

Chapter 1587

Startled, I quickly turned around. Not far behind me stood a man, half-hidden in the shade of a tree. He wore a simple black outfit, his figure thin and unkempt, with dark circles beneath his eyes.

It was him—the scholar from the bridge who sold paintings, the one Mr. Klein had called a hopeless case, a student who had dropped out to care for a woman.

"You're speaking nonsense," I exclaimed, wide-eyed, a shiver running through me at the thought of his strange words. "I've never heard of any water demons here. You're just trying to trick me."

Though I had no fear of death, I was uneasy at the thought of demons, particularly if they were going to trap me beneath the mud.

"I'm not lying to you." Cassius stepped forward, his frail frame seeming even more fragile against the breeze. "If you look around, you'll see no one is here. Why else would such a lovely place be devoid of visitors?"

"That's because the people who come here are not tourists. They come to pray, and they leave once they're finished," I replied, though I instinctively took a step back, feeling the dark waters of the lake stir something unsettling within me.

He paused, then softly but insistently added, "Those who come to pray do so out of reverence for nature and the heavens. If this place were truly as beautiful as it seemed, surely someone would have come to admire it. But there's no one. Doesn't that strike you as odd?"

I wasn't sure whether to believe him, but I knew he was not the most reliable of men. And frankly, I didn't dare take my life here anymore. I

turned to leave.

"Life is hard to come by," his voice followed me, almost mournfully. "Some long to live, but no matter how hard they try, they cannot."

His words hung in the air, strange and haunting. I glanced back at him. Seeing the faint glimmer of tears in his eyes, a thought crossed my mind.

"You're not here looking for death, are you?" I suddenly asked.

He looked taken aback and quickly shook his head. "No, of course not. I just placed my mother's memorial plaque in the temple, and came here for a walk..."

Only then did I notice his attire—he was wearing mourning clothes.

"Ah... my condolences," I said, the words slipping out without much thought, not intending to offer comfort, but simply out of politeness.

"Thank you," he said, bowing deeply, though his eyes were still clouded with grief.

His shoulders slumped, and I saw a tear escape down his cheek. I had never seen a man cry, except for children. For a moment, I didn't know whether to stay or leave, unsure what more to say to comfort him.

I thought for a moment. Losing a mother was truly a sad thing.

I sighed and said, "Do not be too sorrowful. Though your mother is gone, you still have your father to care for."

His face paled further. "My father passed long ago. Now, it's just me."

I hadn't meant to bring up such painful memories. I quickly apologized: "

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you."

"It's alright. No matter how difficult, life must go on. As long as one is alive, there is hope for a way out of hardship." He paused for a moment, as if considering his words. "If your heart feels uneasy, perhaps you should come more often to listen to the priest's prayers."

I thought of my own troubles and fell silent for a while, before turning to leave.

When I returned home, I couldn't shake the thought of how easily I had considered death. It seemed a terribly selfish thing to do. If I truly objected to this marriage, why had I not simply spoken to my parents about it?

Summoning my courage, I went to my mother and told her that I did not want to marry Phineas.

She was taken aback, then immediately scolded me: "Such words should never be spoken again! If they reach the ears of the Langley family, the engagement will be ruined."

I knelt before her, pleading, "Mom, I am serious. I don't want to marry him. He is not a good man."

My mother regarded me for a long moment, then sighed lightly. "Whether he is a good man or not is of little consequence. Once you are married, your father will ensure you live in comfort. The Langley family's second son won't dare to treat you badly."

"Can't Dad still provide for me even if I don't get married?" I asked.

My mother's expression darkened. "Nonsense! What woman doesn't get married? What will become of the other young ladies in our family if you

refuse this match?"

Tears welled up in my eyes as I protested, "I'm the one not getting married. Why does it concern the others?"

"If you refuse to marry, the gossip will tarnish our family's name. What good reputation will the other young ladies have? How could you be so selfish? Who has taught you to think like this?" she replied sternly.

I opened my mouth to argue, but she cut me off with a sharp command: "Leave, and don't bring this up again."

Seeing my mother's angry face, a weight settled in my chest. I felt as though all hope had drained from me.



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Having failed to convince my mother, I went to my father. However, his response was even more severe.

They thought I opposed the marriage because I hadn't spent time with Phineas. They were also convinced that since the match was already being arranged, it would be best for him to take me out and build some rapport between us.

I didn't want to go, but my mother's maid forced me into the carriage. The maid was also told to watch me closely to ensure I didn't speak out of turn.

Phineas looked all polished up, with shiny hair and a face like he had powdered it that morning. He initially showed me some respect, but soon enough, his true nature began to show. He made crude comments about my appearance, saying that if it weren't for my looks and the fact that I was from the Spencer family, he would never have considered marrying me.

His condescending attitude made me uncomfortable. If that had been the worst of it, perhaps I would have simply let it go. But on our way back, he pinched me on the backside as he helped me into the carriage.

I froze, the blood rushing to my head in an instant. I looked into his mischievous eyes and felt the tears rise. The humiliation shook me to the core; I couldn't speak a word.

The maid and the coachman didn't see what happened. Instead, they thought he was being considerate and praised him to my mother when we returned.



I told my mother what happened, but she accused me of making it up and scolded me harshly. As punishment, I was locked in my room for three days.

During that time, I cried so much that my face swelled up. I regretted listening to Cassius' words that day. I even thought to myself that jumping into the lake would have been a better choice than marrying Phineas.

What was the difference between marrying him and falling into a pit of mud?

When my punishment was over, I went to the mountain temple again and used the same excuse to send the maid away. This time, I went to the lake with a heart full of despair, determined to end my life.

But to my surprise, I encountered Cassius once again.

He sat alone by the lake, absentmindedly tossing small stones into the water, watching the ripples spread outward. Perhaps hearing my footsteps, he turned and saw me, looking a bit startled as he quickly stood up.

The winter sun was weak, but it bathed his pale face in a soft, gentle light.

"Are you alright?" he asked, his eyes lingering on me.

I had been crying for days, and my eyes were still swollen.

"No, I'm not!" I didn't know where the courage came from—or perhaps it wasn't courage at all, but madness slowly creeping in from deep inside me. "I can't have children. Would you still marry me?"

He stared at me in shock.

"I have no way out. Either I die, or I find someone to marry me," I said, naively believing that if I could just find someone who would marry me, my parents would call off the engagement with the Langley family.

He studied me for a long time, as if weighing whether I was serious.

"I can't have children," I said again, tears rushing to my eyes as I choked on the words.

"It doesn't matter," he replied softly. "What matters is living. Don't think of dying. If you must have someone marry you to live, then I will marry you."

He actually said it didn't matter. He said that not being able to have children didn't matter.

I wiped away my tears. "Come to my house tomorrow and ask for my hand. I am Liana, a lady of the Spencer family."

"I've seen you at the Spencer family's residence," Cassius said.

"I know you keep a courtesan, have no ambition, dropped out of school, and racked up a ton of debt—but I don't care. All I want is for you to marry me. Even if we're just pretending to be a married couple, I'm fine with that," I told him.

He seemed confused and explained, "I don't keep a courtesan. I borrowed a lot of money to pay for my mother's treatment, but most of it has been paid off now. My painting and calligraphy sell well, and I go to the mountain temple every day to copy scriptures for others. I don't make much, but it's enough to get by."

I looked into his clear, sincere eyes. He didn't seem to be lying.

And so, he came to my family to ask for my hand.

But my father had him thrown out, along with the gifts he brought. He even splashed water on Cassius to humiliate him. He demanded to know how someone like Cassius, with his background, dared to ask for the hand of a Spencer daughter.

My parents thought I didn't know about the proposal, as I wasn't supposed to have met him.

My father told me about it later, but his intention was clear. He said marrying into the Langley family would be the best thing for me. After all, it seemed that even men who were no better than a beggar had come to insult me.

I thought about it for several days before finally making up my mind. I packed my things, left a letter behind, and went to the mountain temple to find Cassius. I begged him to run away with me.

He didn't want to, but I threatened to end my life.

When he finally agreed, I felt ashamed and selfish. I hadn't even considered his future, his life—what would happen to him?

But he took me away.

At first, I didn't like him much. However, he treated me so kindly. Wherever we went, he would write poems and paint to sell his work and earn money. He did everything he could to make sure I had a good life.

Two years after we eloped, we finally got married officially. On our wedding day, we prayed to the heavens in a small rented house. He promised me that no matter what, he would always do his best to treat me well and would never leave me.

I no longer lived a life of luxury, but had someone who truly cared for me.

Eventually, we went home to apologize. My elder brother beat Cassius up for what he had done, but in the end, our family accepted us. However, they made it clear they wouldn't be involved with us much in the future.

Cassius was covered in bruises, but he still smiled at me. "Now, you won't have to live with guilt anymore."

I cried so much.

This man was such a fool!

I was lucky. Although I couldn't have children of my own, I had a husband who loved me just as much as the day we first met.

I wished that all women who couldn't have children because of their health would be treated with the same kindness and understanding.



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