

Seduced 71

Chapter 71

“Do you know who I am? Do you want to die?” Shawn was still putting up a fight, and even Queenie could sense the hypocrisy in his threatening tone.

“Do I need to know?” The guy sneered.

“Would you dare tell me who you are?” Shawn kept yelling defiantly. But to me and Queenie, it sounded like his last desperate struggle.

“They call me Colt,” the guy said arrogantly.

“Colt?” Shawn seemed apprehensive regarding the name. He immediately fell silent and abandoned all resistance.

Pathetically, he pleaded, “Colt, please spare me. I didn’t know Luna was one of yours. I won’t dare to touch her again.”

Was Colt that famous and intimidating? I had no idea. But he seemed pretty cool to me for beating Shawn to a pulp.

“You’d better behave yourself and stay away from her in Lincoln University. If she loses a single strand of hair, I’ll make you pay for it.”

So domineering!

I stared at the guy with twinkling eyes.

“Get lost.”

Having been granted mercy, Shawn crawled to his feet and fled with humiliation.

Then, Colin came back to me. He was frowning angrily. “What are you doing here so late? Do you know how dangerous it is? If I hadn’t happened to pass by, you would have been in big trouble. How do you want me to explain to your parents if you got hurt?”

Uh—oh, Colin was mad.

And when Colin got mad, there was no better solution than playing the helpless card.

Secretly, I pinched the flesh on my waist and tears quickly filled my eyes. Taking advantage of the tears I had managed to squeeze out, I sobbed loudly and wiped my eyes on his shirt. “Colin, why did you come

so late? I was so scared.”

Queenie stood there, dumbfounded as she watched my drastic change of expression, seemingly

impressed by my quick-wittedness.

Yes, I was scared. But my waist also hurt.

Colin cared about me greatly. He softened when he saw me crying. The anger on his face eased up while

he gently wiped my tears with a tissue. “If you’re scared, don’t act so recklessly again. Do you understand? Okay, stop crying. Tell me, what are you doing out so late?”

“We just wanted to grab some late–night snacks and took a shortcut.” I looked up at Colin, whose expression had brightened, and quietly explained.

For some reason, I felt a little nervous facing him as though I had done something wrong.

Even though all we wanted was a late–night snack–

I never imagined that this would happen either.

“Are you injured?”

“No.” To convince Colin, I bounced on the spot and spun thrice.

“Come with me. Tell me next time if you want to eat something. Don’t come out so late anymore, got it?” Colt walked ahead as he chided us.

I followed him with Queenie, repeatedly nodding like a chick pecking at grains. “Okay, got it.”

Now that the danger was gone, Queenie reverted to her gossip–loving self. She leaned into my ear and asked, “Who is this handsome guy? He’s so cool. Ah, my heart is beating so fast.”

“Lower your voice. Don’t let him hear you.”

“Lulu, tell me the truth. When did you find such a hottie? Are there any left? Hook me up with one.”

When I covered her mouth to stop the nonsense she was spouting, she managed to free her mouth and resumed her babble. Irritated, I pinched her waist.

She winced in pain “Lulu, it doesn’t matter if you know him. He saved you

while continuing to speak

today, and you have to repay his kindness.”

Chapter 72

“Repay what? How would I repay him?” I retorted in annoyance.

“In this world, besides offering yourself, any other way of repaying seems pale in comparison.”

“Shut up. He’s practically my older brother.”

“Right. Are you sure he’s not your lover? Luna, this type of ‘brother–sister’ relationship is most likely to develop into something deeper.”

I seemed to h

hear a muffled laughter from Colin. Annoyed and embarrassed, I kicked Queenie in the leg.

Why was her mind so dirty?

*He watched me grow up and changed my diapers. ‘Offering myself is never going to happen between me and Colin. It can be with any guy on this earth but him.’

“What, he changed your diapers? Doesn’t that mean you’ve been...”

Before Queenie could finish her words, I went up and gave her a resentful kick. If I had known about this

conversation back then, I would have never let him change my diapers.

“Queenie, shut your mouth. If you keep blabbering, you won’t get to eat later.”

At last, Queenie reluctantly kept quiet for the sake of food. Instead, she resorted to using her eyes and gestures to torment me, constantly hinting at me to make a move. I was so infuriated that I wanted to break her legs.

The food street was unlike an upscale restaurant; it had a row of stalls on the roadside. Colin picked a clean spot for us to sit, handed us the menus, and then went to make a phone call.

Before long, a few guys arrived to join our table, all of them sweating. They were familiar faces I had seen

many times before.

When they noticed Queenie and me, their eyes lit up. One of them was Flynn Hayes, a lanky guy who silently sat next to Queenie. He casually put his head over and began to discuss the menu with her.

I pondered for a while, feeling something was going on between them. One was very initiative, while the other was a little indifferent. It was rather intriguing.

The food arrived quickly, with chicken wraps, lamb and beef skewers, loaded fries, and pizzas all piled on

a large white steel tray. The wonderful smell made my mouth water immediately.

+16 BONUS

It was so fragrant that I stopped observing Queenie and Flynn. I grabbed a handful of loaded fries and

stuffed them into my mouth. The flavors exploded, making me want to scream in glee.

Colin, seeing my greedy expression, indulgently smiled and picked out a few skewers for me. He put

them separately on a small plate to cool before handing me a cup of freshly poured orange juice. "Slow

down, there's plenty. Have some orange juice."

With both hands occupied with skewers, I didn't take the cup. Instead, I drank a few sips directly from

Colin's outstretched hand.

"Yo, when did Colt become so considerate? Why aren't you kicking her out like you did last time with that

beautiful chick?"

It was said that alcohol could boost courage. After a few glasses of beer, the guys who usually followed

Colin around suddenly dared to tease him.

Normally, I wouldn't participate and would only watch them banter among themselves. But this time, I

was interested in the topic they were talking about.

I couldn't believe that the elegant and gentle Colin would kick someone, let alone a girl. Whoever that girl

was, she must be special to be able to anger Colin.

But on second thought, not only would Colin kick people but also throw punches at them, just like he did with Shawn earlier.

It was cool when Colin dealt with a guy, but kicking a girl. It didn't sound nice.

Colin wasn't that indiscreet. There had to be a reason why he did that.

Chapter 73

"Hey, can you tell me exactly what happened?" I asked one of the guys, Aaron, while biting into my skewer and shifting closer to him.

"Come back here. Don't talk while you eat." Colin reached out to pull me back to my seat.

Colin didn't eat much, spending most of the time looking after me. He handed me tissues and sliced the pizza for me—taking care of me in every way.

"No, I want to hear Colin's romantic tales. Come on, tell me, Aaron. I'm all ears." I pouted, getting Aaron to spill the beans. Colin shot me a glance of indulgence but didn't say anything more.

“All right, let me tell you about Colt’s charm. He’s a really popular guy. There is hardly anyone in the whole university who doesn’t know him. Let’s not talk about the past. Just last year, there was a junior girl who was quite decent-looking. She was a bit shorter than you, and not as pretty. But she was okay.

“One day, when queuing for food in the cafeteria, she accidentally bumped into Colt. Without any hesitation, Colt kicked her out, quite literally. She couldn’t get up for a long time. It happened right at the entrance of the cafeteria, in front of the students and lecturers. She lost all her pride that day.”

During the summer break, while I was recovering from my injuries, I read quite a few romance novels, especially those with domineering male leads.

Thinking of the common plot devices used, it seemed like the girl had deliberately bumped into Colin so that she could fall into his arms or something of the sort. She must have been enticed by his good looks.

It wasn’t her fault, though. If it were me, I would have probably fallen for a handsome and powerful guy

like him too.

“What happened next? Was there a hero to the rescue?” I leaned forward again, and so did Queenie.

This time around, Colin physically maneuvered me away while Flynn went to sit directly between Queenie

and Aaron.

Aaron watched Flynn and Queenie’s interactions with a disdainful sneer. Then, he turned around and continued his story with a mischievous smile, “Who dares to play the hero when Colt is around? That girl

got up with a red face and left.

“After that, she would cry whenever she saw Colt. Since then, everyone secretly gave Colt a nickname.” One Kick Tearjerker. Sounds good, right? It’s quite befitting, haha!”

+16 BONUS

“And what happened later on?”

“Nothing. That’s the story.” Aaron shrugged, indicating that the story ended with no further developments.

I was not satisfied with the story and grumbled, “How could nothing have sparked between them?”

Colin had always been the perfect child every family wanted. Even Mom had used him to set an example for me many times, asking me to learn from him and strive to be a useful person who contributed to society and mankind.

your mind.

I thought it was normal to have such an excellent example stuck in your

From the way I saw it, the girl must have intentionally tested Colin, thinking that he wouldn’t do anything

to her in public even if he didn’t accept her.

But who knew that Colin would be cold and straightforward enough to use violence? Thinking about it

now, I felt quite sorry for the girl.

“Ask one more question, and you won’t get any spicy food for a week.” Colin looked at me with a chilling expression, his warning making those around him shiver.

I grinned at him in response, showing that I wasn't afraid of him.

He forcefully pushed a plate of pork ribs toward me, slicing the meat into pieces. I ate each piece as he put them on my plate one by one.

Though his words sounded stern, his actions were quite gentle. While eating, I concluded that although he had kicked someone publicly, the girl must have had some flaw that failed to evoke any emotional response from Colin.

Chapter 74

Fine. Since I was unable to get the answer from the others, I decided to ask the person involved.

"Colin, why did you kick that girl? Tell me what you were thinking at that time." I smiled and approached Colin, getting close enough to smell his scent.

Aaron, seemingly fearless after a few drinks, took the opportunity when everyone noticed Colin's changing mood. He provocatively teased him, "Maybe he found her smell unpleasant, haha."

"What? Does that girl not take showers? How could she smell that bad? But Colin, that's still not right. If she smelled unpleasant, you should keep your distance. Kicking her out is too much. It's not very gentlemanly."

"So, are you saying I should hug her and give her a couple of kisses to be a gentleman?" Colin's face turned gloomier, making it unbearable to look at.

I felt helpless at how he misunderstood my simple words.

Colin's remark caused a few of the guys, who were in the middle of chugging beer, to choke and spit their

drinks out.

Colin glared at me with a sullen expression. It seemed like he was genuinely angry.

Feeling a bit uneasy, I didn't dare to continue and awkwardly rubbed my nose. "Well, I didn't mean it like that. I wouldn't allow you to kiss just about anyone."

"That's right. It's not just you, even we won't let that happen. We have been friends for so many years, and I have never seen him treat a girl nicely. We all used to think that he might be the dominant type because, well, he's too damn charming," remarked Aaron.

"But now I understand. He's not the dominant type; he's just waiting for someone. Fortunately, that someone has appeared, and his days of being single are coming to an end."

"Don't listen to him. Eat up." Colin fed me the orange juice again.

Aaron seized the moment and continued his teasing. "Look, he's still feeding her. Colt, you're basically as

loyal as Lulu's dog now."

"Stop attacking us. Colin has always been good to me since we were kids. If you had a sister, wouldn't

you be good to her too?" I argued with Aaron, displeased.

That was my dear Colin he was talking about. How could he tarnish the pure and noble bond we shared?

And what was with 'loyal as a dog'? Only a boyfriend could be called that. Colin was far from it.

Flynn, who had been eating quietly, finally found the chance to join in. He tossed away the finished skewer and grabbed another one. “Exactly. If I had a little girl like Lulu as my neighbor, I would spoil her to death.”

I glanced at Colin, who was handing me another skewer, and felt that Flynn’s words had a hidden meaning.

Wasn’t this conversation supposed to be about Colin’s gossip? How did it end up involving me? We were going off–topic.

That night’s encounter was both thrilling and uneventful. Colin not only saved our lives but also treated us to a delicious skewer feast.

The aroma was so tantalizing that even Queenie couldn’t stop smacking her lips in the middle of the night. That small gathering had also created a delightful story between Queenie and Flynn.

Because of this incident, my impression of Colin improved tenfold. From then on, Colin took full charge of my three meals plus late–night snacks, and I wasn’t allowed to act on my own.

Although I protested, Colin told me that if something like that were to happen again, his heart would stop beating. To keep him healthy and alive, I chose to obey him.

Colin’s rules somewhat restricted my freedom, but luckily, the meals and snacks he prepared were all my favorites. Thus, I had no choice but to surrender.

Felix called to inform me that, due to certain circumstances, Lilac's exchange program ended a week earlier. During the phone call, I could tell he was very happy, and honestly, I was happy too.

After all, I no longer had to see her or think about her. Lilac's absolute absence allowed me to finally be peace. She was like a ticking time bomb placed beside me, bound to cause trouble sooner or later.

Somehow, I found myself comparing Felix and Colin. Whenever I was in trouble. Felix either wasn't aware

or left me to my own devices. On the other hand, whether intentionally or coincidentally, Colin always protected me.

Looking from this perspective, I had to admit Dad was right about one thing. Colin was truly dependable. and it made me even more reliant on him.

While I positioned myself as an independent person who avoided troubling others with things I could handle on my own, deep down, I was still a little princess who yearned to be loved.

Colin, apart from my parents, was the person who loved me the most.

Over time, I had completely occupied Colin's leisure time like a plaster attached to him. Sometimes, when he was too busy and we couldn't meet for two or three days, I would feel uneasy—as if something

was amiss.

Colin seemed to understand my feelings. No matter how busy he was, he always made time to call me

and made sure I got three meals a day. All the meals delivered to me were my favorites.

ght that Colin was not an older brother to me but more like a mother.

I often thought that

Before Lilac left, she came to see me. She was crying while trying to explain herself, her nose all runny

and her eyes teary.

Knowing her true nature, I couldn't be bothered to watch her little act. I told her to get to the point and not to use manipulative tactics on me because I wasn't Felix. Even if she cried blood, I wouldn't feel sorry for

her.

aid that

However, Lilac looked at me pitifully with wide, teary eyes and kept talking nonsense. She said

Shawn was only her friend from the town she came from, and there was nothing between them. Their

relationship was pure, and I shouldn't overthink it.

"If you hadn't come to find me, I wouldn't have thought much about it." Honestly, when it came to Lilac

and Shawn, I didn't know what to do. Just thinking about it gave me a headache.

In the end, I warned her, saying. "Treat Felix well when you go back to him. He really likes you."

After seeing Lilac off at the airport, I sent a photo to Felix, letting him know that Lilac was returning unharmed.

Maybe my care was not up to par, but for a girl, the best care should come from her boyfriend. I told Felix that as a good boyfriend, he should always pay attention to his girlfriend's every move and keep her close.

Unfortunately, I was too soft-hearted. With good intentions, I earnestly gave Felix a reminder once again.

Whether he understood or not, that was all I could do.

In the blink of an eye, it was Christmas. Most of my classmates went back home to spend time with their families, while some formed groups of three to five to travel.

Initially, I had told my parents that I wouldn't be home as I planned to go to Verdantmont for sightseeing with my roommates, Julia and Queenie. Our travel bags were all packed.

However, Colin suddenly told me that the competition date was moved up, and we had to finish all the work by the 4th. Or else, we wouldn't make it to the preliminary review. To confirm the authenticity of this

information, he even brought a professor as a witness.

So, with teary eyes, I watched Julia and Queenie happily board the airport bus and disappear into the distance. Meanwhile, Colin dragged me back to the studio at the Research Institute, and I reluctantly did the finishing touches.

A perfectly planned trip was canceled, and my mood plummeted. I couldn't muster the energy to do anything. In Colin's words, I spent several days sulking without a trace of a smile.

Chapter 76

With most lecturers and students out of campus, only Colin and I were in the usually quiet studio.

Apart from watching me eat, he kept reminding me to focus and put more effort into my work. It was so desolate that I felt like crying.

Oh, Christmas.

The holiday came just once a year, and yet I was forced to waste it. How heartbreaking! I wanted to cry!

On the night of the 3rd, I was enslaved until 9:00 pm. Exhausted and sleepy, I snapped that it was bedtime and that I would finish the rest tomorrow.

However, Colin adamantly refused, using both soft and hard tactics to drag me into completing the remaining work.

At 10:45 pm, he escorted me back to the dormitory. After three consecutive days of working day and night, I was physically and mentally worn out. I was sound asleep as soon as I got into the bed.

In my dream, Julia and Queenie were sitting in a restaurant, proudly showing off the photos they took in Verdantmont. The scenery was beautiful, making me want to cross through the dream and give them a good beating.

Originally, I thought I could relax idly during the holiday. Nonetheless, just as dawn was breaking, my phone started ringing incessantly like it was haunted.

Thinking it was my mom, I didn't bother to check the caller ID and answered with a sleepy "Mom".

There was a moment of silence on the other end, followed by a soft laugh that was so familiar that it made me shudder.

I instantly woke up, subconsciously looking at the screen. Colin was smiling at me charmingly. Why was he bothering me so early in the morning? It was a holiday, and I had finished all my work.

My morning anger went through the roof.

Momentarily I forgot that my face was unwashed and my hair was messy. I shouted, "Why are you awake so early during the holidays? Are you crazy?"

Colin laughed even more devilishly, with a mischievous glint in his eyes. The corner of his lips lifted, making him look like a refined scoundrel. "Lazy pig, get up already. I'll take you out to have fun."

Being my stubborn self, I refused.

He then patiently described how delicious the food was, how beautiful the scenery was, and how many artists flocked there for inspiration. He claimed that I might not want to come back once I visited the

place.

Colin's clear voice carried a teasing tone. He was not only a master of watercolor painting but also an expert at brainwashing. By the end, all I could think was that if I missed this opportunity, it would be the biggest mistake of my life.

Moreover, there were still four days of vacation left. Lazing around in the dormitory would be a waste. Not wanting to miss the second chance after the first, I succumbed to Colin's sweet talk.

After I hastily got ready, I exited the dormitory with a small backpack. Colin was waiting for me under a tree, silently watching me as I approached. His gaze was so dark and deep. It was shining in a way that made him extraordinarily handsome.

He resembled a tall, straight pine tree, emitting a clear, refreshing aura. The overall impression he gave was pure, noble, and dignified. For some reason, I felt my heart rate accelerate a bit.

Colin walked toward me, took the backpack, and then led me to his black SUV.

"It's too early for breakfast. I bought something on the way. Just eat this for now." He handed me a beautifully logo-printed paper bag.

Opening it, I found the pancakes and milkshake from my favorite diner. The diner was located nearly 25

miles away from Lincoln University, and it was only just dawn.

Colin had woken up so early!

The sweet milkshake slid smoothly down my throat, making me want to sigh in contentment.

Speaking honestly, although Colin was strict with me, he was very good at pampering me. I gazed at

Colin's focused expression from the side as he drove, finding him genuinely good-looking.

I often had this feeling that I couldn't divert my gaze from him. His lips were slightly pursed, and his

starry eyes were mischievous. Even his broad shoulders tempted me to lean my head on them.

"Are

you satisfied with what you see?" Colin noticed my stare and glanced at me with a teasing smile.

Chapter 77

"Are you satisfied with what you see?" Colin noticed my stare and glanced at me with a teasing smile.

He loved to smile. Sometimes, it was as refreshing as a spring breeze, and at other times, it was warm

and gentle. It always made me feel comfortable and relaxed. I would eagerly admire his smile, reluctant

to part with it.

On the other hand, Felix was always Indifferent. Even when he smiled at me, it felt distant and seemingly Impossible to gauge his true feelings. The point was that he rarely smiled at me.

How should I put it? Felix was like a fragile piece of art that was more suitable to be displayed somewhere to be admired. Colin, however, was like the pillow by your bedside, making you want his company all the time.

I remembered the day we first met: Colin teased me the same way he did now. What did I say back then?

Oh, I remembered. I was deceived by his looks and foolishly said he was handsome.

However, Colin was genuinely good-looking. It was the kind of clean, pure, and pleasing-to-the-eye good-

looking.

“Yes. You’re absolutely stunning and undeniably good-looking. Colin, when I have the time, I’ll draw a portrait of you.”

I was good at portraits, and Colin, this earthly beauty, deserved to be immortalized in a painting.

Otherwise, it would be a waste of a masterpiece.

“Sure, I’d love that.”

Laughing and joking along the journey, the atmosphere was light and cheerful. I nagged him to tell me where we were going, so I could check on Google and plan our trip. Then, in these four days, we could have a great time.

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However, Colin was being mysteriously evasive. No matter how much I begged and pouted, he refused to

tell me. He only said that I would know once we arrived, claiming that I would love the place.

The SUV passed over a mountain, climbed over a slope, went through a forest, and crossed several bridges. Before my little butt got sore, we finally reached our destination.

True to his words, I loved the place.

Western Loch Ecological Scenic Area was located in the hilly area of Silver Peaks. It featured vast

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+16 BONUS

pristine forests, abundant vegetation, green mountains, clear waters, blue skies, and flowing streams. The scenery, with its vibrant layers of colors, was breathtaking.

After getting off the dirt road, a walk of less than 30 minutes brought us to the entrance of the forest park. In fact, we could drive in, but Colin insisted that in tourism, we should focus on the Journey. As driving would make us miss many details in the scenery, walking on foot was more enjoyable.

Colin bought tickets, and I followed him close like a sidekick.

There were no exciting game activities here, just the simple enjoyment of the scenery. Along the way, I

was so happy that I jumped around. Colin pointed out that I looked like a little monkey.

It was the peak of the tourist season, and there were quite many visitors. Countless people were

discussing that the maple leaves here were the most beautiful, claiming it to be the best place in the

Northeast to appreciate autumn foliage.

Having truly experienced the scenery along the way, I also deeply felt the Infinite charm of the maple

trees here. The maple leaves were indeed super beautiful, with layers of red, yellow, and green, perfectly

showcasing the different appeal of maple leaves in different seasons.

When large patches of red leaves fell on my white skirt, I suddenly felt moved and choked up. He actually

knew about how sad I was for not being able to go to Verdantmont!

Colin noticed the change in my mood. He turned to look at me and smiled. "What you missed out is not

meant to be. Right now, the scenery in front of you is meant for you. Do you like it?"

His words sounded a bit philosophical, but I didn't quite understand. Sniffing, I replied, "Is this your way

of making up for what you put me through?"

What the heck? He ruthlessly enslaved me for three whole days and disrupted my travel plans. And now

brought me here to see maple leaves, making me all emotionally moved.

Chapter 78

Colin took two quick steps past me and then turned around, walking serams

from his pocket and pointed the camera at me. "Yes, and no Lulu loka

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Frowning, I came up with a plan.

“Ouch!” I pretended to be hurt, stopping and refusing to move forward while Teas messe

Colin thought I was injured and hastily turned around to run to my side. He was too close to inspect my injury. "Did you sprain your ankle? Why did you run so fast? WHICH SET?"

While he wasn't paying attention, I pushed him down and pounced to snatch his phone.

Colin was clever. He quickly realized he had been tricked and raised his long arm high above his head. Everlyngor the ground, I was no match for him.

Unwilling to give up, I wrestled on top of him, finally grabbing the phone. Only then did I sprawl in Colin's arms, face to face with him, our breaths intertwining closely.

Reflected in Colin's sparkling eyes was nothing but the blue sky and me.

The atmosphere suddenly became ambiguous, and my face gradually flushed red from embarrassment.

I wanted to get up.

Colin gently touched the back of my head, pressing me against his neck.

Colin took two quick steps past me and then turned around, walking backward. He pulled out a phone from his pocket and pointed the camera at me. "Yes, and no. Lulu, look at me, smile."

"I don't want to smile. Don't take pictures of me. I look ugly."

Colin, abandoning his mature and steady demeanor, became lively and playful, with laughter filling the air.

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I heard his strong heartbeat, and the scent filling my nose was the refreshing and cooling fragrance of

his pine-like essence.

For a moment, I couldn't think straight.

"Lulu, don't be sad. You deserve someone better."

My nose felt stuffy. I thought I had armed myself from head to toe, appearing invincible as I fooled

around carefreely every day so that no one see through my feelings.

Yet, Colin's simple words successfully broke through my defenses.

He saw through my restraints and understood that, in my heart, there was a wound that never healed,

bleeding continuously and agonizingly.

"Mm." My voice trembled.

"Don't cry, Lulu. It breaks my heart." Colin tightened his arms around me. His embrace was warm.

I didn't know why, but I greedily wanted to stay a bit longer in his embrace.

Perhaps it was because I had endured too much pain alone and my heart was too heavy, but I longed for

someone to rely on.

But Colin was Felix's brother. Could I rely on him?

"Colin, I want to get up."

"Okay. No more messing around."

After that, Colin helped me up, and we sat side by side on the ground. He opened the photo album on his

phone for me to see.

"Beautiful, isn't it?"

"Yeah. Colin, your photography skills are really good, just like your painting skills."

He caressed my head vigorously, as if he was petting a well-behaved puppy. Then, just like when we were kids, he held my hand and strolled along the mountain paths.

Chapter 79

Colin walked with me hand in hand, strolling along the mountain paths just like when we were kids.

He shared stories about skilled folk artists I had never heard of, talked about his different interpretations

of watercolor paintings, and reminisced about the paths we walked together in our childhood.

Under the blue sky and bright sun, surrounded by picturesque scenery, we were like characters from a

painting.

In the park, there were tandem bicycles. Upon noticing my longing gaze, Colin rented one and took me on

a ride, freely traversing the enchanting nature.

We collaborated wholeheartedly, struggling to pedal for a long time until my legs were unbearably sore. It

was only then we gave up and lay down on the grass to rest.

Following that, we stumbled upon a narrow stream. Its water was a clear mirror, reflecting every grain of

sand at the bottom. Several rounded stones, some dark red and others pure white, discreetly divided the

stream.

I naughtily took off my shoes, held them in my hands, and disturbed the rare tranquility. I watched as the

slender fish swam between my toes.

While having fun, I refused to listen to Colin's advice to get out of the water. I ran even deeper into the stream, splashing water that wet the hems of his pants.

With a stern face, Colin lifted me out and threw me on his back. He cupped my feet in his hands, wiping away the cool water droplets. He said that autumn water in the north was freezing, and girls were prone

to getting sick from the chill.

Then, he carried me on his back, walking a long, long way. He kept talking about the scenery here, the

disparity between fantasy and reality, and the original aspirations a successful artist should have.

Colin's voice was rather pleasant, like a radio announcer telling a story. I lay on his back, quietly listening

to him and feeling that time was peacefully still. His broad back was my entire world at that moment.

This way

This was a secluded paradise, far from the hustle and bustle of the world. It maintained the most

primitive ecological environment, where the maple leaves were like flames,

r upon layer. With

exquisite mountain peaks and winding roads like an art gallery, every inch of the landscape was

stunning.

As the scenery continued to unfold, I suddenly felt an urge to return to simplicity and go beyond the

mundane. If possible, I wanted to stay here forever, merging with these mountains, water, maples, and stones.

Perhaps due to Colin's comforting words earlier, my heart unexpectedly found peace in mother nature accompanied by countless strangers.

"Colin, this place is so beautiful. How did you discover it?"

"You think this is beautiful? There's a better place ahead. Want to go and see?" Colin's voice was deep and melodious like a cello.

When the car stopped in front of a small village, I was once again amazed. If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have thought that such a magnificent scene existed in this world.

If what I saw just now was a fairyland on earth, what lay before my eyes now was one from a painted scroll.

"Colin, where is this? It's even more beautiful than a painting." I exclaimed in delight.

"This is Western Loch Village, also known as the Painter's Haven."

"Painter's Haven? Do painters live here?"

"No. It's the beauty of this place that attracts painters and artists alike to come here for inspiration. Many of them live in this village now. Unfortunately, no matter how wonderful their brushes are, they're unable to paint the complete beauty of these peculiar mountains and clear waters. Nature's

splendor can't be expressed with a few strokes. That's why I brought you here to see it for yourself—to imprint it in your mind. Maybe someday, it will give you inspiration."

As I stared blankly at everything in front of me, I felt an itch in my hands. "Do you want to paint? Let's eat first. We'll paint the sunset later."

Chapter 80

Colin soon found a local inn. The owner, upon hearing the sound of the car, came out to give us a warm welcome. He engaged in a friendly conversation with Colin as though they had been friends for many years.

"Colin, it's been a long time since you've come. Did you finally have a girlfriend? That's great; now I don't

have to worry about you."

"No, mister. That's not it. I'm Luna, and he's my older brother," I quickly replied before Colin could say anything, feeling a bit embarrassed about being mistaken for his girlfriend.

"A sister from another mother? Colin, she's even more beautiful than the scenery here. Keep it up!" The owner's eyes contained a hint of encouragement.

When Colin shook hands with the owner, his grip was strong—as if they had made some kind of agreement.

The owner laughed heartily, telling us to make ourselves at home and that he would take care of our meals and accommodations.

For dinner, we had typical northern farmhouse dishes. It was surprisingly delicious, and I had so much food that walking became difficult.

While Colin teased me about it, he held my hand, strolling around the village to help me digest everything.

“Colin, is there a lake here? Why is it called Western Loch?”

“I heard that before the liberation, this place was occupied by brigands. It was called ‘Western Land’ back then. I don’t know when it evolved into ‘Western Loch.’”

“What’s a brigand? Is it a type of snake?” Having grown up in the South, I didn’t know what it was and thought it might be some kind of soft-bodied creature from the sound of it.

Colin laughed again, letting go of my hand and patting my head. “A brigand is a bandit.”

I stuck out my tongue, feeling embarrassed for not knowing even this. No wonder Colin teased me.

That evening, when Colin opened the trunk, I was shocked to see a complete set of art supplies.

Facing the brilliant sunset, he took out the materials one by one and arranged them neatly before sitting me in front of an easel. He placed a paintbrush in my hand and said, “I’ll paint with you.”



I sat motionless for four hours straight. The sun had set, the moon had risen, and the courtyard lights of the inn were all switched on to illuminate us. Yet, despite wracking my brains, I couldn't fully depict the stunning beauty of this place.

Besides, watercolor painting emphasized details, and after four hours, I only managed to outline the general features. I had to add colors slowly after going back.

I painted the small stream I had waded into in the afternoon, including the stones, small fish, distant mountains, and maple leaves. I even included the grass by the stream, all vividly on the canvas.

Yet, I still felt something was missing. No matter how I looked at the painting, it seemed a bit dull. It was unable to convey the charm I wanted.

Colin stood by my side and observed for a while. Then, he effortlessly picked up a paintbrush and began sketching.

The next moment, a new figure appeared on the white stones. It was a girl in a white dress. She was barefoot as she stood in the stream and playfully danced with the small fish in the water. Droplets of water were wetting the hem of her long skirt.

The addition of the girl instantly made the originally plain painting lively and dynamic. Colin's painting skills were indeed far superior to mine.

*Colin, did you paint me? How pretty."

Colin looked down at me warmly, his gaze intoxicating. "Because of your presence, the mountains, waters, and maple leaves pale in comparison. Lulu, even with all my skills, the girl I painted is only one-tenth of your true being in my heart. You are the most beautiful sight in the world."

Colin spoke like he was crafting poetry. It sounded incredibly pleasant.

"No way, Colin. You're just saying that to make me happy. You're so sly. I won't be fooled."