

My Brother Became a Vegetable To Save Me Chapter 6

In a daze, Lucas's face floated through my mind.

Back in school, my classmates banded together to ostracize me. They whispered behind my back and gave me cruel nicknames.

One day after class, a few older girls cornered me against the wall.

“Lydia, what are you pretending to be so high and mighty for? Who are you scowling at all day?”

“You're just riding on your parents' coattails. So what? I heard your parents don't even like you.”

At parent-teacher meetings, my parents rarely showed up, and when they did, their faces were twisted with displeasure, as if I were the source of their embarrassment. Everyone could see how differently they treated me. A child without support naturally felt lonely and abandoned.

“Move aside.”

A clear, youthful voice rang out. Lucas stood in the sunlight, fury blazing in his eyes. “If I catch you bullying my sister again, you'll regret it.”

Though only thirteen, he was already taller than me, strikingly handsome. After the girls fled, he couldn't resist showing off in front of me, tossing his hair with a grin. “Did I look cool just now?”

His antics made me laugh, sweeping away the clouds of despair. From that moment on, Lucas became my guardian. No matter where I went, he was always by my side, promising to stand by me no matter what happened, to protect me.

He helped me slowly rediscover myself. I didn't ask for much. Even if my parents didn't love me, having a caring brother was enough.

But fate can be cruel, snatching away the one person who treated me kindly.

In the moment my breath stopped, my soul left my body. I witnessed that man cut my flesh into pieces and stuff them into black plastic bags. Then he retrieved an axe from the trunk of the car and hacked at my limbs.

I thought death would end all my suffering, but I was wrong. An unknown force pulled me back toward my loved ones. I saw my mother wake from a nightmare; it was her first dream of me.

How could she not notice? Just like she often said, “I'm your mother; your life and your body are mine.”

I was nurtured in her womb, and even though the umbilical cord was severed, that blood bond was never broken. Even in death, my soul was still drawn back to her side.

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Soon, my birthday arrived, and my brother grew increasingly anxious. An inexplicable unease spread within him.

Taking advantage of our parents' absence, he recalled memories from five years ago and found my company. He asked the manager where I had gone on business and when I might return.

The manager looked puzzled. "What business trip? Lydia hasn't been to the office in over a month." The lie was exposed, and my brother stood stunned.

He stumbled to my rented apartment, mumbling, "But Mom and Dad said she was on a business trip. There must be some mistake." He couldn't believe that his respected parents would lie to him, nor could he accept that parents might not love their own child.

He often said we were family, and that Mom and Dad were just angry. He firmly believed that no family bond was unresolvable.

The innocence he displayed only highlighted my deeper cunning. The first time he stood up to Mom for me was the day I left home. He looked at her, disappointment etched across his face. "I always thought you didn't like Sis was because of me, so I tried to compensate for it."

"Now I understand that even without me, you'd treat her this way. Everything you do is just to satisfy your own vanity."

Faced with his accusation, the usually strong Mom cried. She leaned into Dad's embrace, overwhelmed with injustice. Dad scolded my brother for not understanding the hardships of parenting.

"You and I do everything for your sister's sake. What kind of parents don't love their child? Your sister may not understand your mother's intentions, but you shouldn't follow her example. What kind of nonsense has she fed you that makes you so protective of her?"

They stood on their moral high ground, listing my every flaw. In my brother's uncertain gaze, I left home. I knew he hesitated, beginning to doubt.

But he did nothing wrong. Since the day he was born, he had been enveloped in our parents' love, so he couldn't grasp my despair and helplessness.

My brother clenched his fists, pounding on the door, desperately seeking confirmation of something. The sound of knocking drew the attention of the elderly landlady next door. She looked at the boy who resembled me and slowly spoke, "May I ask who you are to Lydia?"

Lucas turned to her, “I... I’m Lydia’s brother. Do you know my sister?”

The landlady replied, “Of course. Your sister rented my apartment. She hasn’t been back for a month. Has she gone home?”

“If she has come home, you should spend time with her. She’s lived here for five years, always alone with hardly any friends. It’s not good for a young girl; it can lead to illness.”

After the landlady left, my brother squatted outside my door for a long time. He seemed to be contemplating my absence, wondering why I hadn’t returned home or gone to the office. Where could I possibly be? His face gradually drained of color, turning pale. He didn’t dare to think any further.

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As soon as my brother collected himself and returned home, our mother approached him with a worried expression, grasping his hand.

“Where have you been? You didn’t answer your phone. Do you want to drive me to worry myself sick?”

He looked up, meeting her gaze coldly. “Do you know what today is?”

In her confused look, he suddenly burst into laughter. He shook off her hand and shouted, “Lydia isn’t on a business trip! Why are you lying?”

He stepped closer to her. “Do you realize she hasn’t been to work in over a month?”

“She’s been missing for more than a month. Don’t you care about that?”

“Aren’t you worried something might happen to her?”

Faced with his barrage of questions, our mother’s expression remained calm. “What could happen to her? Lucas, don’t forget, it was your sister who caused you to be like this.”

He staggered backward, disbelief in his eyes. “So for five years, you’ve been blaming her?”

Just then, our father returned. Sensing the tension, he stepped forward to steady my brother’s trembling frame. “What’s wrong? Lukie, you just got better; don’t get worked up.”

My brother's lips quivered as he gripped our father's arm. "Have you hated her too, just like Mom?"

How could he not hate me? He had accepted everything our mother did. He even kept my violation a secret for the sake of saving face.

He once said, "Lydia, I'm doing this for your own good. You still want to get married one day, and no man will want a woman who has been raped."

Wasn't it ridiculous? To hear those words came from my own father.

For the first time, my brother felt the weight of our parents' indifference. As he faced our father's silence, realization dawned on him. He collapsed onto the floor.

"Why do you hate her?"

"Have you forgotten? She's a victim too."

At that moment, our mother's phone rang. I leaned in closer.

It was an unfamiliar number.

"Is this Mrs. Brown? The identity of the victim has been confirmed."

"Yesterday, an elderly man found a bag of decaying human flesh at the dump, and DNA comparison has verified it."

There was a pause on the other end.

"The victim is Lydia. Since you are relatives, you will need to recuse yourself from this lawsuit."

"And we need you and your family to come to the police station."

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I imagined countless times how my mother would react upon discovering the truth. Would she regret her actions? Or would she weep for me, her heart breaking into pieces? I felt like a dog desperately seeking attention, trying to find even a hint of remorse in her eyes. Yet, she remained as calm as ever.

After hanging up, it was as if nothing had happened. She called for Winnie to prepare dinner, trying to placate my brother as she pulled him toward the table. He shrugged off her hand, laughing bitterly.

“You don’t deserve to be a mother. I often wondered if I were like my sister, would you and Dad stop loving me? Now I have my answer.”

Mother seemed to lose her balance, collapsing to the floor. Tears shimmered in her eyes as she stared blankly at my brother.

“What do you want me to do? She’s already dead. Should I die in her place?”

Both Dad and my brother were stunned by her words.

“Quinn, who was on the phone just now?”

Mother got up from the floor, smoothing her clothes with composure. Her voice was eerily steady.

“The police station. The victim is Lydia.”

Pain etched across Dad’s face, his lips trembling, unable to form complete words.

“You... you mean the dismembered one... is Lydia?”

Mother responded softly, then calmly walked over to the dining table to eat. Her indifference pierced me deeply once more.

Dad snatched her fork away. “Quinn, how can you still eat? Our daughter is dead.”

Mother shot him a cold glance and stood up from the table. Dad grabbed her arm, his voice low and fierce. “How can you be so cold-hearted?”

She turned to him sharply. “What right do you have to criticize me?”

He looked as if he had been choked, opening his mouth to speak but unable to utter a single word.

“Mrs. Brown, it’s been a long time.”

“Now you remember who I am, don’t you?”

The man in the interrogation room stared at his mom with a smile.

“What’s it like to know the victim is your own daughter?”

I didn't understand why the man hated Mom so much until now.

It turns out that ten years ago, mom helped a man who raped his daughter win his case.

His daughter couldn't accept the result and eventually chose to slit her wrists.

Therefore, he hated my mom and wanted to take revenge on me for all the pain he had endured.

He wanted Mom to taste it too, the pain of losing her own flesh and blood.

I covered my heart and took a few steps back.

Well, it's better this way.

Mom gave me life, and now, I'd sacrificed myself to take her punishment.

It's a clean slate.

"Do you know how stubborn your daughter is? She refuses to admit that you're not a good lawyer."

"What a pity. She's in the prime of her life, but she has to pay for her mother's sins."

The man thought these words would make my mom's heart ache.

But he was wrong.

Mom's face was unperturbed from the beginning.

Just quietly listening to the man, recounting the whole process of killing me.

This made the man nearly break down, slapping his handcuffed hands furiously on the table.

"Aren't you sad? Why aren't you upset?"

"Are you even a mother?"

I don't know why, but at that moment I felt some sympathy for this murderer.

Maybe he didn't realize that not everyone was like him, loving his own child so much.

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The police station was surrounded by a throng of media.

“Mrs. Brown, are you aware that the victim is your own daughter?”

“Mrs. Brown, it’s been reported that you submitted proof of the murderer’s mental illness to the police.”

“How do you feel right now? Can you share your thoughts?”

“Sources reveal that you and your husband have been dissatisfied with Lydia. Is that true?”

“Prof. Brown, do you consider yourself a qualified father?”

Father’s face shifted from pale to flushed, his mouth opening and closing without finding the words. I stood to the side, a bitter smile on my lips. How could he possibly be a good father?

Once, I had reached out to him.

“Dad, I think I’m sick. Every time I close my eyes, I remember that night. I’m scared and want to move back home.”

He had replied, “Don’t come back. If you hadn’t been so stubborn about moving out, your brother wouldn’t be like this. If you like being out there so much, you might as well die out there.”

Father publicly declared that my brother had become a vegetable while trying to save a stranger.

He was hailed as a hero, the good son of Prof. Brown and Mrs. Brown.

My parents exploited my brother’s bravery to elevate their careers, oblivious to the fact that I was struggling to survive in a cramped twenty–square–meter rental.

In moments of emotional collapse, the only relief I found was through self–harm.

In a fit of madness, I chopped off my long hair and shaved my head.

Long–term use of antidepressants, combined with binge eating, transformed me into a greasy figure weighing 160 pounds.

As I looked at my reflection—short hair and a stout frame—I surprisingly found some comfort in it, believing that this disheveled appearance would deter any bad people from approaching me.

This battered shell once yearned to live with dignity.

I longed to stand in the sunlight like a normal girl, to have friends and someone to talk to, to assure me that none of this was my fault.

But no one ever extended a helping hand.

Instead, I was met with cold stares from bystanders, mocking laughter from colleagues, and harsh words from my parents.