

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 246

They stood there in a tense standoff, neither willing to back down an inch.

However, as more guests began to filter in, Julian, acting as the host, had to step away to manage the event. Before he left, he shot Willow one final glare. "A lot of the family elders are arriving. I suggest you behave yourself and stay out of trouble."

Watching him walk away, Willow scoffed internally. A lot of people? Perfect. She was just thinking the audience was a bit too small for what she had planned.

After Julian left, Willow lingered by the koi pond for a while. She leisurely tossed the rest of the fish food Toby had abandoned before slowly making her way to the main reception hall.

The hall was stunningly decorated, featuring a sprawling open-concept design. Minimalist ceilings with recessed warm lighting were paired with an artistic chandelier, creating a soft, elegant glow that wasn't overly harsh.

Clearly, Julian had poured a lot of money and effort into this, likely planning to show off his success. What a shame he had insisted on dragging her along to ruin it.

Not far away was a sprawling dessert bar, loaded with intricate pastries. Feeling a bit hungry, Willow wandered over to grab a bite.

She had barely stopped, hand hovering over a plate, when a group of middle-aged women strutted up behind her. They were in their late forties or fifties, dripping in expensive jewelry and heavy makeup. None of them bothered to look her in the eye.

Willow vaguely recognized them as some of Julian's aunts, but she wasn't entirely sure. She had never been given the chance to actually meet them properly during her marriage.

It was painfully obvious they had zeroed in on her. The hall was massive, yet they chose to stand directly behind her, talking loudly in feigned surprise, putting on a highly choreographed performance.

"Oh my, isn't that Julian's wife? I thought she was stationed out on the West Coast. When did she get back?"

"You didn't know? I heard she's been back for a while. Word is she got caught doing something shady and was fired from Sinclair Group."

"Well, color me surprised. She always looked so plain and boring. Who knew she had it in her to do something so scandalous?"

"By the way, what was your name again?"

Willow hadn't been paying attention to a word they were saying, completely focused on picking out a delicate peach blossom pastry. It wasn't until one of them actually tapped her on the shoulder and asked the question that she finally turned around.

The women stared back with arrogant smirks, clearly expecting her to shrink away in embarrassment.

Willow calmly dusted off her hands, crumpled her napkin, and tossed it into the nearest trash can with a sharp, aggressive thud right in front of their faces.

Then, she gave them a chilling smile. "It's a two-word name. It's been three years and you still haven't managed to memorize it? I suppose that just proves how microscopic your brains are. You must be far too busy gossiping to actually retain any useful information."

The women froze, completely sideswiped by her response. They had no idea how to react.

One of the slightly younger ones recovered first and puffed up her chest. "How dare you speak to us like that? We are your elders!"

"Elders? What a joke. You don't even know my name, but you spend all day gossiping behind people's backs, and you actually have the nerve to demand respect as elders?" Willow unleashed her fury, stripping away any pretense of politeness.

The color drained from the women's faces instantly.

Some people were exactly like this—bullies who preyed on the weak but crumbled at the first sign of resistance. Giving in only emboldened them. Fighting back was the only way to make them back off.

"Willow Horgan!" another heavily made-up aunt shrieked. "What kind of nonsense are you spouting?! Is this how you speak to your family? Do you have no class? No manners?!"

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 247

Willow didn't flinch. She fired back with pinpoint precision. "Didn't you just say you didn't know my name? Funny how it suddenly came to you. You should really listen to yourselves. You can't even keep your own stories straight. If I didn't know your real ages, I'd assume you were all suffering from early-onset dementia."

"You—you little—"

Unable to match Willow's sharp tongue, they resorted to the classic guilt trip. "Julian is such a wonderful man! He's handsome, he has a great personality, and he runs the entire company! How on earth did a man like him end up marrying someone like you?"

"You think he's so great?" Willow scoffed lightly. She picked up a small cupcake, took one bite, and set it back down—too sweet. She then casually twirled the little dessert spoon between her fingers. "Then why don't you marry him? You already know him. Proximity is power, after all. I shouldn't have to explain that to women of your vast experience."

One of the aunts gasped, clutching her chest as if she might faint. She had to sit down, taking deep, dramatic breaths.

The one whose sanity hadn't entirely shattered screeched at her, "Are you out of your mind?! We are his aunts!"

"Well, you understood the insult, so clearly you're not entirely brain-dead. But I should warn you, Julian is quite the hot commodity. You already have some stiff competition right here in the family. If you're all aiming for the Mrs. Sinclair title, you'll have to get past Vivienne first. But honestly, your odds are terrible. She's already living with him. She's got a huge head start."

"Lies!" The oldest aunt yelled, rallying her remaining strength. "Vivienne is Julian's sister! There is absolutely no way she would ever be with him! Stop spreading these disgusting rumors and save yourself whatever dignity you have left!"

Dignity? Willow hadn't brought any of that with her today. And when dealing with vipers like these, dignity was completely useless anyway.

Willow went for the kill. "Oh, you really didn't know? Vivienne and Julian have been together for years. They've been playing house like husband and wife this whole time. Oh, and by the way, Toby is their kid. Surprise! Bet you didn't expect the Sinclair family to be hiding a scandal that juicy."

"..."

Dead silence fell over the group. No one dared to speak. They all stared at Willow as if she had lost her mind.

Desperate, they scurried off to find Julian. When they finally got a hold of him, they were too terrified to repeat exactly what had been said. They simply gave a vague warning that he needed to "keep his wife in check" before rushing out of the hall.

Seeing them practically flee, Julian instantly knew she had caused a scene. "What did you do this time?"

"Isn't it obvious? I insulted them until they ran away," Willow replied breezily, still twirling the little spoon.

"What exactly did you say to them?"

Willow gave a nonchalant shrug. "Nothing much. I just told them about you and Vivienne. Oh, and I threw in the truth about Toby's parentage for good measure."

"How dare you?!" Julian was visibly shaking with rage. The entire reason he had organized this gala and forced her to come was to project an image of stability and consolidate his power within the family.

And she had effortlessly torched the whole thing to the ground!

"How dare you!" he snarled again.

"Why wouldn't I dare?" Willow looked at him with dead eyes. "Don't forget, you're the one who forced me to be here."

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 248

"I brought you here to fulfill your duties as a Sinclair wife, not to act like a lunatic!"

Willow scoffed. "Oh, so this is what acting like a lunatic looks like? I thought it was completely normal, considering how you and Vivienne treated me for years."

Julian glared at her, his eyes blazing with fury. "What the hell do you want?"

"I think you're asking the wrong person," Willow shot back effortlessly. "You told me to stay, so I stayed. If you tell me to leave, I'll vanish right now. But if you make me stay, I can't promise what else might slip out of my mouth."

"You—!" Julian choked on his rage, completely cornered. "Get out of my sight. Right now."

Mission accomplished. Willow had no desire to waste another second on him. She offered one final warning: “Next time you feel the urge to pull a stunt like this, remember how today played out.”

With that, she turned on her heel and walked away without looking back.

After Willow left, Julian still had a massive event to manage. The moment he stepped back into the reception hall, a group of men quickly surrounded him. They were older men—the husbands of the aunts Willow had just eviscerated.

Even though Julian was younger, years of holding absolute power at the top of the corporate ladder had given him a ruthless, commanding aura. Even when dealing with family elders, he always waited for them to speak first.

The uncles clearly understood the dynamic. They initiated the conversation, skipping the usual pleasantries. “Julian, we heard what happened just now. She attacked the child and publicly humiliated her elders. We can’t just let this slide.”

The “she” was obviously Willow, and Julian knew it.

He didn't defend her immediately. He simply looked at them with cold detachment. “And what do you suggest we do about it?”

“She needs to be held accountable. At the very least, a formal, public apology is in order. The entire family is watching, and there have to be consequences.”

“What kind of consequences? Enlighten me.”

“She should be brought before the family board to answer for this. It’s the bare minimum for disrespecting the Sinclair name.”

“Oh? Is that so? Are you gentlemen making decisions for my household now?” Julian asked, a dangerous smile touching his lips.

The men couldn't read his tone, but they knew better than to cross him. They immediately started backpedaling. “No, no, of course not. We’re just offering advice. Ultimately, how you handle your wife is up to you.”

“Up to me? It certainly didn't sound like that. It sounded like you were issuing me a directive,” Julian said, his expression turning to ice. “I wasn't aware that my personal affairs were up for committee review.”

The men exchanged terrified glances. They had only spoken up because the family rumor mill insisted Julian despised Willow. But clearly, the rumors were wrong.

He was blatantly protecting her.

Trembling slightly, they rushed to explain, “You misunderstood us, Julian. We didn't mean anything by it. We were just concerned. How do you want to handle it?”

“Handle it?” Julian gave them a dismissive sweep of his eyes. “Everyone is in high spirits today. She had a little too much to drink and said some crazy things. What is there to handle?”

The uncles instantly caught his drift and nodded furiously. “Yes, yes, exactly. Nothing to handle at all. Just a minor misunderstanding.”

“Since it’s a minor misunderstanding, I don’t expect to hear another word about it from anyone.”

“Of course not. You have our word. Not another soul will hear about this.”

Satisfied, Julian crushed his cigarette into an ashtray, instantly slipping back into his untouchable, billionaire persona. “There are a lot of guests today, and I have business to attend to. Enjoy yourselves, gentlemen.”

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 249

The men practically fell over themselves nodding. "Of course, of course. Don't worry about us, take care of your business."

Once Julian was out of earshot, they watched him walk away and muttered among themselves. "I thought he couldn't stand Willow? The rumor was he's despised her since the day they got married. Why did he just bite our heads off for suggesting she be disciplined?"

"Who knows? The man is impossible to read. If you ask me, neither he nor that Vivienne are a walk in the park. God knows what kind of scandal is brewing there. I say we just keep our heads down and stay out of their mess."

"You're not wrong. And honestly, looking at little Toby... he doesn't look a thing like Julian. Who knows what the real story is there."

On the cab ride back, Willow was wrestling with one thought: should she text Silas?

She kept opening their chat and closing it again, agonizing over the decision, before finally deciding she shouldn't bother him.

But the very second she closed the app, her phone lit up with a call from Silas.

She answered, and his first words were, "Was it really that hard of a decision?"

Willow blinked. "Huh?"

"The chat screen," Silas said, a hint of amused frustration in his voice. "It said 'typing...' for ages, but the message never actually came through."

Willow finally understood. The app did show a typing indicator, but there was a catch—the other person had to actually have the conversation open to see it.

They hadn't been texting. So why did he have their chat open? The answer was obvious: Silas had been staring at his screen the whole time, waiting for her.

"What were you trying to say?" he asked.

"Nothing major. I just wanted to ask if you had left the hospital yet."

"I left," Silas answered smoothly.

A sudden pang of disappointment hit Willow's chest, though she didn't have any right to complain. She was the one who had told him to leave if he had things to do.

"Oh. Okay, got it. I was just checking. I'll let you go then."

Silas didn't let her hang up. "Are you finished with your family business?"

"Yeah, it's done."

"So are you heading home or back to the hospital?"

"I'm not sure. Probably the hospital." Willow hadn't fully decided. Her apartment would be empty, so she figured she might as well go see her mom.

To her surprise, Silas made a rare demand. "Go home."

"Why?" Willow was confused.

"Because I'm standing outside your apartment building right now." Silas had left the hospital, but he hadn't gone anywhere else. He had driven straight to her place and waited.

He figured she had to come home eventually tonight.

"You're at my place?" Willow was stunned. "Why didn't you tell me?"

Silas would have, but she had walked off with that Sinclair bastard without a backward glance. He hadn't thought telling her would change anything.

"When did you get there?" Willow was still reeling.

"Just now." In reality, he had been waiting for hours.

"Is everything okay? Do you urgently need to talk to me about something?"

Some things just couldn't be said over the phone. Silas thought for a moment. "Let's just talk when you get here."

"Okay, give me a little bit. I'm already in a cab, I'll be there soon."

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 250

Hanging up the phone, Willow leaned forward and asked the driver if he could speed up because she was in a rush.

The driver grinned good-naturedly. "In a hurry to see your boyfriend, miss? Don't worry, I won't let you be late."

Willow didn't bother correcting him. He was just a random stranger she'd never see again, so it didn't seem worth the effort.

Thanks to his driving, the forty-minute trip took less than thirty minutes.

As Willow was paying the fare, the driver spotted Silas waiting on the sidewalk and let out a low whistle. "That's your guy? Wow, he's handsome. Tall, great legs, standing there like a movie star. You're a lucky lady, miss!"

Following his gaze, Willow looked out the window. Silas was standing on the curb, leaning casually against his car with one hand tucked into the pocket of his tailored slacks. His posture was perfectly straight, exuding effortless power.

His jawline was sharp, his profile striking, and even from a distance, he projected the ruthless, commanding aura of an apex predator in the business world.

He always seemed to look like that—when he wasn't speaking, he was intimidatingly cold.

This was the second time the driver had used the word "boyfriend." Willow hesitated, wondering if she should finally correct him.

Before she could say anything, Silas seemed to spot her. Abandoning the thought, she quickly pushed the door open and jogged toward him.

Seeing her run, Silas actually frowned and closed the distance with long strides. "Why are you running?" he asked the moment they were close.

Willow was slightly out of breath. "I didn't want you to keep waiting."

"I've waited this long; another minute wouldn't have killed me." Silas looked at her with a dead-serious expression. "Don't do that again. It's dangerous in heels."

Willow nodded. She didn't usually run in heels, but there was something about seeing him that made her act completely out of character.

They stood there looking at each other for a second. Suddenly, Silas reached out and brushed his fingers against her ear. Willow felt her face instantly heat up.

"What was that?"

"You had a leaf on you." Silas showed her the small green leaf he had plucked from her hair.

"Oh." Willow awkwardly touched her ear. "Must have fallen when I was walking to the cab."

"Mm."

Just then, the cab driver pulled away from the curb. Maybe he was struck by how incredibly good-looking Silas was, or maybe he just wanted to be an ultimate wingman, but as he drove past, he rolled down his window and shouted, "Hey, buddy! Don't be mad at your girlfriend! She was stressing the whole ride here just to see you! Have a long, happy life together!"

With that, the driver sped off, leaving Willow entirely mortified on the sidewalk.

What on earth was that? Why was everyone suddenly deciding she was dating her boss? Especially when he was already pining for someone else!

She nervously peeked at Silas to gauge his reaction. To her immense relief, he looked completely normal. He didn't seem angry at all.

Willow planned to pretend the whole thing never happened, hoping they could just gloss over it. But Silas wasn't going to let it go.

"Was he telling the truth?"

Willow swallowed hard. She didn't know which part he was referring to, so she aimed for the safest answer. "I mean, I was a little anxious because I knew you were waiting, so I asked him to step on it."

"Not that part." Silas looked down at her, his eyes unreadable.

"Which part then?" Willow played dumb. "I didn't catch it."

Silas took a step closer, leaving no room for escape. "Why did he call you my girlfriend?"

Being interrogated like this was excruciating. If the sidewalk had cracked open, she would have happily jumped in.

She immediately tried to distance herself from the assumption. "I honestly have no idea."

"Really?"

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 251

Pressed again, Willow's awkwardness deepened. "I mean it. If you don't believe me, I can swear to God. If I..."

"That's enough."

Willow had intended to use the oath to clear her name, but before she could finish, Silas cut her off. When she looked up, she noticed his expression had grown significantly colder than before.

"I really didn't say anything," she defended herself quietly.

"I believe you," Silas said, a hint of helplessness in his tone.

The atmosphere fell silent. Unable to read his mind, Willow didn't dare speak out of turn. After all, she had just inadvertently dragged him into a massive misunderstanding; it was perfectly normal for him to be a little upset.

After a long stretch of silence, Silas suddenly asked, "Have you eaten?"

Willow shook her head. Aside from two tiny pastries earlier, her stomach was completely empty.

Silas frowned. "Didn't you leave with him? He didn't take you to get food?"

She shook her head again. Even if Julian had offered to take her out, she would have refused.

What a piece of trash, Silas cursed inwardly. In his eyes, Julian Sinclair had hit rock bottom. He honestly couldn't fathom what Willow ever saw in the man.

Pushing his frustration aside, he focused on the immediate problem: Willow needed to eat. "Come on. Let's go get you some food first."

Willow happened to be starving anyway. "Where are we going?"

"You live around here, don't you? Would it be inconvenient to go to your place?" Silas asked carefully. Based on his recent observations, he was fairly certain Julian didn't actually live with her.

Willow hesitated. If it were her own place, it wouldn't be an issue at all. But she was currently roommates with Jade, and it was Jade's apartment. Bringing her boss home under these circumstances just felt inappropriate.

Instead of answering directly, she pivoted. "How about I look up a good spot nearby? Dinner is on me."

Silas looked at her, seemingly wanting to press the issue, but ultimately swallowed his words. "Forget it. Just come with me. I know a place."

He told her to follow him, and without asking where they were headed, Willow climbed into his car.

As he drove, she suddenly remembered his earlier comment. "You mentioned you needed to talk to me about something. What was it?"

At the mention of this, Silas shifted slightly in the driver's seat, looking distinctly uncomfortable. "We'll talk about it later."

Willow was confused. He couldn't say it over the phone, and now he couldn't say it in person. She couldn't think of anything that would be this difficult to bring up... unless he was planning to let her go.

Once that thought took root, her mind spiraled, connecting every little detail into a disastrous conclusion.

No wonder he was having such a hard time finding the words. Firing someone was never an easy conversation.

But Willow felt strangely calm. He had already helped her so much, pulling her through her darkest hours. If he genuinely felt she wasn't a good fit for the company anymore, she could accept that gracefully.

Wanting to spare him the guilt, she offered an out. "Mr. Thorne, it's really okay. You can just give it to me straight. I can handle it."

Her tone was bizarre, and her face looked as if she were bracing for an execution. Silas shot her a baffled look. "What exactly do you think I'm going to say?"

Willow took a deep breath. "It's about my resignation, right?"

"Resignation?" Silas let out a dry, exasperated laugh. "What is going on in your head? Why on earth would I let you go?"

"You're not?" Willow blinked at him. "Then what were you trying to say? I can't imagine any other topic being this hard to bring up."

Dealing with her assumptions was maddening. "I wanted to apologize to you."

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 252

"An apology? For what?" Now Willow was utterly bewildered. In her eyes, Silas hadn't done a single thing wrong.

As for why, that was exactly what Silas found so difficult to admit.

He wanted to apologize for his jealousy. For his sheer unreasonableness. For piling pressure on her and forcing her into a corner when she was already trapped in an impossible situation that morning.

Those were the things he needed to apologize for.

But he didn't know how to begin. He was terrified that exposing these dark, possessive edges of his personality would frighten her away.

"I shouldn't have spoken to you like that this morning," Silas finally admitted, deliberately leaving out the darker motivations behind his actions.

Willow cast her mind back. It was true that Silas had pressed her with a few intense questions before she left, but it was nothing more than a minor interrogation. It hadn't caused her any real harm.

If anything, from her perspective, she was the one who owed him an apology. He had come all the way to see her, and she had effectively ditched him at the hospital.

"You don't need to apologize. You hardly said anything. I've dealt with far worse before, honestly. It's really no big deal."

Wanting to relieve his guilt, Willow intentionally brushed it off. Julian had hurled far more vicious insults at her in the past and never once apologized. She was practically immune to it by now.

But instead of relaxing, Silas's frown deepened. "Wrong is wrong, and it demands an apology. The nature of a mistake doesn't change just because of its magnitude. This is a matter of principle."

His sudden severity made Willow turn to look at him.

Silas didn't even need to look back to know exactly what expression she was wearing. She was definitely staring at him with those wide, slightly confused eyes. To stop his resolve from crumbling, he kept his gaze firmly fixed on the road.

"Apologizing when you're at fault is just basic decency. You shouldn't feel burdened by it. Whatever anyone else has said or done to you in the past, forget it all," Silas commanded, his voice firm. "From today on, I only want you to remember what I say to you."

He knew the words bordered on crossing a line. He didn't even care what role or standing he was claiming by saying them. The only thing that mattered right now was resetting her mindset and erasing the toxic standards she had grown used to.

His intense shift in demeanor wasn't lost on Willow, but she also knew it came from a place of care. She had endured so much that her threshold for emotional pain was warped, yet here he was, actively caring about the things she had learned to ignore.

She didn't push him further, simply nodding. "Okay."

Seeing her so remarkably compliant softened the sharp edges of his mood. He knew he couldn't rush this. Untangling years of ingrained habits and deeply rooted beliefs wouldn't happen overnight.

But that was fine. He had all the time in the world.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

"I'm surviving." Thanks to those tiny pastries, she could hold out a bit longer.

"Good. We're almost there."

As he spoke, Silas slowed the car and turned off the main avenue.

Willow finally paid attention to the scenery outside. This wasn't the bustling traffic or commercial chaos she was used to; it looked completely residential.

The deeper they drove, the more apparent it became. She even caught sight of the neighborhood's grand entrance sign. It was The Meridian—rumored to be the most exclusive and expensive real estate in all of New York City.

Unlike typical upscale developments, this place was a secluded oasis hidden right in the heart of the city. The entrance was understated but elegant, the landscaping meticulously curated. With strict security, separated pedestrian and vehicle pathways, and a flawlessly designed lobby, every inch of it whispered quiet, unimaginable wealth.

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 253

Willow had assumed the restaurant was located inside the neighborhood, as some high-end dining spots were tucked into residential areas. But a second later, when the security guard accurately greeted Silas by name and added, "Welcome home, Mr. Thorne," she completely froze.

It took her a moment to process. "Aren't we going to eat?"

"We are." Silas didn't show a flicker of surprise, smoothly continuing down the ramp into the underground garage.

"But this is..."

"You're right, it's my place," Silas cut in before she could finish. "We can eat just as well at my house."

"That's not what I meant." Willow stared out the window at the unfamiliar surroundings. She was just caught off guard. He hadn't given her any warning before pulling into his private residence.

She was entirely unprepared. It was her first time visiting a friend's home—let alone her boss's—and standard courtesy dictated that she should have at least brought a bottle of wine or a gift.

"I just feel like this is a bit sudden."

"Not really," Silas replied. To him, it wasn't sudden in the slightest. He had wanted to bring her here for ages but never had the right excuse. "Don't be nervous. Make yourself at home."

Willow definitely did not feel at home.

The car glided to a smooth stop. Before Willow could even unbuckle, Silas was out of the driver's seat and opening her door. "We're here. Let's go."

"Oh, right."

Stepping out of the car, Willow was instantly blown away by the sight before her. She had never seen a residential garage this luxurious, let alone one packed with an entire fleet of supercars!

The underground space featured soaring ceilings and brilliantly polished epoxy floors. Under the cool, soft lighting, there wasn't a speck of dust in sight. The bays were impeccably organized, and lined up on either side were some of the most beautiful machines she had ever laid eyes on.

Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Maybach, Ferrari, Lamborghini, and a handful of sleek brands she couldn't even identify. It didn't look like a private garage; it looked like a high-end auto show. It was dizzying.

She knew Silas was wealthy, but she hadn't grasped the sheer scale of his fortune. "You own all these cars?"

"Is this a lot?" He genuinely didn't think so. This collection was barely a tenth of what he kept back in Seattle, and most of those were limited-edition hypercars. The ones here were just his daily drivers. Collecting rare cars had been his only real vice since childhood.

"A lot?" Willow couldn't tear her eyes away. "It's the most I've ever seen in one place."

Silas desperately wanted to ask: *More than that Sinclair man has?* His competitive edge flared up, wanting to outshine Julian in every possible metric. But he swallowed the question. He was the one bringing her to his home. Whether this time was stolen or coaxed under false pretenses, it was just the two of them now. He might as well enjoy the illusion.

Noticing her wide-eyed stare, he asked, "You like them?"

Willow didn't know the first thing about cars, but she appreciated the aesthetics. "Yeah, they're really cool."

"Pick one you like. You can drive it home later."

"What?" Willow's jaw practically hit the floor. Was he joking? Just let her drive off in a multi-million dollar supercar?

She immediately waved her hands. "No, no, absolutely not. I don't even know how to handle cars like these."

"They drive like anything else. As long as you have a license, you're fine. If you're nervous, I'll teach you."

"I really shouldn't. If I scrape the paint, I wouldn't even be able to afford the repair bill."

"No need to pay for it. I'll just give it to you."

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 254

"G-give it to me?"

"Yeah, g-give it to you," Silas teased, playfully mimicking her stutter.

Willow felt her cheeks heat up, assuming he was pulling her leg. "Mr. Thorne, please don't joke around."

Silas held her gaze. "Do I look like I'm joking?"

But she really couldn't accept something like that.

Even if the car were free, she could never afford the insurance, maintenance, or premium gas for a vehicle of that caliber.

Willow looked at him helplessly. "Mr. Thorne..."

Seeing her distressed expression, Silas finally let her off the hook. "Alright, I'm just teasing you."

With that, he led her toward the private elevator, acting as though it had all been a passing joke.

But deep down, he knew it wasn't a joke at all. He had just used humor to disguise the sincerity of his offer.

He wanted to buy her cars, buy her houses, shower her with luxury and gifts. Yet he was acutely aware that he possessed zero right or standing to do so.

The elevator opened directly into his penthouse. The multi-level residence was stunning.

It featured limestone accents, floor-to-ceiling panoramic glass, and a sprawling terrace boasting a manicured lawn and a reflecting pool. The interior design was sharp and clean, filled with dark, custom furniture and ambient lighting. It felt cavernous yet unapologetically aristocratic.

As they walked in, he turned to her. "What would you like to drink?"

"Just water is fine."

"Alright. Take a seat for a minute."

Willow was still in a slight daze. She couldn't wrap her head around how she had ended up inside his private sanctuary. But watching him move effortlessly between the refrigerator and the kitchen island grounded her in the surreal reality that she was actually here.

Since it was her first time in his home, she didn't dare wander. She found a comfortable spot in the living room that was out of the way and sat down quietly.

From her vantage point on the sofa, she took in the decor. The aesthetic was understated but intensely masculine, dominated by a stark palette of black, white, and charcoal gray. The furniture featured clean, architectural lines. A minimalist sofa, a highly textured rug, and muted drapes framing the skyline view. A singular, striking sculpture sat in the corner, quietly commanding the room.

It matched his personality perfectly. The only downside was the sheer scale of the place—it felt a little cold and lonely.

A moment later, Silas walked out of the kitchen and handed her a glass.

Willow thanked him, taking a sip. It wasn't plain water; it was perfectly warmed and infused with fresh lemon. The subtle citrus chased away her fatigue, and she quickly took a few more sips.

Silas held a glass of his own, leaning casually against the counter. "What are you in the mood for? I'll cook."

"You're cooking?" Willow nearly choked on her water.

Setting aside the fact that he was her boss—even just looking at the man himself, Willow found it impossible to believe. He was born with a silver spoon, raised in the lap of absolute luxury. The idea of Silas Thorne knowing his way around a kitchen was unfathomable.

"What? You don't believe me?" While speaking, Silas had already slipped an apron over his head. Surprisingly, he looked like he knew exactly what he was doing.

Even so, Willow couldn't let him wait on her. She tried to negotiate. "Why don't we just go out to eat? I saw a few nice restaurants on the drive over. They aren't far."

"We're already here. Let's just eat in. Saves us the hassle of running back out."

"Don't you have a housekeeper? We could ask her to help."

"No. I don't like strangers in my space. They only come in to clean when I'm at the office. Otherwise, they're never around."

Willow was out of options. Desperate, she threw out a final, terrible idea. "Then... how about I cook?"

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 255

The moment the words left her mouth, Silas chuckled. He leaned back against the refrigerator, arms crossed, exuding an effortless, lazy elegance. "I see what's happening. You're terrified of my cooking. What, worried I'm going to poison you? That it'll be inedible? Relax. I might not show it off often, but I actually know what I'm doing."

He didn't just know what he was doing; he had a few signature dishes he was genuinely proud of. He had learned the ropes from his father.

In the Thorne family, toxic masculinity didn't exist. Instead, the men wore their devotion to their wives as a badge of honor. Silas clearly remembered his father constantly taking over the kitchen to prepare his mother's favorite meals. Even as a kid, Silas had to take a back seat to his mother's culinary preferences.

Grandpa Thorne had always drilled the same lesson into him: *There is no shame in a man cooking, and there is certainly no shame in doting on your wife. Making a meal with your own two hands for the woman you love, and watching her enjoy every bite—that is the absolute pinnacle of a happy marriage.*

Growing up in that environment, Silas had absorbed the lesson completely. Once he met Willow, he had tirelessly refined his culinary skills, mastering a select few dishes until they were restaurant quality.

"No, of course not. That's not what I meant," Willow rushed to explain. "I just feel terrible showing up empty-handed and then making you cook. I'm pretty sure I'm the only employee in the world who would have the nerve to let her boss do that."

Silas hated how she constantly boxed herself into the 'employee' role. "There's nothing to feel bad about. It's just a meal. Besides, we aren't at the office right now. You can drop the boss-and-subordinate dynamic."

He paused, a playful glint in his eye. "Tell you what. You can be my sous-chef."

"Me?" Willow blinked in surprise.

"What, you don't want to?"

"No, it's not that. I'm just worried I'll mess it up." She had never possessed a natural talent for cooking. Between her grueling work hours and lack of interest, she had never needed to learn. Even when she lived alone in Seattle, her meals consisted of whatever was fastest and easiest to throw together—just enough to keep her from starving.

"It's easy. Don't stress," Silas encouraged her. "You can start with the apron. Tie it for me in the back."

"Oh, okay."

Willow quickly set down her water glass and walked over to him.

Silas handed her the ties. Willow took them between her fingers and stepped behind him.

Because they were standing so close, the movement caused the ends of her hair to brush softly against his neck. Silas was instantly hit by a subtle fragrance—a clean blend of lime and bergamot. His Adam's apple bobbed slightly.

Focused entirely on tying a neat knot, Willow didn't notice his reaction, nor did she realize her fingertips were lightly grazing his waist.

Silas remained perfectly still, his muscles tense, his breathing slowing down a fraction to savor the moment.

A few seconds later, Willow stepped back. "All done."

"Thanks."

Willow returned to her spot, looking up at him. She suddenly noticed a faint flush on his cheeks and a strange intensity in his eyes. "What is it? Did I tie it too tight?"

"No, it's perfect." Silas smoothly averted his gaze, turning toward the kitchen island. "Actually, maybe you shouldn't help after all. I can handle it myself."

"Absolutely not," Willow protested. It was already embarrassing enough that he was cooking for her; if she just sat back and did nothing, she'd feel too guilty to eat.

Determined to help, she followed him right into the kitchen.

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 256

But once they were in the kitchen, Willow noticed Silas seemed to be avoiding her.

He wasn't actively hiding, but he refused to meet her eyes. A few times, their gazes almost locked, but he was always the first to look away.

This strange dynamic lasted for quite a while. Since he didn't explain it, Willow didn't ask. Everyone had their quirks, and she figured it was best to respect his boundaries, especially in his own home.

As for being his sous-chef, Willow ended up doing absolutely nothing. Silas wouldn't let her chop vegetables, claiming he was worried she'd cut herself. He wouldn't let her prep the marinades because the smell would stick to her hands. And cooking over the stove was strictly out of the question—he was terrified the hot oil would splatter and burn her.

So, she stood off to the side the entire time, banished to a safe distance so the cooking smoke wouldn't irritate her eyes.

Fortunately, Silas worked fast. Before long, he plated three gorgeous dishes: pan-seared sea bass, butter-poached shrimp, and roasted asparagus.

As the food was set on the dining table, Willow finally realized he truly was an expert in the kitchen.

Every plate looked like it belonged in a high-end restaurant. The cuts were precise, the presentation was flawless, and the vibrant colors and mouth-watering aromas were incredible.

"Try it. I was short on time today, so I just threw together something simple. Next time I have more prep time, I'll make something a bit more elaborate."

Hearing him call this "simple" only confirmed how skilled he was. If Willow had tried to make this, she would have been trapped in the kitchen for hours.

It made sense. Overachievers were overachievers in every aspect of life. Whatever he chose to do, he simply did it better than anyone else.

Willow took her first bite of the sea bass. It was incredibly tender, practically melting on her tongue. There wasn't a hint of fishiness, just a clean, savory sweetness that flooded her palate.

She moved on to the shrimp. The buttery richness elevated the perfectly cooked seafood, sliding down her throat with effortless, mouth-watering flavor.

The roasted asparagus was the perfect contrast—crisp, fresh, and bursting with vibrant earthy notes.

She had to admit, her earlier doubts about Silas's cooking skills were wildly unfounded.

"How is it?" Silas asked.

Willow nodded enthusiastically. "It's amazing. Seriously, top-tier."

Silas was immensely satisfied with her reaction. In that exact moment, he fully understood what his grandfather had meant. Making a meal with his own hands and watching her enjoy it was a deeply rewarding feeling.

"I'm glad you like it. I was worried this style might be too delicate, that you wouldn't like it."

"Of course not. Good food is good food. The flavor profile doesn't matter as long as it's delicious. That's just a fact."

While speaking, Willow noticed he hadn't touched his own silverware. "Why aren't you eating?"

Silas wasn't particularly hungry. He honestly preferred just watching her eat. But since she pointed it out, he picked up his fork. "Alright, I'll have some too."

The meal passed at a leisurely pace, filled with easy conversation. By the time they finished, an hour had gone by.

Noticing the time, Willow suggested she should probably head home. Silas didn't want her to leave just yet. He mentioned he had recently acquired some highly classified research data on gene editing technology and asked if she was interested.

Willow was undeniably interested. Anything related to gene editing immediately caught her attention.

She followed Silas into his home office. Calling it an office was an understatement; it was larger than most private libraries.

The space was anchored by dark walnut paneling and subtle gold accents. The towering shelves were lined with meticulously organized books. At a glance, Willow realized a massive section of his collection was dedicated to genetics.

So, he was passionate about this field too.

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 257

It turned out he was also very interested in this field.

The two of them walked over to his massive mahogany desk. Silas pulled a sleek, bound dossier from a drawer and handed it to her. The moment Willow read the cover, she gasped. "How did you get this?"

The Broad Institute had just published a groundbreaking paper in Nature regarding large-fragment safe integration. The breakthrough involved synthesizing a single-stranded DNA template inside the cell nucleus, achieving kilobase-scale precise insertion without the immunotoxicity associated with double-stranded DNA.

It was a monumental leap forward, carrying massive implications for the treatment of hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and other whole-gene therapies.

The dossier in Silas's hand contained the raw, foundational data driving that very research.

This data was completely unprecedented. It hadn't been shared in any public forum, let alone distributed to third parties.

The fact that he not only possessed it but was willing to just hand it over to her?

Willow didn't dare accept it. She knew exactly how valuable this was; it was intellectual property that couldn't be quantified with money.

"Mr. Thorne, this is far too valuable. I can't take this."

"Relax. I acquired it through entirely legal channels," Silas assured her. It had cost him an obscene amount of effort and leverage, but for her, it was worth every ounce of it.

But Willow still refused. Whatever he had obtained belonged to him, not her. "I'm sorry, I really can't take it." The sheer weight of the favor was more than she could carry.

Silas didn't want to hear her excuses. He cut straight to the point. "Just tell me one thing. Do you want it?"

Of course she wanted it. She desperately wanted it. Any researcher worth their salt would kill to get their hands on this data.

This represented the bleeding edge of global science. It was the exact stepping stone she needed to elevate her own research.

Her silence gave him his answer. Without asking again, Silas slipped the dossier into a protective folder and pressed it into her hands. "Don't overthink it. You're a Merit Biotech employee now. If you succeed, Merit benefits. If Merit benefits, I benefit. So, at the end of the day, it's just moving assets from my left pocket to my right."

He made it sound simple, but Willow wasn't naive. She knew exactly how many resources he must have burned to secure this data.

He had spent a fortune to hand this over to her. If her research yielded results, perhaps he'd see a return, though it still might not cover his initial investment.

But if she failed? He would lose everything he poured into it.

No matter how she looked at it, it was a terrible business deal.

Worried he was overlooking the risks, Willow began breaking down the cost-to-benefit ratio for him.

Silas waved off her concerns dismissively. "You know I'm a businessman. Before I make a move, I assess the board from every angle. I only did this because I deemed it absolutely necessary."

Willow seized on his logic. "If that's true, shouldn't you be prioritizing financial returns?"

"Who said that?" Silas countered. "Money doesn't even make the list on this one. I have a completely different priority."

"What is it?" Willow was genuinely curious. For a ruthless billionaire, what could possibly eclipse profit and wealth?

"A dream." Silas looked down at her. The icy detachment that usually commanded his features melted away, leaving only a dark, bottomless warmth. His gaze landed on her, soft enough to protect something fragile, yet heavy enough to leave her entirely cornered. "Do you remember when I told you I have someone I love?"

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 258

Willow nodded. She remembered perfectly.

"Are you saying... she's interested in this field too?"

"Exactly. This is her dream," Silas confirmed.

Willow forced a faint smile. "Wow. That's quite a coincidence."

Very few people had the intellect or the drive to obsess over genomic sequencing.

But beneath her polite smile, a bitter wave of disappointment washed over her. No wonder he was willing to sacrifice so much. He was doing it for the woman he loved. The only reason he was handing this data over to Willow was so she could do the heavy lifting, achieve a breakthrough, and then he could present the finished results to his mystery woman.

Willow had experienced arrangements like this before in the corporate world. As long as the boundaries were clear and the terms set upfront, she could handle it. After all, she would never gain access to this level of data without leveraging someone else's immense power. A win-win collaboration was the ultimate goal.

In the past, she had always accepted these realities with clinical detachment. But for some reason, right now, her chest felt tight. A suffocating rush of sour emotions clawed at her throat.

It felt like she had swallowed an unripe apricot—a sharp, acidic bite stuck in her throat that she could neither swallow nor spit out.

Who was the idiot who claimed Silas Thorne was a ruthless machine, entirely immune to romance? It was complete garbage.

He was moving heaven and earth just to make the woman he loved smile.

Willow forcefully shoved down the bitter ache in her chest. "If that's the case, I'll accept it. Don't worry, Mr. Thorne. I will give this everything I have to ensure we see real progress."

Hearing her formal, business-like pledge made Silas feel like something had gone wrong. He didn't want her to "give it everything she had" for the company; he just wanted her to be happy.

But he couldn't put his finger on exactly what was misaligned, so he couldn't argue the point.

With the dossier safely in her bag, Willow prepared to leave. Silas desperately wanted her to stay, but he couldn't think of a valid excuse to stop her. In his sudden panic, he stood up too quickly. The draft from his movement caught a photograph resting on his desk, sending it fluttering to the floor.

Silas glanced down and his stomach dropped. It was a picture of Willow from her college days. He had kept it safely hidden for years but had taken it out recently to look at it, completely forgetting to put it back in the drawer.

Panic gripped him. If she saw it right now, how would she react? Anger? Disgust? Would she ever speak to him again?

Luckily, the photo had landed face down, keeping the image hidden for the moment.

Though Willow couldn't see the face, the faint silhouettes bleeding through the glossy back clearly indicated it was a picture of a girl.

A hidden photograph, cherished and kept on his private desk—it was painfully obvious who the girl in the picture was.

Since Willow was standing closer to where it fell, she instinctively bent down to pick it up.

As her fingertips brushed the edge of the photo, Silas's tension spiked to an unbearable level.

Should he stop her? What would happen if he didn't?

In that split second, a wild, reckless voice screamed in his mind, urging him to gamble it all. *Let her see it. So what?*

It would finally rip off the mask. It would force all his dark, obsessive, hidden feelings out into the light. It would break the chains he had locked himself in and free him from hiding.

Consumed by the adrenaline of the moment, Silas said nothing. He just stood in heavy silence, watching her.

But as Willow's fingers closed around the photo, she didn't flip it over. Without giving it a second glance, she gently placed it back onto the desk, face down exactly as it had been. As for the woman he loved, she didn't want to know. And she didn't dare to look.

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 259

Seeing her react that way, Silas couldn't tell if he felt a massive wave of relief or crushing disappointment. A tangled knot of emotions tightened in his chest, leaving him unsure of how to keep the conversation going.

The two stood in silence for a moment before Willow finally spoke. "If there's nothing else, I'll head out now."

Silas didn't try to stop her this time. "I'll drive you."

On the ride back, Willow had already locked her emotions away. He had helped her out of a massive crisis, and right now, he was simply delegating a task to her within the scope of her job—a task that would massively boost her own career.

She had no right to overthink things, nor did she need to. Her only job was to deliver results.

Silas, however, drove in a brooding silence. He couldn't shake the feeling that he had miscalculated somewhere, but he had no idea what he had done wrong.

—

Over the next few days, Willow dedicated almost all her time to analyzing the Broad Institute data Silas had given her. Whatever spare time she had was spent at the hospital with Martha Mercer.

Thankfully, Martha was doing well. She hadn't shown any signs of infection or transplant rejection. However, to maintain strict observation protocols, she had to remain in the

sterile isolation ward. The timeline varied between 21 and 28 days depending on her recovery speed. Still, compared to the initial terror of the surgery, they had cleared a massive hurdle and could finally breathe a little.

Jade visited a few times during this period, and so did Silas. He dropped by quite frequently, and every single time, he brought an extravagant amount of flowers. Just like his first visit, he didn't just bring arrangements for Martha's room—he sent bouquets to the entire nursing staff on the floor.

After a few visits, Martha grew quite fond of him. She had thought he was incredibly handsome before she even knew who he was, but seeing his attentive nature only skyrocketed her approval. Sometimes, she spent more time chatting with him on the phone than she did with her own daughter.

One afternoon, Silas dropped by the hospital again.

He chatted with Martha for a bit before turning to Willow, asking if she had a minute to step outside because he had something to give her.

Willow obliged immediately. Saying goodbye to her mother, she followed him out into the corridor.

Assuming he wanted a progress report on the research, Willow instantly launched into a detailed breakdown of everything she had uncovered so far, adding that she fully intended to keep him updated without him having to ask.

To her surprise, Silas looked visibly annoyed. He clearly didn't care about the data at all. "I didn't ask you out here to talk about work," he said, his voice tight.

He looked her in the eye. "I gave you those files with zero ulterior motives. And I definitely didn't want you working yourself to the bone over them. You work on them at your own pace, for your own benefit."

If he had known she would turn into a workaholic over it, he never would have handed the dossier over. Before he gave her the data, they actually had things to talk about. Now, her entire focus was entirely hijacked by the research. It was a terrible trade-off for him.

Sensing his sudden shift in mood, Willow immediately dropped the science talk. "Then what did you want to show me?"

Silas's expression softened slightly. He reached into his coat pocket, pulled out a small box, and handed it to her. "Open it."

The box was breathtakingly crafted—a deep rosewood case carved with intricate lotus vines, secured by a smooth, polished brass clasp. Even the packaging screamed old-money luxury.

Willow looked at him, confused. "What is this?"

Silas held her gaze. "You'll see when you open it."

Willow did as he said. The moment the lid popped open, she was completely stunned.

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 260

She thought she had braced herself, but the moment she saw what was inside, she realized she was woefully unprepared.

A faint scent of premium sandalwood drifted from the case. Resting on a bed of crimson silk brocade was an Heirloom Bangle, gleaming with quiet, understated brilliance.

Willow was no jewelry expert, but the flawless clarity and vibrant water-like translucence of the jade made it glaringly obvious that the piece was worth a small fortune.

She stared at Silas, utterly bewildered. She was so shocked she couldn't even form a sentence, using only her wide eyes to demand an explanation.

Silas didn't answer immediately. He just nodded toward the box. "Look closer."

Leaning in, Willow inspected the bangle. The jade was perfectly smooth, but tucked away on the inner curve—carved so shallowly that it only caught the light at the exact right angle—was a single character.

The name "Willow."

Did that mean this was actually for her?

"Do you like it?" Silas finally broke the silence.

This wasn't a matter of whether she liked it or not; it completely shattered her reality. A multi-million dollar heirloom casually handed over for absolutely no reason? How on earth was she supposed to repay a gesture like this?

Seeing the panic setting in, Silas swiftly cut off her rejection. "Don't refuse it just yet. I didn't buy this for you. My mother sent it."

"Your mother?" Willow was even more stunned. She had never even met the woman. "Why would she send me something like this?"

In truth, this was just the tip of the iceberg. Jocelyn Thorne had been shipping crates of extravagant gifts to Silas's penthouse, and he had deliberately selected the least ostentatious item to give to Willow.

Ever since the Thorne family discovered Willow's existence on New Year's Eve, his mother and Grandma Thorne had effectively crowned her as Silas's girlfriend. Every few days, a new package arrived. They even complained that shipping things to him first was too slow and demanded Willow's direct address.

Silas had repeatedly tried to explain that they weren't in a relationship yet, but the two matriarchs were happily delusional. They firmly believed it was only a matter of time. She was their future family member, so spoiling her early was just good practice.

Furthermore, they pulled rank on him, insisting that as women, they possessed vastly superior insight into what girls actually liked, claiming their gifts would serve as perfect wingmen for his painfully slow romance.

After hearing their logic, Silas admitted they had a point and let the packages roll in. This particular bangle was Jocelyn's latest acquisition, spotted at a high-end auction and purchased instantly because it "had Willow's name written all over it."

Upon inspecting it, Silas had to concede his mother had impeccable taste, so he brought it straight to Willow.

Right now, facing Willow's panicked confusion, he maintained an ironclad poker face. "Do you remember on New Year's Eve, when we stayed up together?"

"I remember." It had only been a few days ago; there was no way she could forget. She just didn't understand what that had to do with a priceless jade bangle.

Silas continued smoothly. "My mother called me that night. So she knew you were the one keeping me company."

"And?"

Silas delivered the punchline with absolute conviction. "There's a tradition in Seattle. The person you spend New Year's Eve with must give you a gift. It ensures peace and good fortune for the other person in the coming year."

Willow frowned. "I lived in Seattle for three years. How have I never heard of this tradition?"

Silas didn't blink. Of course she hadn't heard of it—he had literally just invented it seconds ago. "It's perfectly normal that you haven't. Even I hadn't heard of it until recently. It's an old-school superstition that the older generation still clings to. My mother takes it very seriously. Or maybe my family is just incredibly peculiar. Either way, they care deeply about this custom."