. The boy’s giggles rang out to the background of crashing waves in the distance.

I felt full and contented just watching them.

The next day, we ran into a filming crew at the club Med Kani.

They were shooting a scene where an actress got slapped and then pushed into the pool. For some reason, they had to redo the scene repeatedly.

As it turned out, the director was already satisfied with some of the footage they had taken, but the actress was not. She insisted on several retakes, and each time, she fell into the water and choked.

We milled around for a while before turning to leave.

“Derek!” a familiar voice called out from behind US as we walked away.

None of US paused or looked back.

We had been used to acting indifferent whenever Derek’s name was mentioned, because he was no longer Derek Sullivan now.

In the next second, however, a familiar figure appeared in front of US.

Becky stared up at Derek, her eyes filled with hopeful excitement. Her hair and clothes were dripping wet. “Derek. You’re still alive? Is that really you?”

Indeed, the actress who had been thrown into the pool again and again just now was none other than Becky. I had recognized her, of course, so Derek should, too.

He looked at her now, cool and calm.

“Sorry, you’ve got the wrong person.”

Becky’s eyes instantly filled with tears.

But Derek paid her no mind. He only took my hand, smiled at me, and ushered me past Becky.

To our surprise, she came up to US again.

She tried to squeeze the water out of her hair before smiling brightly at Derek.

"I apologize. It seems I did mistake you for someone else. It's just that, you look a lot like... Like a family of mine.

It's nice to meet you. My name is Becky. I'm just a stranger, and you can forget all about me after this, but I just wanted to tell you that I wish you all the happiness in the world."

Tears were running down her face as she spoke, but her smile never faltered.

"Thank you," Derek replied.

We all continued on our way, but Megan suddenly ran back to Becky. She handed the latter a souvenir, one that she had bought at Paradise Island yesterday.

"Hello, Becky. I used to be a fan. Well... I was watching you shoot back at the pool. You're working hard. Keep it up! God rewards those who do good, honest work."

Megan turned around before Becky could say anything, running to catch up to US.

We were quite a distance away when I finally turned around, only to find Becky still standing where we had left her. I couldn't see her face, but her shoulders were noticeably shaking.

I was glad that things had changed. I didn't hate her anymore.

She looked up then, and I offered her a wave.

"Come on! You're going to do great things in the future!" I muttered under my breath.