My Great Escape Led Me to You

Chapter 16

Emily Blair's breath caught in her throat, but she forced herself to steady her voice. "No. You misheard."

She never expected Andrew Lane to remember what happened last night—or the words she'd said. Wasn't he the one who mistook her for Isabella Austin?

Suddenly, Andrew reached out and wrapped an arm around her waist. Ignoring her protests, he pulled her roughly onto his lap.

In the chaos, her backpack tumbled to the floor of the car.

Emily pounded Andrew's shoulder in panic. "Andrew Lane, what the hell is wrong with you?!"

Without flinching, Andrew held her firmly against the driver's seat, one hand gripping her waist and the other seizing her chin. His dark gaze bored into her, intense and unyielding.

"Do you think I'm an idiot?"

Emily shoved her arm between them, trying to hold him back. "You mistook me for Isabella Austin. Why shouldn't I find that disgusting?"

"I told you before—I wanted distance between us. You're the one who keeps crossing the line."

"And about being drugged-did you ever figure out who was behind it?"

She clung to the lapel of Andrew's tailored suit, her normally clear eyes shimmering with unshed tears.

"Don't you dare try to pin this on me again."

"Again?" Andrew's eyes narrowed, his voice calm and cold. “When have I ever accused you of anything?"

Emily thought bitterly, In my previous life, you did it more times than I can count.

The way she'd died-every wound had Andrew Lane and Isabella Austin's names written on it.

Suddenly, Andrew let out a soft, humorless laugh and tightened his grip on her chin.

"And about that distance you want to keep?" His lips curled into a faint smile. “I don't recall giving you permission."

Emily's eyes filled with tears almost instantly. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Andrew's tone was indifferent. “Until I figure out the truth, you're not going anywhere."

"In the end, you just can't bring yourself to doubt Isabella Austin, can you?" Emily's mouth twisted with irony. "It's obvious what happened. Aside from that glass of juice, where's the mystery?"

She offered him a bitter smile. “Isabella Austin got exactly what she wanted, didn't she?"

Andrew's gaze darkened, his reply nearly inaudible. “No.”

But Emily understood exactly what he meant. "That has nothing to do with me.”

She shoved him off with all her strength, scrambled back to her seat, and snatched her backpack from the floor, clutching it tightly to her chest.

For the rest of the drive, neither of them spoke. Andrew turned his attention back to his tablet, reviewing documents as if nothing had happened.

When they arrived at the school, Emily didn't hesitate-she jumped out of the car and hurried away without looking back.

Inside the car, as the door thudded shut, Andrew's phone began to ring.

Isabella Austin's name flashed on the screen.

"Andrew, are you feeling any better now?" Her tone was gentle, tinged with concern. Andrew gave a low, noncommittal hum.

After a moment, Isabella's voice grew smaller, a hint of bashfulness in her words. "Andrew, why wouldn't you let me help you last night? I know you care about me, but I-"

"Isabella," Andrew interrupted her, his sigh quiet, almost weary. "Don't even think about it."

Isabella fell silent.

After a long pause, she asked delicately, "Andrew, why did you give Ms. Blair a ride to school this morning? Did you two talk about anything?"

Andrew's reply was short and flat. "No."

There was a beat of silence. Then Isabella asked, "Andrew, about what happened last night...do you think I had anything to do with it?"

For a moment, Andrew was quiet. When he finally spoke, his voice was gentle. "No. You don't need to worry."

A relieved smile spread across Isabella's face. "I'm glad to hear that. I'll wait for you to come home."

Andrew made a soft sound of agreement and ended the call.

He looked out the window at the school gates, but Emily's figure had already vanished into the crowd.

Thanks to Amelia Lane—Ms. Lane herself—Emily was anything but popular at school. In fact, she was openly ostracized.

This was a prep school for the city's elite; every student here was used to being coddled and adored. The Lane family's influence reigned supreme, and naturally, a pack of students followed in Amelia Lane's wake.

After all, she was the real Ms. Blair as far as the Lane family was concerned.

As soon as Emily walked into the classroom, one of Amelia's minions wrinkled her nose and called out in a syrupy, mocking voice, “Ugh, what's that smell? Did someone forget how to shower and spend the night in a dumpster?"