

Whispered Goodbye Chapter 10

He looked up at me, two streams of tears falling and disappearing into his clothes.

“I’m sorry,” Leo Sterling said, his eyes red and filled with pain.

“I forgive you. Now go, Leo Sterling.” We each had our own paths to follow.

As he picked up the casserole dish and walked out the door, he asked in a hoarse voice if I ever regretted being with a selfish person like him.

I shook my head. No.

I didn’t regret it when we fled our hometown empty-handed.

I didn’t regret it when we worked part-time jobs until we were too exhausted to eat, collapsing into sleep.

I didn’t regret it when we scraped together half our savings to splurge on a feast, dreaming of the future.

I didn’t regret it when he told me he wanted to propose on a night with both stars and a moon.

Even when his relationship with Jade Kingsley became ambiguous, I didn’t regret it.

Leo Sterling’s silhouette trembled slightly as he disappeared from my sight.

For a long time after that, I heard nothing about him.

Six months later, I suddenly received a call from Jade Kingsley, cursing Leo Sterling.

I could barely make out a few coherent pieces of information from her fragmented, vulgar tirade.

It all revolved around Leo Sterling’s ingratitude.

It was disjointed and bewildering.

Jade Kingsley seemed to be calling just to vent and smear his name to anyone who knew him.

She hung up without giving me a chance to speak.

After some thought, I decided to ask around about what happened. It seemed to be related to plagiarism and academic fraud.

Our law firm had been looking to expand into new areas and business sectors recently.

After learning the details, I felt a twinge of regret.

The matter was already settled, and our firm wouldn't be able to get a piece of the action.

Leo Sterling and Jade Kingsley had been working together on an experimental project, planning to publish together once the final data came in.

But their university suddenly reached an agreement with an Ivy League Dental School abroad.

If Jade Kingsley could publish as first author before the application deadline, she could apply for an exchange program to pad her resume.

However, the experimental data simply couldn't be produced that quickly.

So when Leo Sterling was facing a sudden increase in his clinic workload, Jade Kingsley's data was miraculously "handled" by her professor father.

When Leo Sterling found time to return to the lab, he saw empty culture dishes and was told the paper had already been submitted and approved.

The investigation into the trending news story "Dr. Leo Sterling Accuses Tenured Professor of Abuse of Power and Academic Fraud" proved to be true.

Leo Sterling revealed that the professor had falsified data more than once. When had he started collecting evidence? Didn't he know that even if he won against the professor, his own fate wouldn't be much better?

That man still had enough connections and face to make it impossible for Leo Sterling, an outsider, to stay in Northern Medical School's circle.

Following his usual approach, he should have swallowed his pride and endured the small injustice for greater benefit. Leo Sterling knew all the possible outcomes, yet he still chose this path.

T.J. came to ask me if I needed help pulling some strings.

She was a local from a family of lawyers, with a decent network.

I lowered my eyes to read Leo Sterling's words: "I don't want to be part of the silent majority anymore."

"What has Leo Sterling done to deserve you, Counselor Justice, spending your favors?"

T.J. leaned in to look at me, snickering and calling me stubborn. She straightened up, said "I understand," and turned to leave.

I held her back: "T.J., thank you."

"Buy me dinner," she said, patting my hand.

Leo Sterling, don't feel guilty anymore, and don't be sentimental.

This time I'm helping you, consider it for Grandma's sake.

After this, we needn't think of each other again.

Though the mountains aren't high and the waters aren't far, our paths need not cross again.