

## Chapter 558 Cruel Joke

Eva's words hit Cole like a sledgehammer to his chest. Eva said that his mother hadn't died, and that she had simply vanished from home.

Shocked, Cole staggered backward, his voice cracking as he asked into his phone, "What did you just say?"

Eva's revelation crashed through him like a tidal wave, leaving him so stunned that he wondered if his ears had betrayed him. Nobody made jokes about death. Despite the bitter feud between Eva and his mother, Eva would never craft such a vicious lie.

Yet Eva, blind to the chaos raging in his mind, interpreted his response as mockery. Her rage blazed hotter, and she dismissed his question with a wave. A harsh laugh tore from her throat. "Ha. Everyone praises your brilliance and decency, Cole. But who would have imagined you'd fabricate your own mother's death to dodge an engagement? Shame on you!"

She spat the words like poison. "You're too heartless."

The insult bounced off Cole without impact. Instead of fury, confusion etched deep lines across his forehead. Eva hadn't answered his question, but the meaning behind her words rang crystal clear. She assumed his mother still drew breath. But why? What drove Eva to believe this? His own memories blazed with certainty—his mother had succumbed to illness when he turned twelve. How could his memories clash so violently with hers?

Eva launched her next assault. "Very well, Cole. Tell me—where does your mother rest? I'm her sister-in-law, after all. If she's truly gone, shouldn't I honor her memory?"

The challenge struck Cole, and his thoughts scattered like leaves in a hurricane. His mother's grave... Where did she lie buried? The answer eluded him completely.

He only recalled she'd passed away when he was only twelve. A while

earlier, after awakening on that island, he had focused solely on honoring her dying wish. He hadn't dwelled on the details. But now, as he frantically searched his memories, he found emptiness. No ceremony. No burial. No headstone. How could this be possible?

If Eva was spinning lies, then why did a massive void exist where his mother's funeral should have been? He couldn't have forgotten something so monumental. And if Eva spoke the truth... then where had this vivid memory of death originated?

The questions attacked Cole like wasps, creating a whirlwind of bewilderment that left him completely adrift.

He was a man who prided himself on being in control, on understanding the world around him. But now, the very foundation of his life felt like an illusion, and he felt like a ghost haunting his own memories. Where had reality fractured? The car crash... could his head injury have scrambled his memories like puzzle pieces?

But even if that explained his confusion, it couldn't explain his family's silence. When he had awakened on that island, he had shared how his mother died at twelve. He had spoken of her final request, his obligation to marry the Campbell daughter. Neither his father nor his grandfather had challenged him. They hadn't even flinched. Why would they allow him to embrace a falsehood?

His mind churned with unanswered questions. Desperate for clarity—any fragment of truth—he tried once more. "Eva—"

But Eva, consumed by her own inferno of rage, refused to hear him. Her final words sliced through the phone line like broken glass before she severed the connection. "I despise your entire bloodline!"

And in that instant, she truly did. This hatred had festered for decades, now erupting like a volcano. The Evans family, with their vast power and connections, could have lifted her up. They could have stood as her shield. Instead, they had cast her out.

From the start, her father and elder brother had fought viciously against her marriage into the Campbell clan, even threatening to erase her from their lives if she proceeded. She had laughed off their warnings, convinced that no matter how rebellious she became, they would never truly cast out their own blood. Secure in their love, she had wed Arthur

without hesitation.

But she had never been more mistaken. Her father and brother had fulfilled their threat, banishing her from the family and marking her as their shame. They'd proclaimed to society that no such daughter or sister existed, and that her fate—whether life or death—no longer concerned them.

Throughout the years, regardless of how brutal her existence with the Campbells became, she never dared seek the Evans family's aid. During her rare visits to Ublento, only her mother offered her compassion. Her father and brother refused even to glimpse her face. The remaining relatives, terrified of their fury, shunned her like a plague, afraid that association would doom them.

When Cole, the designated heir, had suddenly materialized at her doorstep proposing a marriage pact, it had seemed like divine intervention. Hope had flooded through her veins, suggesting the Evans family was finally prepared to embrace her return. She hadn't realized it was all theater.

After ending the call, Eva pressed her eyelids shut as tears of torment streaked down her face. They were tears born of hatred, of crushing isolation, of a lifetime's accumulated bitterness.

She had once believed that marrying Arthur would crown her the most blessed woman on earth, that his devotion would suffice. She had convinced herself she didn't require her family's approval. After twenty years of suffering, she finally grasped the harsh reality—a woman needed a mighty family watching her back. She'd possessed one. And she had thrown it all away. She had dared to hope that Cole represented her redemption, yet his promised engagement had proven nothing more than a cruel joke.