

MY SCYTHE-WIELDING HUSBAND

Chapter 7 - Death by Coffee

With a strong conviction to hunt for the truth, Solene decided to visit the supermarket and ask to see the security camera of the building, specifically while the tremors happened.

There was footage found, yes, but it only showed pictures before the shaking started. Solene couldn't be more disappointed when the video stopped right when she and AC were about to approach the Nutella shelf.

'A technical malfunction,' the manager explained, but Solene didn't buy it. It was damn too coincidental. Something in her gut told her it was intentional. As to why and who did it were the two questions that filled her mind.

Ultimately, she returned to her house with more questions than answers, and those lingered until the next day.

Early in the morning, Solene met with her thesis partner and best friend, Myrna — a redhead with a short bob and thick lashes. They chose their favorite cafe outside the University, Cafe Tiala. The store was packed with customers, unfortunately, so the two of them had to wait in line for their orders to be taken.

While listening to her friend talking, Solene caught a glimpse of a familiar face among the crowd of customers. She hissed silently when she realized who it was.

"Excuse me, Myr. I need to do something. Save my spot for me will you?" she said.

Her friend furrowed her brows and before she could answer, Solene was already walking straight to the person sitting coolly at a cozy corner of the cafe.

“A coincidence again?” Solene placed her arms akimbo while her eyes thinned at the sight of none other than Hein Masters.

He didn’t look up. His eyes continued to be glued on the newspaper he was holding, but he chuckled lightly and made a humming sound deep within his throat.

“That’s a rather weird way to open up a topic with a stranger.”

Solene’s jaw tensed.

“No, I’m not treating you a stranger anymore, Mr. Masters. More like a stalker.”

“Stalker?” He arched a brow and then shot a scolding eye towards her. “Woman, this is a coffee shop. Anyone has the freedom to come into this place. Myself included.”

Solene, upon hearing this, was caught off guard. She released a heavy sigh and routed her gaze to the floor.

He had a point, or maybe it was just his alibi? She didn’t want to add the part that this was her favorite coffee shop. That she had been coming here practically almost every day since she was in middle grade. This information was obvious for any stalker who had researched her well.

Or maybe, she was just getting paranoid.

“Please,” Hein’s voice cut off her musings and this made her look up, “feel free to sit.” His eyes roamed side to side and then past her to the crowd of patrons. “There seems to be no vacancy,” he commented. “You can even invite your friend with you.”

Solene was almost tempted.

“No thanks,” she replied, voice monotone, and then turned around, intent to return to where her best friend was standing.

“Suit yourself,” she heard him say from behind. She twisted her lips resisting the urge to fire back a response. She didn’t want to cause any scene. She admitted it. She felt a little bit embarrassed accusing him like that, but he couldn’t blame her. Their consecutive meetings were just too much for her liking.

“I swear if I ever see that man again, I’m calling the police,” she muttered to herself instead whilst walking away.

Near the cashier, Myrna cocked her head to the side, her eyes turning to slits.

“Hmmm, who is that eye-candy?” she asked as soon as Solene stood near her.

Solene resisted the urge to look back at the man, but her best friend was enjoying herself ogling him. She actually didn’t bother to hide it.

“I have no idea,” Solene answered, biting the inside of her cheek. From the corner of her eye, she saw a couple leave their table. It was perfect timing. She immediately pulled her best friend towards the vacancy.

“But you were talking to him,” Myrna called out from behind her, now walking towards the fancy chairs. She glanced at Hein’s way and definitely caught him staring at them, or more to Solene, who just claimed her seat. Myrna couldn’t hide a grin from forming on her lips.

Solene, on the other hand, groaned. “Let’s just start with our planning Myr, please.”

Myrna shrugged her shoulders. “Okayyy, someone’s rather stingy today.”

Solene didn't respond to her comment. She fished out her jot-down notebook and pen from her bag and placed them on the table. Her best friend did the same, plus two plastic folders of white and gray.

An hour later, Myrna waved a hand in between them.

"Hey, are you even listening to me?" she stated, feeling almost out of patience.

Solene blinked many times while clearing her throat.

"Yeah, uhmm, yes, I'm listening, Myr. I think if Professor Hadley will give us time then—"

"You were checking him out were you?" Myrna called out whilst wiggling her brows and grinning.

Solene flat out replied a hasty, "No." She routed her eyes on the jot-down notebook and acted as if she was reading.

"Admit it, Lee," Myrna kicked her toes under the table. "Your eyes are practically saying otherwise. I've been talking here for the past hour and here your attention is elsewhere."

"I'm not checking him out okay?" Solene bit out, painstakingly trying to keep her voice down. "I'm just cautious. I feel there's something about this man. He seems to be following me since two days ago but when I confront him to be a stalker, he denies it. Or well, he didn't exactly 'deny' it, more like in the lines of shrugging me off."

She opted not to give more details. It was better that her best friend was blissfully unaware of her experience in the supermarket and their then conversation in the library.

"Pft. You're just overreacting, Lee," Myrna chuckled. "Com'n if someone like him would stalk me, I'd already been in his table flirting

with him and asking for his number in the process. He isn't stalker material. He's more like a bodyguard or something better."

Solene cringed. "Don't judge the book by its cover, Myr, had you heard of that saying?"

"Only when the book is not on Wattpad," her friend retaliated.

Solene rolled her eyes heavenward. "Myr, I'm talking metaphorically."

"Yep, I know," she sighed. "Look, my point is, give the guy a break. Just talk to him properly. Investigate. You're an intelligent woman. You're a psychologist-aspirant for crying out loud. Psych. Him. Up."

And Solene was planning to, yes, but she was still amazed at how blunt her best friend was.

"Wow. You know I love you right?" she stated whilst smirking.

"Girl, since kindergarten," Myrna flicked a hand in between them.

"Seriously, get your butt off the chair now or I'll—"

"MOVE OUT!"

A deafening shout of a woman from across their table interrupted Myrna.

Everything happened so fast that Solene was only able to register a pick-up truck coming down on them from the street outside. The next thing she knew, she was being pushed on the ground and then felt a hard body shielding her from the crash. She was supposed to feel scared, worry about her life even, but in that instant, she felt protected.

She heard a man's groan from behind her thereafter, thought it familiar even, but she couldn't delve deeper into that fact as more noises assaulted her ears.

"AHHHHH!"

She heard screams everywhere and then a loud crashing sound of metal on concrete.

Shards of glass hit the floor. The tables and chairs toppled over. Some customers lay on the ground with their heads covered with their arms while the others just stood stunned on the spot.

Solene, on instinct, closed her eyes and crawled into a fetal position. She couldn't be so sure what was happening, but she knew she was in the hot-spot of a motor vehicle accident.

Seconds later, everything went silent.

The weight that had pushed her down disappeared. Safety left her and this time, as crazy as it sounded, she truly felt vulnerable.

Solene cracked her eyes open. With her face contacting the floor, she slowly pushed herself up and surveyed the scene. It turned out, all eyes were on her. Behind her, some couple of inches away, was the truck, its wheels almost reaching the ceiling.

“Solene!” Myrna cried out, rushing to her side from the crowd of witnesses.

“Myr—na?” Solene glanced up. “Are you—alright?”

“Yes! Yes, I am. I was pulled by a group near our table out of harm's way just in time, but you! Are you alright?! Are you hurt somewhere?!”

Myrna grabbed her shoulders and studied her whole being from head to foot.

“The truck just literally passed you! Is there anything in pain?!”

Solene glanced at the vehicle. It definitely received great damage. If anything, she could even be dead by now if it weren't for...

“No...” she replied, frowning her brows. “None.” Her mind tried to piece together the earlier events.

“We need to get you in the hospital to be checked just to be sure,” Myrna frantically stated. She checked and touched her again, making sure Solene was truly unscathed.

Solene didn't mind. Her head was elsewhere. Her best friend's voice thinned as she recalled to the time when the truck came down on her. If she weren't pushed on the ground to actually dodge it, she would have been dead. She was also sure that something shielded her from the debris. Something or someone for that matter.

“Solene?” Myrna shook her shoulders to capture her attention.

Solene cleared her throat and fluttered her lashes before answering. “No, I'm fine, Myrna. I don't need the hospital. I'm not hit anywhere.”

“You have blood at the back of your blouse though,” Myrna pointed out worriedly.

Solene looked over her shoulder and saw some stains of red on her beige blouse as what her best friend said. A wrinkle on her forehead formed then.

“No, this is...this is not mine...” she stated, sure of herself.

“Well, you should get yourself checked anyway,” Myrna stressed. She guided Solene up and supported her once she was able to stand straight.

“Really, Myrna, I'm fine. I just need to go to the house and change clothes.” Solene's eyes unconsciously moved to where Hein sat. The table and chairs were unaffected from the crash but he was not there anymore.

‘Where is he?’ she thought.

She moved to check the people around her. Some had a sense of urgency to leave the cafe while others remained, studying the damages, recording their harrowing experience on social media, and some checking if the driver of the truck was okay.

Sounds of sirens were heard nearby then and she watched past the broken wall of glass the arrival of ambulances and police cars.

In the midst of this busy picture, what immediately caught her interest was the sight of a man, Hein specifically, standing across the street, looking at the cafe strictly towards her while he nursed a bloody slash on his cheek.

‘How had he got to be on that side of the road so quick?’ that was the first question that popped in her mind. The second was the wound he received. Clearly, it came from the vehicle accident, but how would he get such a wound when his spot in the cafe remained virtually untouched?

Glass shards possibly reached him. That’s a plausible explanation. Could be. Definitely.

Yet why does a part of her believed he was that person who saved her from the crash?

There was only one way to find out.