

His Destructive Toxic Love Chapter 13

She knew she wasn't worthy of being his wife. He was infatuated with someone else. What was she compared to Nova??

"Yeah, I know I don't deserve it" she said, her gaze icy as she pulled the blanket over herself and lay down.

Feeling ignored, Casper lashed out, swiping the tablet off the nightstand, sending it crashing to the floor. The sound made Eliza's heart skip a beat

After Casper stormed out, she picked up the broken tablet. The shattered screen mirrored her own broken heart

A nurse walked in, "Ms. Eliza?"

Eliza tucked the tablet away. "Is it time for my

my shot?"

"No, it's not that." The nurse looked troubled, her eyes filled with pity. "The hospital just called... you're being discharged."

Discharged? They'd just agreed to move her to another room, so why did they accept her discharge request now?

"Is it because my deposit wasn't enough?"

"No, that's not it. It's just... an order from above."

Eliza got it immediately. Someone wanted her out of the hospital. No one but Casper would have the power or reason to do this. It looked like she really did offend his precious sweetheart.

Casper's influence was far-reaching. Eliza had no way to fight back. "Alright, I'll go."

"Ms. Eliza, I'm really sorry. But you can get treatment at another hospital."

Eliza gave a weak smile. "Thanks."

The nurse felt sorry for Eliza, handled the discharge paperwork, and even wheeled her out to a taxi.

"Ms. Eliza, I hope you recover soon."

"Goodbye."

Back at home, Eliza's knees were swollen and throbbing. She didn't bother going to another hospital, knowing she'd just get kicked out again.

In Falconridge, Casper's power left her no options!!

d to her at home.

Her legs hurt so much that she called a doctor online to attend to her at home.

When the doorbell rang, Eliza struggled to her feet and opened the door.

"Eliza?"³

"Aaron?" she said, surprised. "What are you doing here?"

"A friend had an emergency and asked me to fill in. I didn't expect. He immediately reached out to steady her." ". how did you hurt your knee??"

Eliza didn't go into detail:

details. She just said it was an accident. Once she was settled, Aaron opened his medical kit to treat her wounds. The infection was bad. It was clearly festering. This is serious. Why didn't you go to the hospital?"⁸

Eliza gave a bitter smile. "I did."

"You're not still having issues with Casper, are you?" Aaron asked, sensing something was off. "Surely you're not still fighting?" Eliza wondered what Aaron, an outsider, thought of her marriage. Did he think this was just typical married life drama?!!

If only it were that simple.

"Do you think I have the right to be fighting with Casper? The little warmth left in her heart was slowly fading.

"Why did you move out?" He applied alcohol to disinfect the wound, focusing on his task. "I'll sting a bit. Just hang in there."

Eliza gripped the sofa fabric tightly, not making a sound. Over the past two years, she'd grown numb to the pain

"His heart does not belong with me."

Aaron paused. In Falconridge, gossip about Casper and Nova was a daily affair. Their relationship was splashed all over the news. As Casper's closest friend, Aaron could see how he treated Nova differently.X

However, the media never mentioned Eliza, the legitimate wife

To them, Eliza was invisible

“Thinking about divorcing him?”

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Eliza didn't deny it. Every time Casper endangered her and her family's lives for Nova, her urge to leave him only grew stronger.

“Yes,”

Aaron was initially stunned but didn't say much. Being Casper's wife was a position of prestige that many only dreamt of

Was Eliza really prepared to throw it all away?

“Are you sure about this?”

“Absolutely.”

Aaron didn't press further and focused on treating her wounds. His hands were skillful and gentle as he applied the medicine and bandaged her injuries.³

“If you get a fever tomorrow, make sure to go to the hospital,” he reminded her

Eliza nodded slightly. “Thank you.”

“Get some rest. If you feel unwell, give me a call, and I'll come by to change your dressing again tomorrow,” he said, picking up his medical kit!

Her eyes fell sadly. “Don't bother. I can't afford to pay for more house calls.”

She was unemployed and low on funds. She had to save every penny counted.

Aaron felt a pang of sympathy, “I won't charge you.”

“Really, Aaron, thank you, but I don't want to trouble you.”

“Stay seated. I'll lock the door on my way out” Aaron gave Eliza a meaningful look before leaving.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, his breathing became heavy. He couldn't resist calling Casper. “Do you know about Eliza's leg injury?” Casper's voice was cold on the other end. “And how do you know about that?!”

"I saw her. Her knee is badly injured and getting infected. Without proper treatment, it could become critical..."

"This isn't your concern." Casper's voice was chilling, filled with an unprecedented coldness and ruthlessness!

Aaron, puzzled, asked, "What has she done to you to treat her this way? She said she had already gone to the hospital. With such a serious injury, she should be treated there. Don't tell me you had her discharged."

"Are you feeling sorry for her?" A mocking laugh came through the phone, "Aaron, Eliza is my wife. It's not your place to care whether she lives or dies."³

"Consider me nosy, then."²

"It's none of your business. With that, Casper hung up.

Back at the hospital, the nurse arrived, and Casper prepared to leave.

"Casper, are you leaving?" Nova wanted him to stay, but when she saw Casper's grim expression, she spoke cautiously. "If there's work at the company, you should go."²

"Call me if you need anything."

Casper's car took a detour to Eliza's apartment. The lights were

still on in her window

After he finished a cigarette, he dialed her number. "Come downstairs.")

Eliza's hand trembled slightly as she held the phone. He knew full well how badly her knee was injured, yet he still made such a request. Her heart grew colder. "If it's something important, we can talk over the phone."

"If you don't come down, don't bother talking to me about Robin's issue ever again."

et him, even at the risk of her knee. With that, he hung up. If Casper were willing to discuss Robin's matter, she would meet him, Eliza tried to stand, failing several times before grabbing a cane

Half an hour later, Eliza, leaning on her cane, made her way downstairs with difficulty. Her forehead was covered in sweat, and her breathing was uneven and rapid.

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Casper leaned casually against his car. The streetlight above cast a soft glow on his hair and shoulders, highlighting his chiseled profile against the clear night sky. He had striking looks that even made other men do a double-take.!!

As he looked up and saw her approaching, his eyes narrowed, and a smirk tugged at the corner of his lips when he noticed her using a crutch. Perhaps in his mind, she was just clumsily mimicking Nova.X

“Aaron must be heartbroken seeing you like this,” he scoffed.

Aaron? So, they talked. That explained why he was here.!!

“Weren’t we supposed to discuss Robin?” she asked, trying to keep her voice steady.il

He strode towards her, his cold eyes reflecting the chill of the night as he thrust the divorce papers at her. “Take these back, and then we

can talk.”

“Still can’t let me go?” Eliza looked up at him. His tall frame blocked most of the light, making it hard for her to see his face clearly. Tm not asking for a penny. Isn’t leaving with nothing enough? Or do you not want to give Nova a proper status?”

He grabbed her chin, forcing her to meet his gaze. “Seems like I haven’t given Nova a status yet, but you’ve already given Aaron one.”2

His words cut deep. Despite their two years of marriage, she had always been loyal, but accusations still flew her way.

Anger flared in her eyes. “When have you ever seen anything happen between me and Aaron? Do you think everyone’s like you, chasing after every desire?”

“Are you saying nothing is going on?” His grip on her face tightened, distorting her features slightly. He leaned in closer, grabbing her waist. “Would he defend you without getting any benefits?”

Aaron had probably said some kind words about her, which must have pissed Casper off. Now, Casper was taking it out on her

Eliza’s face turned pale with fury. She shoved him away. “You’re a complete bastard.”

She backed away, step by step, leaning heavily on her crutch. Her eyes were filled with disdain and a sense of betrayal.

He reached out and gripped the back of her neck, his lips brushing against her earlobe as he whispered hotly, “But you love bastards like me.”

She raised her hand to slap him, but he caught it mid-air. The tension was palpable.

Eliza struggled, but his grip was too firm. "Feeling brave, huh?" he sneered, releasing her hand with a rough shove.

The force caused her to stumble back. Her heel caught on a protruding brick, and she lost her balance, falling hard to the ground. Her palms scraped against the rough surface, dirt and grit embedding in the wounds. The pain in her knee was almost unbearable."

But she had learned to endure pain. Even as blood soaked through her pants, she didn't make a sound.

He crouched beside her, gently brushing aside her disheveled hair. "Silent in bed and still silent in pain?"

Despair washed over her. She felt utterly defeated, as she got to her feet with effort, using her crutch for support. She tidied her hair and forced her voice to remain calm. "Mr. Casper, it seems you're not here to discuss Robin.")

"Whether we talk about him or not depends on your attitude," he said, his long fingers trailing down her cheek. "And clearly, you're not showing the right attitude tonight."

Eliza turned her face away, suppressing the urge to scream. It was late, and she didn't want to disturb the neighbors.

It was clear now that Casper had no intention of discussing Robin.

Casper was just here to blow off some steam.

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With a cane in hand, she struggled her way upstairs. Each step felt like it took every bit of strength she had left.

He glanced down, lit a cigarette, and a cold, thin smile crept across his lips. The smoke swirled around him, his dark eyes taking on a mysterious, unreadable look.

Eliza's legs were completely numb. All night, it felt like they'd been amputated.X

In the morning, she groggily got out of bed and checked her temperature—102 degrees Fahrenheit, She called Chelsea, "Chelsea, could you get me some fever medicine? I've got a fever.

"What happened? Hold tight, I'm coming."

Without asking more, Chelsea rushed to the pharmacy, grabbed the meds, and drove over to Eliza's apartment complex.

"Elle?"

"Elle

Chelsea knocked for ages, but no one answered. She felt a knot tighten in her stomach. She remembered the spare key under the flowerpot and quickly fetched it.

She burst through the door and rushed to the bedroom. Eliza was in a feverish haze.

"Elle, are you okay? Forget the medicine. I'm taking you to the hospital."

Chelsea wasted no time getting Eliza to the nearest hospital. She watched Eliza's pale face, swollen knees, and injured palms, feeling a pang of heartbreak. How had this once-vibrant girl ended up like this?"

Eliza woke up the next morning. She saw Chelsea and struggled to sit up. "Chelsea."

Chelsea touched her forehead. "Thank God, the fever's gone."}

"It's been ages since I had a fever this bad," Eliza said, managing a weak, self-deprecating smile.

Chelsea couldn't bring herself to smile back. Eliza's injuries had to be Casper's doing.

"What happened to your legs?!"

Eliza didn't want to say, but Chelsea insisted. So, she gave a brief explanation.!

Chelsea was furious. She had seen cruel people, but none as bad as this. The worst part? Even after all this, Casper still hadn't released Robin

"What did you do to deserve Casper? He cheats and tortures you. Elle, you need to leave him, or he'll ruin you.!"

Eliza lowered her eyes. Of course, she would leave. She couldn't die—what would happen to her mom? What would happen to her brother, who was still stuck in Mercy Hospital??

"Chelsea, I don't think Casper will release Robin anytime soon. You have connections. Can you make sure Robin stays safe in there? I can

pay

Chelsea understood Eliza's worries but wondered if she even had the money to pay for her brother's stay. In the two years Eliza spent with Casper, all she had gotten was a free housekeeper and someone to vent on. Aside from injuries and family misfortunes, what else did she have?

"Where would you get the money? Has Casper given you a dime in the last two years?"

Though it stung. Eliza shook her head. "No."

"He's such a bastard."X

Eliza stayed in the hospital for two weeks. Chelsea handled everything. Eliza's leg got the best treatment and healed quickly. As her health improved, so did her spirits.

Holding her cracked tablet, Eliza continued sending out resumes. An art training institute in the city center extended an offer for an interview. She decided to go after getting discharged the next day.

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The institute was close to her home, offering a convenient commute. The opportunity seemed perfect.

The manager watched Eliza's impromptu sketches, nodding frequently. "Ms. Eliza, your artwork is truly exceptional. You're a distinguished graduate from a top art school. We urgently need someone with your solid fundamentals, prestigious background, and exceptional talent."

"Thank you," Eliza replied, a bit embarrassed by the praise.

"How about this: you can start on Monday, with a salary of \$4,000 per month plus performance bonuses. Typically, our teachers earn over \$10,000."%

Eliza's face lit up with delight. "Okay, I'll come by on Monday."

The manager excitedly grasped Eliza's hand. "It's rare to find such a talented teacher. You wouldn't believe it, but we recently had a teacher get pushed to us through connections. It was... difficult. Now that we have you, we'll find an excuse to let her go."

Eliza was taken aback. She felt uneasy if her arrival meant another teacher would lose their job. "Is that... okay?")

"Ms. Eliza, don't worry. We would have found a reason to dismiss her regardless," the manager sighed, shaking his head. "That teacher didn't even attend college, just had some drawing classes in high school. How could we let someone like that teach our children? If it weren't for her disability, we would've..."

The manager's discontent was evident

"Ms. Eliza, we're looking forward to Monday. We'll have the contract ready for you, including health insurance and a pension plan. Rest assured."

The salary wasn't high, but Eliza felt content. After reaching a verbal agreement, she politely excused herself. "Then, I'll get going now."

"Let me walk you out."

As Eliza and the manager reached the institute's entrance, they spotted Nova.

She emerged from Casper's car, her white dress fluttering in the breeze, her face beaming with happiness.

The manager whispered, "That's the teacher I mentioned. Looks like a wealthy guy backs her. She does not really do much here."²

So, it was her

Upon spotting Eliza, Nova, leaning on her cane, approached. "What a coincidence, Eliza. You're here..."

The manager calmly interjected, "Ms. Eliza is here for the art teacher position."

"That's wonderful. You'll do great, Nova offered a kind smile to the manager. "Eliza is my friend. She's really wonderful. Please give her a chance."

Eliza gave her a cool glance. "I'll be off then."²

"Goodbye. Ms. Eliza, the manager waved cheerfully

As Eliza passed Casper's car, the vehicle revved up, brushing against her pants as it drove past!

Just after Eliza got home, the manager called. "I'm sorry, Ms. Eliza, but you can't start on Monday. We hope you find a position that suits you."

"It's okay." She had anticipated this.

How could Casper allow her to compete with Nova for a job? Even without Nova, just a word from Casper and nobody in Falconridge would hire her ⁵

However, Eliza didn't expect it to happen so quickly.

Finding a job was never easy. It was time to look for the next one.!!

After half a month of unsuccessful job searching, Eliza suspected Casper had interfered. By now, she had come to accept her situation.

With the little money she had left, Eliza bought an electric scooter and planned to deliver food to make ends meet.

His Destructive Toxic Love Chapter 18

Aside from her eight hours of sleep, Eliza spent sixteen hours a day delivering food.

“Hey Eliza, you’ve got an order from Grandview Villas today. They’re having a birthday party tonight and ordered over twenty thousand dollars’ worth of food. Your delivery fee is two thousand bucks. Remember to pick up the meals at 5 PM.”

The caller was the owner of a small catering business.}

In Eliza’s month of delivering food, the owner had always looked out for her, giving her big, lucrative orders.

“Got it, Lana. I’ll be there on time.”

This was the biggest order Eliza had received since she started delivering food. A two thousand dollar delivery fee was a lifesaver for Eliza, who was struggling financially.

At five o’clock, Eliza picked up the meals that Lana had packed.

“Lana, could you give me the contact’s number?”

Lana sent Eliza the phone number and handed her a raincoat. “Eliza, the weather looks bad. It might pour later. Ride carefully and head straight home after the delivery “8

“Got it.”

Eliza put on her helmet and took the raincoat from L

“Be careful on the road.”

“Will do.”2

Grandview Villas were located in the suburbs, about thir

Halfway there, it started to drizzle

miles away. It would take over an hour on her electric bike.

This was nothing new for Eliza; in her month of food delivery, she had faced all sorts of weather. Her attitude changed from discomfort to adaptability. As long as she could make money, she feared nothing.

When she arrived at the gate of Grandview Villas, the rain had intensified.

She called the contact. "Hello, your order has arrived. Could someone please come and collect it?"

"You're the delivery person, right? Bring it in to Villa No. 78. "H

"Oh, okay."

Eliza navigated her way and found Villa No. 78. Worried about the meals getting wet, she took off her raincoat to cover the packed food. She called the contact again. "Hello, I'm here. Could you please come out and collect it?"

"Just a moment."

Inside the villa, one could see the girl in the yellow vest standing outside.

"Casper, doesn't that delivery girl look like Eliza?" Nova asked, standing on the second-floor balcony.

Casper was standing beside her and immediately told his staff to wait. "Have her wait outside."

"Yes, Mr. Casper."

Nova gently nudged Casper's arm, worriedly watching Eliza standing in the rain. "Casper, it's raining outside. She'll get soaked."

"That's the job she chose," Casper replied.

He turned and walked inside, sat down, and lit a cigarette, placing it to his lips. From his seat, he could clearly see Eliza's plight

Nova shrugged and said no more. "Till go check on the fruit preparation."

The rain grew heavier

Eliza couldn't wait any longer, and called the contact again, "Hello, when will someone come to collect the food?"

"Sorry for the inconvenience. Please wait a bit longer. Everyone's busy, but someone will come out soon."

“Please hurry. I’m worried the meals will get ruined.”

She tucked in the corners of her raincoat again and sought shelter under the eaves to avoid the rain.

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The wind was downright fierce, whipping the main every which way, Once she was soaked through, she couldn’t stop shivering from the cold.

Casper watched everything and stubbed out his cigarette with a scowl.

One of the staff in charge of coordination jogged up to Casper and reported, “Mr. Casper, the kitchen’s almost ready. Should I bring in the takeout?”

“Open the door, let her in, and have her wait in the courtyard.”⁸

“Yes, sir,”

The coordinator didn’t dare ask more questions and quickly opened the villa’s door.”

When the door opened, Eliza hurriedly picked up the food container and dashed inside, braving the rain. This delay had taken too long. She wasn’t worried about missing out on more deliveries; she was worried that the food would get cold, leading to a bad review.

Her phone rang. She set down the food container and answered, “Hello? Wait in the courtyard? But there’s no shelter here. I don’t mind getting wet, but what about the food... Oh, alright, please hurry.”

Eliza was left to wait under the steps in front of the villa’s de

door. The rain was pouring, and her raincoat was flapping wildly in the wind

Suddenly, the door swung open. She was just about to complete her delivery when she saw Nova’s face.

“Well, if it isn’t Eliza.”

Eliza’s steps halted abruptly. “Nova?”

“Yep, it’s my birthday today Nova looked every bit like a fairy-tale princess dressed in a white gown. Her hair was styled in luscious waves, and a tiny crown was perched on her head. Her usual crutches were replaced with ones covered in rhinestones to match her elegant attire. “But don’t get it twisted. It wasn’t me who didn’t let the staff pick up the food; it was Casper’s orders.

Was Casper here, too?

Eliza scoffed. How could Nova's grand birthday bash be without her husband's presence?

Eliza hadn't seen Casper in over a month, but gossip about him and Nova kept popping up in ads on her phone.

"Eliza, Casper specifically chose this villa for my birthday. Isn't it beautiful? I absolutely love it."

Nova's eyes sparkled with excitement.

Eliza clenched her teeth. "Nova, I've worn those old shoes, and you seem to fit them just fine."

Nova was taken aback, her face souring. She was about to retort when Casper approached.

He looked even angrier than Nova, having probably heard Eliza's remark.

She met his furious gaze. "Would you please have someone take the meals? If they get cold, they won't taste good."

Just as Eliza was about to step up, Casper's cold voice stopped her. "Stay there."

She froze, looking up to meet his eyes. The rain mercilessly pelted her face, blurring her vision.

"We don't want the meal anymore."

He had made her wait in the pouring rain for nearly an hour, and now he was just dismissing it?

"Why?" Eliza was stunned, her voice tightening.

"Casper, don't be mean. Look how hard Eliza worked to deliver in the rain. Delivery fees are hard to ear," Nova interjected, playing the peacemaker gloatingly

"The food's cold."

"It was your failure to receive it on time, and besides, the food is insulated. Even if it's cold, it can be reheated,"

Casper mocked, "I spent over twenty grand on this meal, and you want me to reheat it?)

Eliza stood in the rain and stared at the face that had become so foreign to her. This was the man she had loved for six whole years.

He was mercilessly pushing her to her limits.

His Destructive Toxic Love Chapter 20

'Marriage? What a joke! Eliza thought.

"Casper, stop it. Maybe I should get the food," Nova said, leaning on her cane. She tried to move before Casper pulled her back. "Leave her be."

His cold gaze returned to Eliza. "I might accept the food, but only if you stand there for two hours."

A pang of bitterness crept into Eliza's heart. She lifted her defiant little face. "I hope you keep your word, Mr. Casper."

Turning his head, Casper walked inside with Nova, the heavy door shutting behind them with a thud. Eliza held the food and stood alone in the pouring rain. The wind lifted her raincoat, allowing the rain to soak through. She was chilled to the bone.

Chelsea called, "Elle, why aren't you at home?"

"I'm making a delivery."

"It's pouring. What if you slip? Stop making deliveries and just come back home," Chelsea's voice was full of concern.

Eliza smiled faintly. "Chelsea, this delivery pays two thousand dollars."

"Just for..." Chelsea's disbelief was mixed with concern. "...then be safe. Come back after this one and call it a day."

"Yeah, I'm alright."

On the second-floor balcony, Casper's cigarette burned at his fingertips. He hadn't taken a single puff and just let it burn out. He flicked it into the elegant ashtray.

"Casper, my birthday party is about to start. Aren't you coming down?" Nova asked cautiously.

Casper didn't respond, his gaze fixed on the slender figure in the rain. Nova also looked down. Eliza was still standing there. Nearly two hours had gone by, and she hadn't moved an inch.⁸

“Casper, I’ll have someone retrieve the food.”

Til go.”

The villa’s wooden door opened again, and Casper, with a black umbrella, elegantly descended the steps. Eliza stared at him with desperation, trembling from the cold.

“Can you take the food now?”

“You’re bending over backward for two thousand dollars?”

He was only a step away, his tone mocking, with the air of a superior. The rain between them separated their worlds.

“Well, thank you for that...” she said.

If he hadn’t sabotaged her at every turn, she’d probably be in a spacious classroom now teaching kids how to draw early autumn rain. He chuckled, his shoulders relaxing as if he’d heard a ridiculous joke.

“If you can’t stand the hardship, come back and be Mrs. Welton, All will be forgiven.”

She shook her head, quietly staring at him. The color drained from her face.

“Please, take the food.” She extended the meal box toward him.

Casper didn’t take it but turned and walked back inside. “It seems you still haven’t come to your senses.”

“Casper, you don’t keep your word. Her voice was hoarse, her fingertips trembling.”

She would throw the food in Casper’s face if she had the courage. But she couldn’t afford it. She couldn’t afford to lose the two thousand dollars for the delivery, let alone pay for the twenty thousand dollars worth of meals.

He didn’t respond. The door quickly shut once more. Eliza turned around in despair, her head drooping

“Hey, delivery girl, bring the food inside, someone called out.

Eliza turned, surprised, to see a man in a chef’s outfit waving at her. “I’m talking to you. Come on in.”

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Eliza humed along, jogging to hand over the food to the chef. "It might a bit cold and needs reheating" she said

The chef didn't say much

Her phone pinged, confirming the delivery Her fee was deposited into her account

With a deep breath, Eliza felt the hassle was worth

At least she got the money

Back at the villa, the birthday party was still in full swing

Guests continued to arrive, including Aaron.

He hadn't really wanted to come. He couldn't wrap his head around why a married man would throw such a big party birthday

Even if Eliza and Casper were getting a divorce, they were still married, right?

"You and Nova

"It's her birthday today" Casper raised his glass, cutting Aaron off another girls.

Aaron wasn't usually chatty, but today, he couldn't help himself "Doing
ing this could make Eliza misunderstand, especially since you two

"What? She already told you about the divorce?" Casper appeared indifferent but a bit jealous, glancing sideways "Seems like your relationship with her isn't as simple as it looks

Aaron frowned. Given his history with Casper, he shouldn't be questioned like this. His voice turned icy Eliza is

"Is that so?" Casper chuckled lightly

"Eliza is only my

friend

Aaron always knew Casper wasn't a generous man. He was possessive, a bit tyrannical, and domineering Honestly a guy like that wasn't suited for a peaceful life

"I just want to remind you that Jeffrey's illness still needs the antibodies in Eliza's blood it's best not to do anything that might misunderstand That's not good for a marriage, especially if you plan on having kids")

Casper's gaze darkened. "Isn't there any other way?"

"Well, there is. But it's not really feasible," Aaron said

Casper frowned, "Let's hear it."

Eliza

"It would involve draining all

Eliza's blood and replacing all of Jeffrey's. The cost would be Eliza wouldn't survive"

Fearing Casper might not fully understand, he added, "if she gets pregnant

ent, just drawing a tube of blood could purify the antibodies

As Casper's wife, Eliza had the duty to continue the family lineage:

Pregnancy was the simplest, safest, and most efficient solution. Aaron hoped Casper would understand

Casper remained silent

Nova came over with her cane, smiling, "Casper, come blow out the candles with me

He set down his glass, supporting Nova. "Alright"

Aaron shook his head.

After parking her electric scooter in the community shed, Eliza finally headed home

Chelsea was standing at her door, checking her watch: "Where did you go to deliver food? I've been waiting for two hours."

Eliza smiled faintly. "It was a bit far Why didn't

hidn't you go in

"I can't keep using the spare key to open the door"|||

"It's okay" Eliza took out her keys, unlocking the door "Did you wait to tell me something important

Chelsea helped Eliza off with her raincoat think constantly delivering food isn't really your thing I found you a job

"Realty

there were a stable

Eliza would be thrilled. Though she wondered who in Falconndge would dark to hire her
1

'T

end who just opened

quite pleased

studio in Falconndge. He needs talented

killed.

commended you, and he seemed

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It sounded promising.

But... Eliza didn't want to be a burden to anyone

"Does your friend know about my relationship with Casper? I'm worried..."

"My friend just got back from abroad, so he doesn't play by these local rules." Chelsea handed the contract to Eliza "Look, I brought the contract. Have a read, and if it feels right, you should sign it."

The opportunity had come out of nowhere. After the initial excitement, Eliza couldn't help feeling a bit melancholic. "The terms are good, it's just..."

"What's there to worry about?" Chelsea pulled out a cigarette, placed it between her lips, and lit it. Her slender fingers held the cigarette in a captivating and cool way.

She took a drag and slowly exhaled a plume of gray smoke. "Does Casper still have that much control?"

"He's your friend, after all," Eliza said calmly

Chelsea handed the contract to Eliza. "He doesn't have much leverage over Casper, so don't worry."

"So, should I... sign it?"²

"Yeah."⁸

Once the contract was signed, Chelsea put it away. She picked up her phone and sent Eliza a location, "Go to this place tomorrow. Someone will meet you."

"Thank you, Chelsea."

"Stop thanking me, or I'll get mad." Chelsea stubbed out her cigarette, packed up the contract, and stood. "I'm heading out. You get some rest, drink some ginger tea, sweat it out, and don't catch a cold."

"Okay."

Chelsea, holding the contract, quickly returned to her car. She fiddled with her phone for a bit before dialing a number. "Elle signed it?"

"Good," a man's voice came from the other end.

"Zach, I'm not doing this for you. I just can't stand to see Elle suffer

Chelsea wasn't sure if what she was doing was right. Maybe, once Eliza knew the truth, she would blame her. Chelsea accepted that

Zach, on the other end, was silent for a moment. "Understood."

Chelsea hung up the phone. She lifted her gaze towards the third-floor window...

The next day. Eliza went to the art studio Chelsea had recommended. She was greeted by a very young girl

"Our studio mainly helps students about to enter college improve their drawing skills so they can get good results in their upcoming exams," the young girl said, smiling and revealing two cute little bunny teeth. "Ms. Eliza, you graduated from the Art Academy of Falconridge and are the most popular among the students."

"Really?" Eliza never knew she was popular.!

"Ms. Eliza, you can start working today. Later, some students will sign up. You can choose one-on-one sessions or groups of three or five, with different commissions."

Eliza nodded, looking around.

“Is your boss not here?”

Eliza didn't see any sign of the boss and felt uncertain. She also wanted to thank him personally for the opportunity.⁸

“Our boss doesn't come often. You'd be lucky to ever bump into him.”

I see Eliza silently acknowledged.

The wo

he young girl then explained some work-related matters to Eliza. With that, the job application process

In three days, Eliza got the hang of the workflow.

was complete.

teachers who o were graduates from renowned

Compared to training institutions, this place was relatively high-end and staffed with tex colleges. Everyone got along well.

After work, Eliza would stay a bit late to clean up the studio.

“Ms Eliza, I'm heading out.”X

After tidying up, Eliza turned off the lights, locked the studio door, and turned around to find a low-profile dark sedan parked in front of her.

She paused, slightly taken aback.