

## His Destructive Toxic Love Chapter 63

“It wasn’t me. I know how valuable that screen is; why would I ever do such a thing?” Nova’s eyes darted between Marian and the servants. “Tell him, was it me who broke it? Marian, you’re in charge here. What do you say?”

Marian didn’t dare lift her head, let alone speak. She hunched her shoulders and stepped back.

Nova’s voice grew more hysterical and upset. “Marian, was it Eliza who said she didn’t want to see the wedding stuff and broke it in a fit of rage? I even tried to talk her out of it, you know. I told her, this is a testament to your marriage, a symbol of your love. You can’t just break something so important over a couple of arguments. You all saw it, right?”

The servants were silent as the grave.

Casper’s cold gaze fixed on Marian. “So, who broke it, Nova or Eliza? You only said it was broken over the phone, but who did it?”

“It was, it was...” Marian stammered, trembling.

“Who is it?” Casper’s voice was like a death knell.

Marian, with trembling eyes, looked at Nova, who sent a malicious glare.

Marian closed her eyes, then reluctantly pointed at Eliza. “It was, it was her.”

Eliza’s eyes widened in shock. She understood why Marian and the servants, all afraid of Nova’s retaliation, wouldn’t speak the truth. But why did they blame her?

“What do you have to say?” Casper strode up to Eliza, gripping her wrist. “Did you have to break it just because it was a wedding gift from my mother? Do you know what it represents?”

Eliza shook her head. She didn’t know what it represented. All she knew was that she hadn’t done it.

“This wasn’t my doing. Are you all trying to frame me?”

“Is everyone blind?” Casper shook his head, disappointment—flashing across his face. “Since it’s broken, you’ll have to pay for it.”

Eliza couldn’t afford to pay for something with a seven-figure price tag. She would have willingly taken the blame if it had been her doing. But it wasn’t.

“I told you, this wasn’t my doing.” Her lips pressed tightly together, her eyes wide.

Nova, afraid Casper might soften, chimed in, “Casper, where would Eliza get the money to pay? Maybe she can apologize to your mother tomorrow. She was just momentarily annoyed with you; your mother won’t hold it against her.”

“She has the nerve to face my mother?” Casper dragged Eliza to the broken screen. “Since you can’t afford to pay, you’ll have to fix it. You’ll bear the consequences if I don’t see it whole by tomorrow.”

Eliza was thrown to the ground. The palm of her hand was cut by the shards of the thinly framed glass that held the embroidery.

“Ouch...”

Blood dripped from her palm onto the delicate embroidery, staining the intertwined magnolia flowers with crimson, Pain spread through her limbs. Her heart grew colder by the second.

“Oh dear, Eliza, you’re bleeding...” Nova limped over, leaning on her cane, and picked up the ruined embroidery with mock sadness. “...this embroidery is ruined now.”

Casper’s expression darkened. He gave Eliza a cold look and then went upstairs.

Nova threw the stained embroidery back at Eliza’s feet. “Eliza, you still think you can compete with me? I can destroy you in minutes,” she laughed arrogantly. “None of the servants here dare to speak the truth. They only say whatever I tell them to say. Even Marian has to follow my lead.”

Nova bent down, continuing to provoke Eliza. “If I’m unhappy here, you’ll be the first to suffer. Isn’t that fun?”

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Eliza kept quiet, her fingers slowly curling into fists.

Nova let out a breath, feeling a surge of satisfaction. “I need to change into a stunning dress. I’ll be joining Casper at the banquet later.”

A servant brought in a wheelchair. Nova tossed aside her crutch and settled into the wheelchair, heading upstairs.

Feeling a wave of guilt, Marian took a deep breath before approaching Eliza. “I’m really sorry, ma’am.\*

“You have nothing to be sorry for, Marian. Adapting to the situation is your right.” Eliza’s words were soft but distant, lacking her usual warmth.

Marian, troubled, fidgeted with the hem of her dress before quickly fetching the first aid kit and offering it to Eliza. “Let me take care of your wound, ma’am.”

“No thank you, Marian.”

Nova had control over this household. Aside from the title Mrs. Welton, Eliza was treated worse than a servant.

She cleaned her wound with alcohol. It wasn’t too deep, but it throbbed painfully.

After roughly bandaging it, she picked up the broken screen from the floor, found a bag to put it in, and left the house.

She had gone with Audrey to order this screen. She knew where it could be fixed.

Looking at the shattered frame and the stained embroidery, Eliza felt another piece of her already fragile peace slip away.

The studio that handled such restorations had already closed for the day. She had to plead with the security guard for a while before getting the manager’s contact number.

The manager was kind enough to agree to come and take a look.

Holding the embroidery, Eliza waited in the cold wind for two hours before the manager arrived.

“Can you fix this?” she asked, handing over the embroidery.

The manager examined the blood–stained piece and hesitated for a moment. “It can be restored, but... it’s a big project. Even with overtime, it’ll take at least ten to fifteen days. And it won’t be cheap.”

“How much?”

“It’ll cost tens of thousands of dollars.” Such top–tier craftsmanship always came with a hefty price tag.

Eliza didn’t have much money. She wasn’t sure if she could afford it. “Could you give me an estimate?”

“Around fifty thousand.”

Fifty thousand. That was no small sum for Eliza.

She retrieved the embroidery. "I'll... think about it. Sorry for the trouble."

"No problem. It's not cheap, so take your time to consider."

"Alright, thank you."

After parting ways with the manager, Eliza sat on the curb, staring at the night sky, lost in thought.

After a while, she checked her bank balance on her phone. She had just paid her mother's hospital bills, and her balance was nowhere near fifty thousand. It was clear she couldn't afford the restoration.

Eliza returned home, clutching the damaged embroidery. The more she thought about it, the angrier she became. Why should she bear the cost for something she didn't break?

She found an empty cupboard and stored the embroidery there temporarily.

That night, Casper didn't come home. When Nova returned, she smashed things all over the place.

The servants gossiped about how Nova had been ridiculed by several high society ladies, at the dinner, and Casper hadn't defended her. She was fuming.

To make matters worse, Casper's friends had invited him out for drinks after the dinner, and he left Nova alone once again.

When Nova came back, she was furious.

"Where is that bitch Eliza? Get her out here to serve me!"

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Nova wanted to vent her rage on Eliza. The servants huddled in the corners, too scared to speak up.

"Have you all lost your tongues? Get that bitch down here; I need to soak my feet," Nova barked.

The servants remained silent and still.

Furious, she banged her cane on the floor. "Eliza, get down here now, you worthless piece of trash. Playing deaf and dumb, are you?"

Casper wasn't home. Eliza couldn't care less about Nova. She could cry and make a scene, but it was none of Eliza's concern.

But Nova had a twisted nature. Enraged, she suddenly grabbed a kitchen knife. The servants were terrified and quickly called for Marian.

Marian saw her make such a dangerous move and feared the worst. She did not want to be responsible. She nervously pleaded, "Ms. Nova, what's the matter? Who has upset you? Just tell me, and I'll deal with them for you."

"You all mess with me..." Nova suddenly burst into tears, her eyes reddening fiercely. "I'm telling you, sooner or later, I will be the lady of this house."

"Ms. Nova, please put down the knife. Whatever it is, let's talk about it," Marian kept her fixed on the blade's tip. "Didn't you want to soak your feet? I'll get the water ready for eyes you.."

"I want Eliza to prepare it for me. Go call her down."

Marian was in a tight spot but had no choice. "Alright, I'll call her. Please, don't do anything rash."

Upstairs, Eliza had had enough of Nova's hysteria. As soon as Marian knocked, she coldly rejected, "Don't bother me with her. If she wants to die, let her die. I'm not serving her."

"But, Ma'am..."

"Just go."

"Yes."

Marian, walking on eggshells, relayed Eliza's message to Nova. Unexpectedly, without a moment's hesitation, Nova plunged the knife into her own chest. Blood gushed from her chest, and the servants screamed in terror.

Eliza thought a thief had broken in. When she looked down from the second floor, Nova was already lying in a pool of blood, her designer white dress stained red around her chest. Her heart tightened. Had Nova really committed suicide?

"Ma'am, Ms. Nova has hurt herself. Please come down quickly," Marian urged, sweating profusely.

Eliza had wanted to stay out of it. She hadn't expected Nova to be so extreme. She wanted to help but also feared Nova's retaliation, so she asked Marian, "Did you call an ambulance?"

“Yes, and I’ve also informed Mr. Casper. He’s on his way.”

Informing Casper was the right move. After all, Nova was his beloved. If something happened to her, everyone would be implicated.

The ambulance arrived before Casper. After the paramedics took her away, they left the Welton Estate. Taking in the blood and the knife used for self-harm, Eliza decided to tidy up the house. She figured Casper would probably head to the hospital and wouldn’t have the energy to deal with this mess. She needed a good night’s sleep.

The next morning, Casper returned with bloodshot eyes. Eliza was just about to visit the hospital.

“Stop right there.” He looked at her, his handsome face twisted in anger.

her?”

“Did you hurt

A look of disbelief spread across Eliza’s face. Was this accusation never going to end?

“Of course not,” she suppressed her anger, her voice low.

“If it wasn’t you, then how did she get such serious injuries?” He grabbed her wrist, pulling her towards him, glaring at her fiercely as if he wanted to devour her. “Are you trying to tell me she stabbed herself?”

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“She’s fully capable of stabbing herself. What’s so impossible about that?” A cold smirk played at the corners of her lips, dripping with scorn and mockery. “Do you really think she’s anywhere near normal?”

“Is she any less normal than you?” His dark eyes narrowed, fists clenched. “Nova told me herself that it was you who stabbed her, and you still won’t admit it? Do we have to go to the police station for you to confess?”

The police station? Was Casper really planning to send her to jail just to avenge Nova?

“How can I admit to something I didn’t do?” Her chest heaved with turmoil. “Do you have to blame everything on me?”

“So, you won’t admit it?” He stepped forward to the table, picking up the knife Eliza had cleaned the night before. “You say you didn’t do it, so surely, your fingerprints won’t be on this weapon, right?”

Her pupils dilated. She had cleaned up the scene last night and put away the knife, so, of course, her fingerprints would be on it. Did he really intend to condemn her just based on

this?

“Casper, do you believe everything Nova says? If that’s the case, then go ahead and call the police. Might as well sentence me to death and put an end to all this.”

Her chest rose and fell. Her face bore an expression of extreme disappointment and indifference. The screen incident wasn’t over yet. Now, a murder charge was being added to the mix. There was no need for such effort if Nova and Casper wanted to kill her.

“Feeling guilty?” He stared at her, the knife pointed at her chest. “If you’re willing to return the favor with a stab, I might consider not pursuing your responsibility.”

eyes. Her

She stared at Casper, who offered her the knife. Tears slowly filled her reddened pale face, lips devoid of color, was full of resentment as she looked at the gleaming blade. “Casper, if you care about her so much, why don’t you marry her?”

“You always believe her lies unconditionally. Who’s your wife here, her or me?”

“Fine, if you’re so eager for revenge on her behalf, come on.”

Eliza suddenly snatched the knife from Casper’s hand. Last night, she had cleaned the blood off the knife thoroughly. The blade was cold, much like Casper’s heart.

“Mr. Casper, where would you like me to stab myself?”

She asked him with a daunting smile. Casper’s eyes showed an unreadable expression.

“The heart?” She pointed the knife towards her own heart. “Is this where you felt pain for Nova? No worries, I’ll do the same for her.”

Without a second thought, she pressed down with force. She was truly being foolish. He didn’t come back home for the truth. If this stab could end her life, it might actually be a merciful option for her.

The moment the blade aimed for her heart, Casper grabbed it barehanded. Blood quickly seeped from his palm, dripping onto her chest. She hadn’t expected him to take the knife from her. Her heart wouldn’t stop pounding, her face displaying disbelief. Her fingers involuntarily released the knife handle. Casper winced in pain, throwing the knife away.

In Casper's eyes, Eliza was timid, prone to hiding her grievances, enduring and swallowing them silently. Who would have thought she could be so ruthless towards herself, to the point of madness?

"You're truly insane."

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"Isn't this exactly what you wanted?" she muttered, her voice lifeless, her head buzzing.

Casper glanced at the wound on his hand, a mix of irritation and anger flashing in his eyes. "Go get the first-aid kit," he barked.

Eliza stood still, unresponsive.

"Are you deaf? Go!" he shouted, his voice sharper.

Eliza froze for a moment before turning to fetch the kit. She placed it in front of Casper.

He looked up, frustration in his gaze. "You expect me to handle this myself? How am I supposed to manage that?"

"I'll do it," she replied softly.

She took out the alcohol, cleaned the blood from his palm, applied antiseptic, sprinkled healing powder, and wrapped it all up with gauze, securing it with a neat knot. Her movements were smooth and gentle as if she'd done this a thousand times.

"All done," she said.

"Useless at most things, but pretty handy with this," he sneered.

Eliza didn't bother to respond. She was used to his cutting remarks by now.

"Why did you stop me? Isn't that the outcome you wanted?" she asked, her tone flat.

He gave her a half-smile, his eyes mocking. "Did you really think I wanted to come home. to a corpse?"

So that was it. He just didn't want to traumatize himself. She stayed silent.

"I might hold off on taking you to the police station, for now, but Eliza, I'm going to find out whether you stabbed Nova or not. And if it turns out you did, you'll pay."

Eliza listened quietly. If he did a proper investigation, the truth would come out. But if he turned a blind eye, who knew?

“However, you can still make amends.”

She looked up, puzzled. “Make amends? How?”

Join me for a social event later,” he said.

Eliza didn’t want to go, and remained silent.

He glanced at her. “We’re going to Daniel’s place in the south of the city. His wife loves playing the harp. You two might have a lot in common.”

“Why don’t you take your secretary?” she suggested, unwilling to force herself into something she disliked. “I can make amends in other ways.”

Casper scoffed. “Eliza, what makes you think you can negotiate with me? If you want your mother’s clinical trial to stop and for Robin to stay in the hospital for another year, feel free to skip this.”

Eliza felt her temper rising.

Casper’s cool, detached voice cut through the air again. “I’ve heard your mother’s trial could wake her up. If it’s halted, it might cause a blood vessel to burst, possibly leading to... death.”

Eliza shook her head, bitterness flooding her heart as she looked at his handsome face. Her voice trembled with emotion. “Could you be any more despicable? Must you always threaten me with my family?”

“Eliza, you are Mrs. Welton. You have an obligation to cooperate with me,” he said, raising an eyebrow, a mocking smile lurking in his eyes.

Casper had his reasons for wanting Eliza to accompany him. Daniel was a tough nut to crack. They’d been negotiating a collaboration project for nearly a year, and he still hadn’t agreed. With almost a billion in profits at stake, Welton International wasn’t ready to give up.

By chance, Casper found out that Daniel’s wife was Eliza’s college classmate. Both had been in the orchestra club and had a good relationship. Daniel’s first wife had been with him for ten years without having children. After their divorce, he married his current wife, who, despite being young and beautiful, had given him twin boys within a year.

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Having a child later in life brought Daniel immense joy. He doted on his current wife, hanging on her every word and indulging her every whim. Thanks to Daniel’s wife and

Eliza's relationship, Casper could easily break the ice and discuss the upcoming projects, paving the way for successful collaborations.

"Here's your dress. Go change into it," Casper said, handing Eliza a beautifully wrapped box.

Without a word, she went upstairs to change. She came back down wearing a sky-blue haute couture dress that wasn't quite her size, hanging a bit loose on her frame. Casper noticed and slightly furrowed his brow but decided not to comment.

Visiting Daniel as a future business partner was naturally out of the question. On the way there, Casper reminded her, "Daniel's project is crucial for Welton International. Be careful with your words; we can't afford to offend him.

Eliza remained silent, understanding the underlying message: mess this up, and her family would pay the price.

Before knocking on the door of Daniel's home, Casper instinctively took Eliza's hand. Eliza felt a strong aversion and wanted to pull away, but she silently gave up the attempt.

"Don't look so down," he reminded her. Eliza managed a slight smile.

When the doorbell rang, a servant opened the door for them. They had barely taken a few steps when Daniel came out to greet them.

"Mr. Casper, we're greatly honored by your visit Please, come in."

"Daniel, you're too kind."

"Please, after you." Daniel took the gift from Casper's hand and handed it to a servant. "Hurry, ask her to come down and tell her we have guests."

"Right away, sir."

Only then did Daniel turn his attention to the quiet Eliza beside them. Her arched eyebrows framed a pair of bright, starry eyes, and her skin was so perfect it almost glowed. She was clearly a lady of delicate upbringing. Eliza was shy, but her demeanor was still graceful, devoid of any pettiness.

"And this is...?"

"This is my wife, Eliza," Casper said with a smile, turning to her. "Eliza, this is Daniel."

Eliza smiled faintly, "Hello, Daniel."

“So this is your wife, I see.”

He was somewhat surprised; everyone knew Casper was married, but few had seen his wife. The internet buzzed more with rumors about Casper and Nova. Nova’s looks were no match for Eliza’s.

Because of Casper’s many scandals, Daniel had been hesitant about sealing any deals. After all, a man’s first duty was to love and cherish his wife. Though, in theory, this had nothing to do with business negotiations, Daniel was particular about these things.

“Mr. Casper, your wife is young and beautiful. You should bring her out more often.”

“Elle is a bit shy.”

Daniel chuckled, noticing the bandages on both their hands, and joked, “It seems Mr. Casper has a type for quiet, shy girls. You

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up, and their eyes met.

Smiling. Eliza walked into the living room.

Daniel’s wife was coming down the stairs. Eliza looked up

Both were taken aback.

The woman sped up her steps, practically flying towards Eliza, and hugged her tightly. “Eliza, is it really you? My god, I can’t believe I’m seeing you in my own home after all these years. Why haven’t you kept in touch? I’ve missed you so much!”

The woman was Renee.

She’s Eliza’s college classmate and roommate for four years. They were also in the same orchestra club and had been very close friends. After graduating from college, Eliza married Casper and lost contact with everyone. She had no idea that Renee had married the middle-aged man standing before her.

“Renee, you are... Daniel’s wife, Mrs. Lynch?”

“It doesn’t matter. I’m still your dearest bunkmate, Renee.

Renee looked radiant, lively, and playful, just like she was back in school. Clearly, she lived. a pampered life. Renee’s happiness was obvious.

Eliza’s lips curved into a slight smile.

Daniel joined the conversation at the right moment. "Renee, so Mrs. Welton was your old classmate? What a coincidence."

"Isn't it? Eliza and I were best friends in college. We even promised to travel the world after graduation, but alas..." Renee lightly patted Eliza's arm. "...this little heartbreaker disappeared right after graduation."

"You old classmates must have a lot to catch up on. Casper and I will leave you to chat," Daniel said, leading Casper to the living room.

"Sure." Renee took Eliza to a side room. "Eliza, after you graduated, I asked so many people about you but couldn't find anything. I even thought you might have been tricked into going to the far north and had people search for you overseas. Turns out you got married."

Marriage was a stain in Eliza's life. She forced a smile. "When did you get married?"

"Me? Just last year. Someone introduced me to Daniel. Honestly, I wasn't into him at first, as he was somewhat wealthy but old and so not my type. But my mom was all about the money, so I just went with it. Luckily, Daniel turned out to be a decent man."

Renee's face was aglow with happiness. She had chosen the right person, which was truly fortunate.

"He's good to you, and that's quite rare."

Renee glanced towards the living room and whispered to Eliza, "I often see Mr. Casper on TV. He's even more handsome in person than on screen. Living with someone so attractive must be exciting, right?"

Exciting? Indeed, it was.

Not in the way Renee imagined though.

"We're just alright."

Seeing Eliza's melancholic expression, Renee couldn't help but add, "Honestly, I've seen quite a bit of Mr. Casper's scandals. That woman, Nova, really has no shame. Without any official status, she's always seen with him. It's so irritating."

In front of Renee, Eliza couldn't speak recklessly. Casper had invited her over, presumably already aware of her and Renee's relationship. He had already warned her not to speak out of turn.

"You can't believe everything you see online."

“Exactly, those journalists love to exaggerate.” Renee pulled Eliza towards a corner of the living room. “Eliza, do you still play the harp? I recently bought a new one, it sounds wonderful. You should give it a try.”

The room was designed for performances, and the harp, in its rightful place, looked exceedingly luxurious.

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“This is something Daniel got for me on a business trip. He said he didn’t know much about it, just that it was pricey and should be good.” Renee’s eyes sparkled with

amusement as she looked up at her husband in the living room. “Daniel, tell me, did you get swindled?”

“Whatever you say, dear,” Daniel replied with a doting smile.

Renee let out a playful huff. “Daniel, you haven’t heard Eliza play the harp yet, have you? She’s amazing, way better than me. How about we ask her to play something?”

“Renee, Mrs. Welton hurt her hand. Let’s not ask her to play now. There will be other opportunities.”

“What?” Renee looked surprised as she glanced over at Eliza’s hand. “How did you get injured?”

“Just a small cut, nothing serious,” Eliza explained casually.

“You gotta be more careful next time.”

“Sure.”

“I really miss seeing you play the harp. I remember whenever there was a concert, Aaron would show up just to see you. You really have quite the charm,” Renee joked.

Eliza’s heart tightened, and she couldn’t bring herself to look at Casper’s stormy expression.

She was about to steer the conversation away when Renee continued, “I remember Aaron was in medical school. What was his last name... oh, right, Martin.”

Daniel smiled at his wife. “Mrs. Welton is naturally beautiful, so it’s no surprise she had admirers.”

“Our Eliza was the prettiest girl of Falconridge Art Academy. The line of her admirers stretched from the south gate to the north gate of the school. She was especially

popular among the younger med students like Aaron,” Renee reminisced, completely oblivious to Eliza’s subtle attempts to change the subject. “Mr. Casper, you certainly picked the most beautiful woman from our school.”

“That is indeed an honor,” Casper’s tone turned colder.

Eliza nudged Renee’s palm, trying to move on from the topic. “Renee, let’s add each other on WhatsApp.”

“Sure, you’re not using your old number anymore?”

“Nope.”

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Thanks to the bond between Eliza and Renee, Daniel eventually agreed to the business.

Eliza and Renee, Daniel eventually agreed to the collaboration.

Dinner went relatively smoothly.

As they said their goodbyes, Renee hugged Eliza tightly. “Let’s keep in touch, and no more disappearing acts, okay?”

“Sure.”

They waved goodbye to Casper and Eliza.

Renee looked up at Daniel, asking, “So, you’ve decided to collaborate with Casper on that project?”

“Do you have any objections?”

“I’ve read a lot of the rumors about him...”

Daniel nodded thoughtfully. “I had my reservations for the same reason. But we see how loving they are as a couple, and since Mrs. Welton is your good friend, I thought...”

“He’s lucky to have married Eliza.”

“I’m the lucky one to have married you,” Daniel said, wrapping his arm around Renee’s waist and planting a kiss on her cheek.

Renee laughed and pushed him away. "You're so cheesy."

In the car, Casper had been silent.

The cigarette between his fingers burned slowly until it nearly reached his skin before he

tossed it out of the car window.

"Aaron pursued you in college?"

His gaze was filled with barely noticeable jealousy and possessiveness, like a fire burning, distorting his features.

This side of Casper was dangerous. She shifted uneasily to

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He flipped her over, pinning her down on the passenger seat.

Gripping her chin tightly, he sneered, "You two have been sneaking around behind my back, haven't you? No wonder he gave up his family business to become Jeffrey's personal doctor. It's all because of you, isn't it?"

His grip contorted Eliza's face. She tried to struggle but was firmly held down.

"Casper, can't you just stop being so suspicious?" she pleaded, her heart aching with an indescribable feeling. "If you just want to pick a fight with me, fine. You don't always have to drag Aaron into it."

"Then tell me, have you slept with him?" His grip on her chin tightened slowly.

He didn't understand his own reaction. He tried to calm himself, but it was useless; he was now overwhelmed by a murderous rage.

"Eliza, tell me, have you slept with Aaron in the two years we've been married? Have you?"

He stared at her intensely, his eyes unblinking, muscles on his face twitching slightly. He looked downright crazy.

Eliza was so scared that her whole body tensed up, "What kind of answer do you want?"

"Did you sleep with him or not?" he spat out a curse.

Before Eliza could respond, he floored the accelerator, and the car shot forward. He pressed the pedal deep, speeding along Falconridge Boulevard in the dead of night. The engine roared, and the exhaust emitted a beast-like growl.

She had never seen him so out of control. Tears streamed down her face, “Casper, please calm down.”

“So, you’ve always wanted us to die together? Fine, let’s die together then.” He had completely lost it, speeding up to 200 kilometers per hour. The cars and people on the road turned into blurs.

Eliza closed her eyes, her lips trembling, “I never even spoke to Aaron in college. I didn’t know he would come to our concerts. You can ask Renee if you don’t believe me.”

She could feel it. After she spoke, the car noticeably slowed down.

“Aaron and I are so distant we’re not even friends, let alone anything more. There was nothing before, and there’s nothing now.” Afraid that this paranoid man wouldn’t believe her, she added, “I would never betray our marriage.”

She was not like him. She had no interest in an affair.

Finally, the car slowed to a normal speed. When they reached the next intersection, he hit the brakes hard, “Get out.”

Eliza didn’t ask why. Her legs were shaking so much that she nearly fell out when she opened the door. Casper showed no pity. As the car sped away, she saw it turn into a hospital not far ahead.

She took a deep breath and collapsed on the curb. A message popped up on her phone. It was from Renee, [Eliza, did you get home?]

Her fingers were still trembling from the shock. Weakly, she rubbed her hands together and managed to type, [Yeah, I’m home. Don’t worry. Get some sleep, good night.]

Just as she sent the message, the phone slipped from her fingers and crashed to the ground. After almost half an hour, she took off her high heels, carried them, and walked in the direction of the Welton family home. Her silhouette was forlorn, alone in her shadow.

She thought that tonight, Casper wouldn’t come back. Nova would surely keep him by her side, not letting him go..

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Just as she stepped through the front gate, his car screeched to a halt.

She froze, startled, before quickly picking up her pace. Casper caught up in no time, grabbed her wrist, and pulled her inside. She was moving too slowly for him, and he simply swept her off her feet and carried her in

His possessiveness never came with any prelude. It was more like an outlet—a release of anger or maybe lust. Her ordeal only seemed to end when his heavy breathing brushed past her ear.

He went for a shower, leaned against the headboard, and smoked a cigarette. Eliza limped towards the bathroom.

He glanced over. “What’s wrong with your foot?”

“Nothing,” she muttered, not wanting to elaborate.

He frowned. “Come here, let me see.”

“It’s okay. I’m going to take a shower.”

He stubbed out his cigarette, got out of bed, and lifted her from behind, placing her on the bed. Her foot was covered in blisters.

“What happened?” he asked, surprised.

“My shoes got worn out.”

“Go take a shower. After that, I’ll take care of it,” he said, patting her back with an unusual gentleness. But she knew it was just the afterglow of his release, not real tenderness. His gentleness was never really for her.

Eliza dawdled in the shower, knowing Casper wasn’t one to wait for her to sleep. She thought he’d already gone to bed, but he hadn’t. He patted the space beside him, “Come here.”

Normally compliant, Eliza wasn’t about to provoke him after today’s wild ride.

“I can do it myself.”

“Let me,” he said, his voice clearer than ever. She couldn’t help but look at him. His large hand gently held her foot, and with a sterilized silver needle, he lightly pricked, causing blood to seep out. Eliza hissed in pain. After disinfecting with alcohol, he continued, “Hold still.”

This kind of intimate care, something she wasn’t used to, made her uncomfortable.

“In a few days, it’s Grandpa’s big birthday,” he said.

“Oh.”

“Grandpa’s health...” He hesitated, not looking up. “...is really poor now.”

She knew what that meant: it was time for her to prepare for a blood donation. Reflexively, she tried to pull her foot back, but he held it firmly. “What are you scared of?”

“Casper, can you wait until my mom gets better and until Robin is out of the hospital before you take my blood?”

Under the light, her gaze was humble and broken. He couldn’t help but look at her. Though he didn’t say anything, she knew he probably wouldn’t agree. He patiently took care of the blisters on her foot. Eliza hugged her knees, feeling melancholy.

Just as she lay down, he was already pressing down on her again, his kisses

overwhelming. She could only passively accept.

Suddenly, the phone rang on the table. Casper propped himself up, still panting, and reached for the phone.

“Hello?”

“Casper, your grandpa might not make it much longer. You need to bring Eliza to the hospital right away; there is no time to delay.” Tristan’s voice was urgent.

Casper could hear the desperation. Hanging up, he got out of bed. “Hurry and get dressed; we’re going to the hospital.”

Eliza didn’t want to go at all. Was there really no escape this time?