

MY SCYTHE-WIELDING HUSBAND

Chapter 6 - Death by Stress

By afternoon, despite her conscience telling her otherwise, Solene braved herself to leave the house. She had only one goal in mind and it was to go to the library and ask Dally for a copy of the log records yesterday.

She remembered the time when she had seen the man inside the library. She knew how to focus her search and oust those names which were students of the University. She could narrow her search down to his name — whatever name he had — and possibly try and track down his address.

By the time Solene arrived in the library, there were only a handful of students in sight, mostly men taking their IT major. Dally was in her usual counter, busily sorting out piles of magazines.

“Hey Dally,” Solene greeted, showing a soft smile.

“Oh, back so soon?” Dally looked at her from behind thick-rimmed glasses and smiled back.

“Yeah, I need to ask you a favor.”

“Anything Sweetie. What is it?”

“Can I look at the visitor's log records of the library? I happen to see a guy yesterday who—”

“Say no more,” Dally interjected. She gave her a mischievous grin and pulled out a print-out from her table.

“That man got your attention too huh?”

Solene was dumbstruck. She opened her mouth to object and then closed it again. Why would she deny it when the librarian was right. The man indeed got her attention, but definitely not in a way the old woman thought.

“I seriously had difficulty controlling the female undergrads from making noises yesterday. Luckily, that man left a few minutes after you left.” Dally placed the paper in between them and continued, “Here’s the newly printed log report from the system. I was supposed to fasten it into the records book, but well, you have a peek first. I’m sure you’d love to know his name.” She gave her a wink.

Despite herself, Solene felt a blush taint her cheeks. “Uhm, thanks Dally. I’ll return this to you when I’m done.”

To the computer room of the library was where Solene went after her conversation with Dally. It was located at the far end of the library, next to the winding staircase going to the second floor.

The computer room was walled with glass. Solene could still see the shelves, tables, chairs, books, and students outside. In haste, she chose a computer where it was facing the glass wall. She clicked the server of the University and searched the names of the male visitors yesterday one by one. It was a crucial and tedious task, yes, but she was willing to do it all just to know the man’s name.

Some twenty minutes later, Solene finally was able to narrow down her search to a name.

Hein Masters

With a proud grin, she clicked the public server of the Germaine Police Department and typed the intriguing name.

She waited as it auto-populated, throwing her attention briefly on the situation outside the computer room. It was still the same as before: the IT undergrads in one long table and two other female students on the

couch. However, her attention was quickly diverted to a new addition in the library.

It was him. The man yesterday and the man today in the grocery.

Hein Masters.

Solene couldn't believe her luck. After checking the result of her search which consisted of zero, she speedily closed the windows of her computer and stood up, aiming to approach the man and talk to him if he was willing. They were in the library obviously and for sure he was here again to read. He was likely not open to entertaining anyone.

And then a sudden thought crossed her mind.

'No, it couldn't be,' she stated to herself.

But the evidence was so obvious, she just couldn't keep a blind eye to it.

With a deep breath and a renewed vigor to confront the man, Solene walked out of the computer room and straight to him.

"Hey, are you following me?" The words spilled out of her mouth before she could even filter it. It wasn't really a proper way to say hello to a stranger but nevertheless, she did it. He wasn't basically a stranger to her anymore. She knew his name.

From across the table, the man looked up past his book and gave Solene a once-over.

"What made you think I was following you?"

Solene stilled when their eyes connected. The gray-green color pierced through her soul and held her reality hostage. She suddenly saw herself not in the library anymore but in a bedroom so grandiose than her own. She saw the open balcony and next to the marbled balustrade stood a man wearing only trousers. His naked back to her.

An electric feeling traveled through her skin then. It started from her head down to her toes. It was both pleasurable and scary.

When finally she was able to snap herself back to reality, that same feeling had remained on her fingertips for a few seconds before vanishing.

“I...saw you in the library yesterday,” Solene stated, putting that odd experience at the back of her head. It was distracting her and she didn’t want any distraction now especially when she was interrogating him.

He lifted a brow.

“Then in the grocery,” she added.

“And?” he replied, now closing his book.

“And then here.”

Solene watched as he placed the lambskin-bound book on the table and stood up. With his height, she ultimately felt short which was a feat in itself. She was five feet eight inches tall without wearing heels and she was actually wearing closed-toe shoes now with two-inch heels.

“This is a small city, amoureux. Surely you know that,” he worded smoothly.

For a moment, Solene was taken aback. His voice sounded naturally deep, velvety, with a little hint of edge. Plus, he just used a foreign word. Good thing she understood it owing to her multicultural classmates at the University. It meant ‘sweetheart.’ A bloody endearment. She had to internally recollect herself before any unwelcomed inhibitions started kicking in.

She let out a long hiss and started dissecting his words. She didn’t know what to feel afterwards then: embarrassed by the possibility that he was true? That it was just mere coincidence that they met the third time? Or

annoyed, because she knew she was right and that he was trying to lie right on her face.

Her eyes turned to slits as if scrutinizing him through a microscope. She didn't accept his reason. It was just too simple. Arguing with him would be the best course of action, but she thought otherwise. After all, she still had to get some information from him about the incident this morning.

"Please don't call me that, Mr. Masters," she stated, putting a hand on the table. She noticed his brow quirk upward, no doubt surprised that she knew his name. Briefly, her ego boosted. "And yes, I know your name. You are Hein Masters. You're not a student in this University and you're not a resident in this city. You can call our meeting a coincidence, I'm going to accept that, but in return, I'd like to ask you a few questions."

A smile ghosted his lips for a second before looking at his wrist watch.

"You sure surprised me with your detective skills, Ms. St. Fair."

It was Solene's turn to quirk her brows. He knew her name. That meant she was right. He had been following her and this fact wholly rearranged all her questions in an instant.

"But unfortunately for you, I don't have time to answer your questions," he added. "I'm running late on a very important job."

"Just one question then. I just want to ask you about that incident in the supermarket," Solene insisted, straightening up her spine.

The man let out an exhale before nodding. "Ask away."

A brief smile crossed her lips. Her charm worked.

"You saw me and my brother fall from that crack on the ground. Had you by any chance seen something odd then? I mean...umm...urhhh..." Now she didn't know how to explain her experience. She bit her lip, slightly disappointed with herself.

“You’re quite an eloquent woman,” he mocked, signaling his limited time through glancing at his watch.

“Just, I want to know if you saw or heard something weird. My brother and I were supposed to die inside that deep crack, but here I am now, in this library talking to you and my brother safe with my mom,” Solene managed to snap.

The man gave her a deep and meaningful stare before answering. “To tell you Ms. St. Fair, yes, I did see a crack on the ground, but I didn’t see you and your brother fall inside as per your claim.”

Solene’s brows knotted. What was he saying?

“I, on the other hand, saw you with the boy run towards the cashier counter while the shaking happened.”

“No, that’s impossible,” Solene shook her head. “I’m not imagining things. I clearly saw you look at me when I was falling. Our eyes met! You know what I mean!”

From the distance, a few students made a shushing sound. Solene slightly felt embarrassed. She glanced at Dally first—saw her frown—before she lowered her eyes on the floor.

The man released an impatient huff. “I worry for you. You should get yourself checked. Post-traumatic stress disorder is common after an event like that.”

“I am perfectly fine,” she bit out, shooting him a glare.

“Then that’s reassuring to hear.” He gave her a lingering look before turning around and ending their conversation.

Solene’s shoulders sank. She placed a hand on the edge of the table to steady herself while her head spun. She couldn’t accept his answer. It

was just too...safe. Too suspicious. What happened to her in the supermarket was real. She could feel it in her core.

“This man knows my name,” she muttered to herself. “He has been following me since yesterday too. If I’m correct, I think he knows something I don’t.”

She scrutinized the man’s back as he stepped out of the library door.

“Unlucky for him, I aim to find that out.”