

Unrepairable Love / I married a man

Chapter 431

It was all the little moments and memories of her and Alexander over the years. Elizabeth looked on, feeling that familiar heartache. Especially now, with the fresh divorce papers in hand, she felt even more lost. She randomly clicked on a photo, one she had secretly snapped of Alexander.

Back in high school, things seemed pretty chill between them; every photo looked friendly enough. There were times when Elizabeth would glance at Alexander, and he would look right back at her. But by the time they hit college, with her still trailing behind him, things started to shift.

In the photos, Alexander's gaze had morphed from the playful and light look of high school to something colder, more hostile. Annoyed, Elizabeth shut the photos and then deleted them all without a second thought. The computer was wiped clean. It felt like by doing this, she could erase all memories of Alexander from her mind.

Elizabeth slumped over the table, closed her eyes, and listened to the rain tapping against the window. She had no idea how long it was before she dozed off. Elizabeth dreamed again. She dreamed of Alexander, lying in front of her, covered in blood. No matter how much she called out, he wouldn't wake up.

She jolted awake, panic-stricken, and saw the clock stuck at ten in the morning. Her phone had a message from Sunny: "Dr. Percy, you're late." Sunny's subsequent messages read: "Dr. Percy, there's a big meeting today. Why aren't you here yet? Dr. Percy, answer your phone!"

Elizabeth was speechless. She had her phone on silent and, thanks to that deep sleep, missed all the messages. She hurriedly washed up, changed clothes, and rushed downstairs. The living room was empty. Only the divorce certificate was still on the table. Elizabeth walked over and picked it up.

Seeing the papers again, she felt a bit lost. But she quickly shook it off and put the certificate away. By the time she got to the hospital, it was already eleven-thirty, and everyone was having lunch.

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Elizabeth trailed behind Amanda, apologizing like crazy, saying she wasn't feeling well. She thought Amanda would give her a hard time, but Amanda just reminded her to take care of herself. Elizabeth sat alone on the rooftop, staring at the scenery.

He felt like this job wasn't for him. Suddenly, she wanted to quit the hospital gig but was scared of bumming out Celine. But Elizabeth really didn't want to stick around anymore. This wasn't her endgame. Elizabeth sighed, tilted her head, and heard someone call from behind, "Dr. Percy."

She turned around; it was Sunny. Sunny walked over with a grin and asked, "What are you doing? Had lunch yet?" Elizabeth nodded. Sunny plopped down next to her and started gossiping. "Our department's about to announce the candidate for deputy director."

Thinking of the deputy director spot, Elizabeth thought of Laura. No one was more suited for the deputy director role than Laura. "Dr. Percy, I'll let you in on a secret. Everyone thinks you've got a lot of potential," Sunny whispered.

Elizabeth paused; what did that mean? "I think the deputy director selection might get postponed this time," Sunny said. Elizabeth frowned, not getting it. Sunny noticed her confusion and explained, "Oh, it means they might leave the position open for two years, and then promote you directly once you've got more experience."

Elizabeth was even more puzzled, "What about Dr. Dixon?" "I don't know. Dr. Dixon is good, but overall, she might still fall short," Sunny shrugged. Elizabeth looked into the distance. At that moment, she was even more sure of her thoughts. It was time for her to leave.

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"What? You wanna quit?" Amanda stared at the resignation letter Elisabeth handed over, totally baffled. Laura was about to give her work report when she heard Elizabeth was leaving and was just as shocked. Everything seemed fine, so why was Elizabeth suddenly balling?

Elizabeth nodded. "Ms. Carter, I wanna..."

Amanda frowned, flipping through Elizabeth's resignation letter with a puzzled look. Elizabeth didn't give a reason; it seemed like she just didn't want to stick around the hospital anymore. "Are you sure about this?" Amanda asked Elizabeth again and again.

Elizabeth nodded like a bobblehead. Amanda went quiet. Elizabeth hoped Amanda would just sign off on it, but Laura looked pretty bummed out. Elizabeth glanced at Laura, who furrowed her brows and then walked off after a few seconds. Amanda told Elizabeth to leave for now; she needed to chat with Nick about this. Elizabeth followed Laura.

Laura stopped at the emergency exit stairwell. They looked at each other, and Laura sighed. "Is this because of me?"

"What are you talking about, Dr. Dixon?" Elizabeth flashed a stunning smile.

Laura glared at her, feeling a bit attacked by her beauty. Elizabeth was drop-dead gorgeous, with a fierce charm. She made hearts race and people fall for her.

"There's been talk in the department that Ms. Carter's planning to leave the position for you," Laura leaned against the wall, head down, hands in her pockets, looking super chill.

Elizabeth saw a steadiness in Laura. Maybe it was her age, or the fact that Laura was a mom now. Whatever she did, she had this weird sense of calm.

"No, I just don't want to be in this line of work anymore. I only got to the hospital because my grandma insisted," Elizabeth said, trying to sound casual. "I'm the daughter of the Percy Family. Do I need to do this?"

Laura raised an eyebrow.

Elizabeth nodded seriously. "For real, I don't need the money, and I don't wanna serve others."

Laura stayed quiet. "Dr. Dixon, I wish you all the best," Elizabeth said to Laura.

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Laura kept silent. Amanda eventually agreed to let Elizabeth go. But what Elizabeth didn't know was that if the deputy director position wasn't meant for Laura from the start, it would stay vacant. Her leaving just meant one less rival for Laura. Elizabeth wrote a letter to the hospital recommending Laura. Whether Laura could get promoted in the future would be up to her own skills.

When Elizabeth got home, she saw Celine sitting on the sofa with a stern face. Next to her, Declan was sipping tea, watching Elizabeth like he was enjoying a show. Regarding Elizabeth's resignation, it seemed like everyone except Celine was pretty stoked. Declan thought Elizabeth could finally take over his company! Rose thought Elizabeth could finally learn design from her! Grant thought Elizabeth could finally go fishing and gardening with him. But then everyone heard Elizabeth say, "I plan to go abroad."

The few people who were watching the show all widened their eyes and asked Elizabeth, "What are you gonna do?"

Elizabeth replied, "Go abroad for further studies."

"It's one thing if you don't want to run my company, but now you wanna leave?" Declan was furious.

Elizabeth awkwardly said, "Dad, I'm really not into the company."

"Then are you not into design either?" Rose immediately followed up.

Elizabeth nodded. Grant silently raised his hand, like, she didn't even wanna stay home and chill? Celine's expression was complicated.

"Elizabeth, are you in a bad mood 'cause of your divorce from Alexander? My advice is, don't act on impulse," Rose gently held Elizabeth's hand.

Elizabeth felt even more helpless. She wasn't sad at all about divorcing Alexander. If she were sad, she wouldn't have gotten divorced.

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Since they'd come this far, it meant Elizabeth had really let go.

"Elizabeth, spill it. Are you planning to stay abroad for years, or just taking a few months off and coming back?" Rose thought this was super important.

Elizabeth replied, dead serious, “Stay abroad for years.”

Hearing this, Rose flopped onto the sofa. She looked at Elizabeth, tears welling up instantly. “You just got home a few months ago, and now you wanna leave us again? Elizabeth, you can’t be this selfish as a daughter!”

Mom Elizabeth took a step forward. Rose just wiped her tears on the sly and then headed upstairs. Elizabeth watched Rose, feeling super bummed inside. Over the years, she had indeed become more and more selfish. Elizabeth hung her head.

“Let’s hit up the cruise party first,” Elizabeth finally caved.

Declan was taken aback and thought, *The cruise party’s tomorrow night. If Elizabeth can meet a guy she likes on the cruise, she might not go abroad!*

“Alright, let’s do the cruise party first!” Declan was all in on this idea because this was the best shot at keeping Elizabeth around. After all, as her dad, Declan knew Elizabeth was stubborn as a mule. If Elizabeth had been a bit more chill, she wouldn’t have insisted on marrying Alexander back then. Elizabeth could sense her family didn’t want her to leave.

After getting back to her room, Elizabeth locked herself in the study. Elizabeth wanted to chat with someone, so she messaged Lila, but Lila didn’t get back to her for a long time. Elizabeth checked Lila’s schedule and found out she had joined a new project and was probably filming right now. Elizabeth lay on the desk and played a game for a bit.

Suddenly, her phone buzzed. Elizabeth looked down; it was another anonymous number.

Mysterious Person: Wanna go racing? I’m here.

The person sent a map location, which was at Eaglecrest Mountain.

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Elizabeth frowned. This was the mysterious person who had been claiming that Elizabeth was Steve for the past few days! Elizabeth wanted to see who this person was, always trying to uncover her identity.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Mysterious Person: My code name is 5.16361

Elizabeth quickly put on some simple makeup, altered her appearance a bit, and then changed into a cool black leather jacket. Under the black leather jacket was a white crop top. She wore black pants. She left the villa.

Declan immediately stood on the balcony. Looking at the car in the distance, his expression was complicated. Rose slowly walked over, her tone calm, "After kids grow up, they eventually have to leave home."

"You always do this, scolding and blaming her to her face, but secretly indulging her endlessly," Declan said, looking at Rose with a sigh. Rose felt super sad.

Elizabeth soon arrived at Eaglecrest Mountain. There was a race here today, and there were quite a few people. Because Elizabeth had disguised herself, no one recognized her as she walked in. Elizabeth put on a mask, hands in her pockets, and lazily walked to the race site.

In the arena, a black car was dominating. It was a knockout competition, and the car had already won seven consecutive matches. There was another win. This time, the opponent was a professional racer.

Elizabeth walked to the front desk and knocked on the table. "Looking for someone."

"Who you looking for?"

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Elizabeth paused for a couple of seconds. Who was she even looking for? She scrolled through her phone, spotted the keyword, then looked up and said, all chill, "K."

The guy in charge gave Elizabeth a quick glance, nodded, and was about to make a call. Then, from behind Elizabeth, a laid-back male voice chimed in, "That's me."

Elizabeth turned instantly. There stood a dude in a black and green racing suit, helmet on, so she couldn't see his face. But that voice? It rang a bell for Elizabeth.

Under the helmet, the guy's deep eyes were checking her out. He smirked a bit, thinking, *Disguised? Elizabeth's got some serious skills; Alexander must be blind, sticking with Esme and ditching Elizabeth.*

"I'm K," K extended his hand towards Elizabeth, his voice dripping with amusement. K had been trying to meet Elizabeth for ages and finally got her out here. But K wasn't interested in Elizabeth because she was Elizabeth. No, he was after Steve! He got into racing after watching Steve's races.

"Hey, I'm Emily," Elizabeth shook his hand, playing it cool, "I'm not Steve."

K raised an eyebrow. With his face hidden under the helmet, he could make any face he wanted. K knew whether Elizabeth was Steve or not; he wasn't just going to take her word for it.

"How about a lap?" K suggested.

Elizabeth looked down and asked, "Are you the one on a winning streak?"

"Yep." He wasn't hiding it.

Elizabeth gave him a look. "Take off your helmet."

K squinted. Was she serious?

"Why? I just wanna race a lap with you. I'm not selling myself." K quickly hugged his body, acting all dramatic.

Elizabeth rolled her eyes. "What are you thinking? I'm not into you." She just thought the voice sounded familiar and wanted to see if it was Kyle. She wasn't super familiar with Kyle, just curious.

K cleared his throat, "If you beat me, I'll show you."

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Elizabeth frowned, then snorted, "Fine, so you won't think I'm into you if you lose?" he asked.

“What if...” Elizabeth started walking towards the racing area, “Then I’ll tell you a secret.”

“I already know you’re Steve; you don’t need to tell me.” K said.

Elizabeth shot K a meaningful look. *How did he know she was going to tell him she was Steve?*

“Did I guess right?” K grinned, sounding a bit cocky.

Elizabeth couldn’t shake the feeling he was some immature, good-looking guy. She didn’t waste any more time and went to get ready.

After she left, K took off his helmet. Underneath was Kyle’s face. Kyle watched Elizabeth’s back and couldn’t help but smirk. He’d been following Elizabeth for years. Last time on Amber Road, he lost to her. He hoped this time, he’d win.

Soon, the race was on. Kyle looked at Elizabeth in the driver’s seat, rolled down his window, and said lightly, “You won’t cry if you lose, right?”

Stop bragging, Elizabeth was annoyed. She’d never lost before.

Kyle just smiled. Yeah, Elizabeth had never lost before.

With a signal, the race began, Elizabeth’s car shot forward. Kyle’s car was right on her tail. Soon, a crowd gathered around, painting and commenting on the two racers below.

It’s K again. How many wins has K racked up tonight?

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“I saw the chick who just hopped in the car. Remember the gal who won last time on Amber Road? Looks like the same one.”

“Shut up and watch the race!”

Elizabeth’s driving was smooth and fast. Kyle was just chilling, tailing Elizabeth’s car. He wanted a front-row seat to see how Elizabeth handled the turns and confirm she was Steve!

Elizabeth knew Kyle was onto her, so she didn't plan to gun it during this turn. Elizabeth smirked, glanced back, and knew Kyle was watching her. She switched up her game, using other racers' moves. She secretly sped up during the turn, showing off her drifting skills.

The tires left marks, sparks flying, and the crowd went wild.

Kyle frowned. Switching tactics?

After the turn, Elizabeth left Kyle in the dust. Kyle had no choice but to chase her down. But Elizabeth was going nuts; she floored it, going so fast it gave everyone goosebumps. This was a mountain road, after all. Even though it was a race, wasn't that speed a bit much?

Kyle felt like Elizabeth was using the race to blow off some steam. Kyle thought, *Is she pissed? Maybe 'cause she divorced Alexander?*

Kyle didn't have time to think more and hurried to chase Elizabeth, not wanting to lose too badly. He tried his best to catch up, but lost the opportunity to pass her. But Steve was Steve. Once Elizabeth gave him a chance, he couldn't take it, and she'd make sure he knew it.

So, no surprise, Elizabeth won the race. Kyle lost two races in a row, which he didn't see coming. He always invited Steve out, wanting to race against him, thinking he was good enough to beat him.

First thing Elizabeth did after getting out of the car was to beckon him with her finger. "Take it off."

Take off the helmet and let her see who he really was!

Ryde cleared his throat. "Let's find a less crowded spot," he said.

Elizabeth laughed. "You embarrassed?"

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What was there for a grown man to be shy about?

Kyle touched his helmet and walked towards Elizabeth. Elizabeth watched him. Occasionally, light swept across, and she seemed to see that face through the helmet. She did recognize it.

Until the helmet was off, Kyle's handsome face came into view. Elizabeth smiled. "Mr. Brooks?"

Kyle pursed his lips, shook his head, and ran a hand through his hair, making it a bit messier. He looked up, his eyelashes long. To be honest, Kyle was pretty handsome. But compared to Alexander, these guys were all a bit lacking.

"Yeah, it's me." Kyle smiled, his tone chill.

Elizabeth complained, "What's with the mystery?" She tossed the helmet aside and walked off. Kyle followed her.

Elizabeth leaned against the car, the mountain wind chilling her to the bone. Kyle handed her a can of beer. "Want a drink?" he asked.

Elizabeth leaned against the car, looking down at the race. "I drove here, can't drink."

"I'll call a driver to take you home," Kyle said with a grin.

Elizabeth pouted, "Are we that close?" She still remembered Alexander wanted her to stay away from Kyle. Even though Kyle hadn't done anything crazy so far, Elizabeth felt he had ulterior motives; it was clear he wanted to get close to her. These repeated encounters weren't by chance but planned.

No network available now. Please check your network.

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"We can get real tight," Kyle shot back.

Elizabeth chuckled. "Not interested."

"Elizabeth," Kyle suddenly blurted out her name, making Elizabeth squirm even more. She thought, *I'm in disguise, and yet Kyle's dead sure I'm Elizabeth and Steve. What's his deal?*

"I'm not Elizabeth," she insisted, trying to keep her cover.

Kyle just grinned, cracked open a beer, and took a big swig. His Adam's apple bobbed as he gulped, then he said, "Sure, you're not Elizabeth."

Elizabeth felt a wave of discomfort wash over her. She decided to go for another race. Since she was already here, might as well have some fun.

“Another round?” she asked Kyle.

Kyle shrugged, clearly not expecting her to want another race. “I’ve been drinking.”

Elizabeth sneered. She waved him off and headed down to the track. Kyle sipped his beer and watched her race...

He thought, *Looks like Elizabeth really doesn’t remember me. I can never forget the first time I met her. Elizabeth, I know your secret.* Kyle’s eyes lowered, and he smiled helplessly. He thought she was really clueless.

Elizabeth played until late before heading back. On the way, she spotted a 24-hour convenience store. Hungry, she went in to grab some food. She came out with her snacks and found a bench to sit on. There was a small, quiet plaza right across from her.

Elizabeth took a sip of soup, feeling warmth spread through her body. She propped her face on her hand, gazing into the distance and slowly chewing her food. A few cars zoomed by occasionally. It was already 2:30 in the morning. The sky was pitch black, no hint of dawn. Elizabeth took another sip of hot soup and leaned back on the bench.

Just then, she heard footsteps approaching. Someone was shouting, and another voice was trying to calm him down.

“Who does she think she is? If she dares to divorce me, I’ll kill her!”

Letting go can be good too.

“Come on, couples have their ups and downs. Letting go...”

“Who am I busting my ass for? It’s all for her! What’s wrong with seeing other women?”

Elizabeth rolled her eyes. She slowly turned her head and saw two seemingly drunk guys stumbling towards her. One had long hair and a scruffy beard, cursing, “She needs to be taught a lesson!”

“Couples should support each other. You need to sober up.”

Hearing this, Elizabeth couldn't help but take another look at the guy talking about mutual support. He seemed pretty refined.

Elizabeth looked forward again and smiled helplessly. She thought, *They say birds of a feather flock together, but how did these two end up together?*

Just as she was lost in thought, her foot got stepped on. She immediately pulled her foot back and looked up. It was the drunk guy. But the refined guy was already gone.

Elizabeth frowned and was about to speak when she heard the guy curse, "Bitch!"

Elizabeth stayed silent. This guy was drunk, and she didn't want any trouble. She stood up, ready to leave. Suddenly, the guy grabbed her arm.

"What do you want?" she asked coldly.

The guy pointed at her. "I think I know you."

"Sorry, I don't know you," Elizabeth shook off his arm and tried to leave.

The guy immediately blocked her way and said, "You're Elizabeth, the daughter of the Percy Family,"

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Elizabeth scrunched up her face. "Nah, you got the wrong chick." She'd wiped off her makeup on the way back. But getting recognized this late? Totally not on her bingo card.

"No way you're not her. Alexander ditched you." He burst out laughing.

Elizabeth's face turned stormy. "And how do you know it was him dumping me and not the other way around?" she shot back.

The guy tilted his head, smirking. "Chicks are just arm candy. Someone like Alexander? You think he'd stick around for years? Don't kid yourself. He's all about Esme now, but tomorrow? Who knows. Get it?"

He was spitting out words like he was stone-cold sober. But Elizabeth wasn't in the mood to chat. They weren't buddies, and he was clearly wasted... She shrugged him off.

“Wanna hook up?” he suddenly grinned.

Elizabeth finally laughed, giving him a once-over. Her eyes screamed, “You? Seriously?” The guy felt the burn from her look, full of pure disdain.

“What’s wrong with me? Not good enough?” He stepped closer.

Elizabeth smirked. “You’re not worthy.” His face twisted, and he raised a hand to slap her. Elizabeth caught his arm and shoved him back. “Beat it.”

She thought, *Who does this clown think he is? I feel gross just touching him!*

“You bitch!” He rolled up his sleeves, fuming. Elizabeth was already ticked off, and this guy just had to show up. She was done holding back. Guess I’ll use him as my stress ball, she thought.

With that, she felt a rush of energy. As he moved to kick her, Elizabeth clocked him with a punch. He stumbled back, eyes wide, not expecting her to be that strong. Elizabeth raised one eyebrow, motioning him over. “Bring it.”

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He gritted his teeth. “You!”

Elizabeth grinned. “Come on.” He was pissed and lunged again, but before he could touch her, someone else grabbed his arm. In a flash, his arm was twisted behind his back, and he was forced to his knees.

“It hurts,” he whined. When he looked up, it wasn’t Elizabeth who’d taken him down—it was a guy!

“Alexander?” Elizabeth’s eyes widened.

Alexander turned to her, looking annoyed. “Why are you out here alone at this hour? Go home.”

Elizabeth was stunned. It was almost 3 AM, and she ran into Alexander. Just as she was about to say something, he cut in, “Just finished work.” He’d just wrapped up dealing with a shipment.

Elizabeth noticed how tired he looked. His eyes were bloodshot, and his hand had some scratches. “Got into a fight?” she asked softly.

He glanced at her, then at his hand. He didn't say anything, just let the guy go and pulled down his sleeve. "No."

"Scram," Alexander kicked the guy.

Elizabeth was annoyed. "Don't let him go."

"Why not?" Alexander's brows knitted together.

Elizabeth still had some steam to blow off. "That was my punching bag. If he leaves, I'll use you instead," she glared at Alexander.

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Alexander was like, "Are you so pissed, beating someone up in the middle of the night?" He was about to say more when he saw Elizabeth already lounging on the bench, munching away. He gave her a look, his face a mixture of emotions. Elizabeth was skinny, and sitting there, she looked so fragile. She had this lonely vibe that made his heart hurt, stirring up all sorts of feelings.

Alexander pressed his lips together, sighed, and plopped down next to her. Elizabeth glanced at him and asked, "Why are you here so late? Shouldn't you be home?"

"Whatever you're doing, I'm doing," he shrugged. After all, Elizabeth was here. Alexander crossed his arms and looked up. The moon was shining bright, with a few stars twinkling around. It was a rare clear night.

"You've got some taste," Elizabeth said, taking a sip of her hot soup, feeling all warm inside. Alexander stayed quiet, still staring at the sky. Elizabeth quickly finished her food. But she didn't leave; she just looked up at the sky too.

"Are you going to the cruise party tomorrow night?" Alexander suddenly asked. Elizabeth nodded, "Yeah."

"Don't drink anything anyone gives you," he said flatly. Elizabeth laughed. "I'm actually looking forward to it." She left it at that. Alexander's eyes were on her, his face complicated, brows furrowed. He thought, 'Looking forward to what? A one-night stand? Is she nuts?'

Sensing his disdain, Elizabeth smiled. "Trying to control me, Mr. Tudor? You're my ex-husband now. Frowning won't help. If I want a one-night stand,

no one can stop me.” Elizabeth was always a free spirit. If she wanted to go wild, she would.

Alexander said nothing, couldn’t be bothered. “If you want to degrade yourself, go ahead,” he muttered.

“Oh, seeking excitement is degrading myself, being with Ese is just fine?” Elizabeth spread her hands. She sighed, thinking, Why should a married woman be so humble? This world is so unfair.

“You’re blaming me,” Alexander said flatly. Elizabeth shook her head. “No, I’m not. It’s all in the past.”

Alexander sneered, “You still like me too much, so you care. You keep saying it’s all in the past, but you haven’t really moved on.”

“Don’t flatter yourself. What do I like about you? Your betrayal or your constant misunderstandings?” Elizabeth sighed deeply. Thinking about it now, what was there to like about Alexander? Alexander was left speechless. All his so-called confidence felt like a joke. ‘Yeah. I’ve treated Elizabeth so poorly. What’s there for her to like?’ he thought.

“But, Alexander,” Elizabeth looked at the bright moon, her voice tinged with helplessness and sentiment, “Do you know, that night, I had no thoughts in my mind?” Alexander looked at her, his eyes momentarily dazed. “What?”

That night? Which night? Elizabeth turned her head, meeting his confused eyes. He didn’t know that Elizabeth had saved him. All these years, he had never asked her. But Elizabeth wanted him to know that she had saved him back then, no matter the cost. She bit her lip, her hand gripping the hem of her clothes tightly, lowering her voice, and said heavily, “Alexander. I, Elizabeth, have never wronged you.”

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Alexander was eyeballing her like she was about to spill the juiciest gossip ever. What was she gonna say? Elizabeth could tell she had Alexander hooked. Tonight was the perfect time to lay it all out, because after tonight, they’d be on totally different tracks.

Elizabeth bit her lip, took a tiny step closer, locked eyes with Alexander, and started, “That year you were... achoo!”

Right when she was about to drop the bomb, she sneezed out of nowhere. Elizabeth sniffled and rubbed her arm. It wasn't even cold.

"Cold?" Alexander asked, already shrugging off his jacket.

Elizabeth glanced up, shook her head fast, and waved him off. She wasn't cold. Elizabeth was about to pick up where she left off. Then they heard a snarky voice from the side, "She said no, so no jacket. Dude, being too direct isn't always good."

The words were dripping with sarcasm. Elizabeth and Alexander turned to look. There was another guy on a nearby bench, someone they knew. Who else but Kyle?

"Kyle, what are you doing here?" Elizabeth asked, totally surprised.

"I followed you. It's late; can't let you walk home alone," Kyle said, crossing his arms.

Alexander's brow furrowed, thinking, *Are they that close? Have they been hanging out?*

"What does it matter? I used to go home alone late at night all the time," Elizabeth said, checking the time on her phone.

Alexander looked at her, thinking, *What's she getting at? Complaining to another guy in front of me? Have I let her go home alone before?*

"Yeah, in a crappy marriage, you definitely go home alone." Kyle walked over, standing in front of them, chuckling.

Alexander squinted, more sure than ever that Kyle was gunning for him.

"When did it become your business to comment on our marriage?" Alexander adjusted his clothes, his face cold as ice.

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Kyle smirked. "Aren't there already plenty of people talking about your marriage?"

"Plenty. But doing it to my face is your mistake," Alexander locked eyes with Kyle, his gaze fierce.

Kyle was about to retort. Alexander cut him off, “Oh, by the way, got some bad news for you.”

Kyle frowned, and Alexander said calmly, “Your shipment got sent back, and mine’s already here.”

Kyle’s calm facade cracked. Elizabeth realized from their conversation that these two had some serious history.

“You’re such a jerk,” Kyle spat through gritted teeth.

Alexander shrugged. “Could be worse.”

In the business world, you gotta be a bit of a jerk to survive. He slowly walked over to Kyle, flicking imaginary dust off his shoulder. The contempt in his eyes was brutal. Alexander spoke coolly, “If you wanna make it in Lisbun, you gotta play by my rules.”

Alexander thought, *Trying to mess with me? Not a chance. If Kyle wants to keep coming at me, bring it on. Let’s see who comes out on top!*

“Mr. Tudor, you really put your career above everything else. Is there really nothing or no one in this world you care about?” Kyle pushed Alexander’s hand away, his tone challenging.

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Alexander lifted his chin, giving Kyle a frosty stare. He didn't want to be played by him. Kyle’s eyes drifted to Elizabeth. “Like, take Ms. Percy here.”

Elizabeth shot him a glare. “Quit using me as your example.”

‘He should be talking about Esme, not me,’ she thought. ‘To Alexander, I’m a nobody.’ Elizabeth knew exactly where she stood.

Alexander glanced at Elizabeth and noticed a new calmness in her eyes. He looked down, his eyes clouding over. ‘Back in the day, she’d be all over me, asking if I ever gave a damn about her. She seems so chill now, but why am I all twisted up inside? Is there really no one I care about? Why, when Kyle asked that, did Elizabeth’s name pop into my head instead of Esme’s? Why do I keep looking at her?’ he wondered.

Sensing the awkward vibe, Elizabeth decided she wasn't sticking around with these two any longer. "It's late," she said, adjusting her clothes. "I'm outta here. You guys do whatever." She gave them a cool look. She didn't care about their history; after all, she barely knew either of them.

"I'll take you home," Alexander called out.

Elizabeth shot him a look. "Taking your ex-wife home late at night? You might not be scared, but I am."

Alexander asked, "What are you scared of?"

'Scared your fiancée will come after me.' Elizabeth chuckled lazily, her tone playful. Esme was totally the type to do that.

Before Alexander could say more, Elizabeth was already in her car and gone.

Alexander watched her car disappear, feeling oddly irritated. He turned to see Kyle lounging on a bench. Kyle squinted and grinned. "Mr. Tudor, even if I can't outdo you at work, watching your love life crash and burn is pretty satisfying."

"Kyle, don't push it," Alexander snapped, tugging at his suit collar, clearly annoyed. "You're still the same as when we were kids, low EQ, always screwing up your feelings. That's your Achilles' heel." Kyle leaned back, smiling at Alexander like an old buddy.

Alexander glared, his eyes darkening. Kyle used to be the one who got to him the most. Kieran thought Alexander was torn between Elizabeth and Esme, making him a jerk. But Kyle knew Alexander just sucked at handling emotions. That was his flaw. Too bad they ended up as strangers.

Alexander was about to leave when Kyle, still on the bench, called out, "Alexander, you really gonna marry Esme?"

Alexander stopped, his back to Kyle. The night wasn't cold, but the wind had a bite to it. He turned slightly to look at Kyle. Kyle grinned. "You really need to think it through. Don't let Esme play you."

"What do you know? If you know something, spill it. Is this fun for you?" Alexander was fuming.

Kyle laughed. "Yeah, it is."

“Watching you get played by Esme and stressing over her, it makes my day.”
Kyle clapped his hands, clearly enjoying himself.

Alexander snapped, “Kyle, how long do you think you can keep this up?”