

## Midnight III 251

### Chapter 1733 - 251: She Can't Help You

Joyce stared at the television carefully. She was trying to find fault with Eric, to make herself feel better. But the more she looked at him, the more fascinated she became. She wished that she could take Crystal's place. If wishes were horses - she thought sadly - then beggars would ride...

The makeup artists were fixing Nancy's makeup, and as she looked in the mirror, she thought - I wonder if people will be able to see - She had been told that there would not be a lot of people and the ceremony - So, why are there so many journalists?

There was chaos all around her, and everyone was busy. Crystal was doing an interview with the journalists, and she worried that they would want to talk to her next. For the moment, at least, she had been left alone, which was a mixed blessing. It was nice not to be the center of attention, but she would have felt better if she had Noah by her side.

Paul came up behind her, smirked, and said, "No amount of makeup will cover your natural ugliness. I don't know why you even try..."

Nancy frowned. He was the last person that she wanted to see. She tried to stand up so that she could walk away, but he pressed down on her shoulders and forced her to stay sitting.

Paul looked around the room and ordered everyone - including his bodyguards - to leave. It took a moment for everyone to shuffle out, and he closed the door behind them. Then he walked back to Nancy and pinched her jaw. "Look at you," he hissed. "Your face is a picture of lust and dissatisfaction. Doesn't Noah Laurent satisfy you? Why do you need so many men?"

Nancy sighed. "You don't know what you're talking about. You never do! What are you doing here anyway?" She pushed his hand away, and without waiting for a reply, she said, "Get out of my face! Go away! I don't want to see you!"

The sight of him was enough to trigger the memories of him assaulting her. The memories haunted her, humiliated her, and made her feel dirty. She stared at him with disgust, as if he were a piece of shit.

When Paul saw the look in her eyes, he frowned. "Hey!" He said, "Today is your big day. I am only here to give you my blessing."

Nancy smirked and said, "Thanks, but I don't need your blessing. Just leave."

Paul scowled. He was used to being in charge, and he did not appreciate Nancy ordering him around. "Do you hate seeing me so much?" he asked. "How can you be so heartless? How can you forget your ex-husband so quickly? Was it so easy to replace me?"

Nancy was confused. She did not believe that he was only there to offer his blessing, but she could not figure out his real motivation, and she certainly did not know why he was talking this way. After all, he had replaced her with Michelle. He had been the one who had asked for a divorce, and he had driven her out of their home. And just the other day, he had ordered her to get out of the house.

Paul touched her cheek and said, "You loved me once, didn't you?"

"You know that I did," Nancy replied. Paul smirked and said, "I guess it's true what they say: You can never trust a woman." He looked at Nancy's reflection in the mirror. With the makeup, her delicate features appeared to be prettier and more attractive than they usually were.

With the bright red lipstick, her lips were intoxicating. While they were married, he had forbidden her from wearing makeup, especially rouge lipstick. From the moment he had taken her home, he had treated her as his possession. He had not allowed her to show her beauty to anyone, and the thought of his "possession" marrying another man upset him. He squinted and wiped her lips with his thumb.

Paul's thumb was rough, and when Nancy flinched away, she accidentally dropped her veil on the ground. When he saw that, he sneered and said, "You'd better mess up your hair, shred your dress, and walk into the church in disgrace. Then everyone will see what kind of a person you actually are!"

Nancy was finally fed up with Paul's disrespect. "What the hell do you want?" she shouted.

"Didn't you sleep well last night?" he asked, changing the subject and deflecting her question. "What's with the bags under your eyes? You weren't up prematurely knocking boots with Noah, were you?!?"

"What I do is none of your business!" Nancy snapped. "You can't humiliate me because I don't care about your opinion!"

"Don't you?" Paul chuckled. "The lady doth protest too much, methinks..." As he finished speaking, he thrust his right hand into her dress and grabbed her breast.

Nancy froze momentarily, and then she began to yank at his arm. He was too strong, though, and as she pulled, he squeezed her breast. "Let go of me!" she shouted. "Paul Burnett, you pervert! You're hurting me!"

"This is what you deserve." He twisted her nipple until tears were streaming down her face. "You know that I hate it when women tell me what to do," he said. "Did you actually think that I would follow your orders?" And instead of letting her go, he licked her neck.

Nancy trembled, and her body broke out with goosebumps. She finally understood what he had come for. "You want to destroy my wedding and embarrass me," she said. "Do you deny it?"

"I do not." Paul laughed. He let go of her breast and said, "I told you that I never wanted to see your face again, but here you are, strutting your stuff for the whole world to see - and that is why I am here!"

Nancy stood up abruptly. She hoped that if she could catch Paul off guard, she could make it to the door and escape. After taking only one step, though, he had her by the waist. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her into his arms. She called Crystal. "Help me, Crystal! Help me!"

"She can't help you!" Paul laughed. "She is surrounded by journalists.. She can't even hear you."

**Chapter 1734 - 252: I Was Never Like That**

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Nancy turned in his arms so that they were facing each other, and she pounded on his chest with her fists. She could tell that she was not hurting him, and she quickly gave up.

"Do you think you can hurt me?" Paul smirked. "You are a weak woman," he said, and then he ran his hands through her hair, ruining the up-do that had taken two hours to set straight. He had wanted to make her look like a ragamuffin, but her disheveled appearance had the opposite effect. It made her look like an innocent, simple princess.

Paul's breathing became disordered, and he began to pants. He had not intended to take possession of her today. He had only wanted to embarrass her. At this moment, though, she looked pure and attractive, and her appearance made his heart beat fast. Without even thinking about what he was doing, he started to tear open her wedding dress.

"What are you doing?" shrieked Nancy. "Stop! Help!" She tried to resist him, but she was powerless against him. "Somebody, please help me!" she wailed. The wedding dress had been customized especially for her, and she didn't think that it could be repaired on short notice.

Soon, there was beautiful lace scattered on the ground. "You're really too much..." Nancy whined.

"Too much?" Paul raised his eyebrows and said, "If you dare to show up at the wedding, you will see what too much is."

"Why?" Nancy was sobbing by now. "Why are you doing this to me?!?!"

"A slut is not qualified to marry anyone," Paul answered ruthlessly. "Especially you, Nancy Carter."

"But I'm not a slut!" Nancy argued. "Michelle is the slut!"

Paul's pupils dilated. "What did you say?" he shouted.

"You've already had her," Nancy replied. She was desperate. "Why do you keep pestering me? You bastard!" Not knowing what else to do, she opened her mouth and bit his arm. She clenched her teeth as tightly as she could, but even as her mouth filled with his blood, he seemed unfazed, at least as far as the pain went. To her horror, it affected him in another way.

Suddenly, Nancy felt Paul's manhood pressed against her. He was as hard as a rock. Before she knew what was happening, he had pressed his lips against hers. He forced her mouth open with his tongue, and then he penetrated her mouth with it.

Nancy wanted to spit his tongue out of her mouth, but he was holding her head, and there was no escape. After a while, kissing was the least of her problems.

As Paul kissed Nancy, he began to caress her private parts. As he massaged her genitals with one hand, he tore off her bra with the other. Before he could go any further, though, she slapped him across the face.

Paul's pupils shrank. He could not believe that she had hit him. "You bitch!" he hissed. For a second, he just stared at her. Then he grabbed a fist full of her hair and yanked her head backward. He looked her in the eyes and shouted, "Woman! Do you see who I am?!?!"

"I know who you are!" she cried in disgust. "You're nothing, and you're definitely not my husband. You have no right to touch me, let alone kiss me with your dirty mouth!"

She picked up a bottle of perfume from the table, unscrewed the lid, and poured a mouthful into her mouth. She rinsed her mouth with the perfume and then spit it out.

Almost immediately, Nancy regretted what she had done. She felt nauseous, and she was quite sure that she was going to be sick. Her face turned green, and when Paul saw that, he chuckled. "It looks like the cure was worse than the cause of your concerns," he said. There was a smug expression on his face.

"Go away!" Nancy whined. "I don't want to see you!" As she spoke, she threw the empty perfume bottle at him. Paul dodged it easily.

"Who is dirtier?" Paul asked as he unzipped his trousers. "You or me?"

"You! Always, you!" Nancy's eyes opened wide, and she backed away from him. "Don't come over here," she said. "I am begging you." She did not think her nerves could stand much more of this, and she was afraid that she was already going mad.

Paul had his manhood in his hands, and it was jutting out of his trousers. "Why are you acting like you're frightened?" he asked. "You've seen this big boy before. It's like you're some polished virgin. I still remember that time you drugged me and took advantage of me!"

"It wasn't like that, and you know it!" Nancy shook her head and said, "I was only doing what the doctors told me to do..."

Paul's eyebrows furrowed. "That bullshit," he said, "And we both know it. Ever since that day, I've been able to see through all of your schemes."

Nancy's face turned red. "It was not like that," she argued. "You often drank alcohol. Your health was poor, and the medicine was for your kidneys..."

Paul seemed intent on not taking Nancy's explanations seriously. The problem was that, at the time, she had been too naive, and she had not fully understood the doctor's instructions.

Nancy had put all of Paul's pills in the same place, and after several days, he had begun to feel strange, until finally, he went into a psychotic rage. During this episode, he had humiliated her. He had called her a scheming slut, a prostitute, a bitch, and many other foul names. Then he forced her to take all his pills and gave her a stick to pleasure herself with.

To stay calm, Nancy had spent the night having an ice-cold shower. The next day she had a fever. She fell into a coma, and it took her three days to recover.

When Nancy thought about the past, she felt stupid. After taking the pills, Paul had chosen to release his sexual urge by fucking prostitutes instead of making love with her. He is a real pervert! - she thought angrily - And I hate him!

"It was never like that," she replied. Tears were running down her face. "And you damn well know it! But thanks for reminding me of these past pains."

"Pain?" Paul scoffed.. He grabbed her hands and said, "You deserved everything you got, and then some! To make it up to me, how about fulfilling the promise you made to me two years ago? It will be my wedding gift to you. What do you say?"

### **Chapter 1735 - 253: You Had My Fortune**

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As Paul finished speaking, he separated Nancy's legs. She tried to fight him off, but he was too strong. "No!" she shrieked. "I am not the kind of woman that you think that I am. You said that I pretended to be innocent and pure. You said that I lied to you, but if I had, what would my purpose have been?"

"Because you coveted my money!" Paul exclaimed.

"Bah!" Nancy's face soured. "What have you ever given to me, other than heartaches and headaches? I had to bear your bad temper for simple things like getting a new dress, and you certainly never gave me money!"

"That's one of your schemes," Paul explained. "You bore all of this. You hid your pride to relax my will so that you could gain my trust and defeat me. But luckily, I saw through your schemes."

"When did I get your money by doing that?" Nancy scoffed.

Paul sighed and said, "The minute you had my heart, you had my fortune."

"When did I have your heart?" Nancy laughed. "That is supposed to be a joke, right? From day one, in your eyes, I was nothing but a baby maker. Once I had served that purpose, you replaced me with Michelle. Then you demanded that I divorce you! I should never have married you in the first place. I can't believe what a stupid girl I was...."

Paul smirked and said, "Maybe you're right. You are stupid. You did marry me, though, and now you are paying the consequences for what you did."

"All I ever did was love you." She wiped the tears from her face and said, "I may have been a stupid girl, but I committed no crimes."

Suddenly, Paul caught the necklace that was on her neck. There was a ring hanging from it, and he glared at it. "If I did not give you anything, what is this? It is your wedding ring, isn't it? If you're going to marry Noah, why are you still wearing the wedding ring I gave you?"

Nancy spat in Paul's face and said, "Take it back! Take your dirty things back!"

Paul glowered, and as he wiped the spittle from his face, he thought about murdering her right there and then. He thought better of it, though, and he did not even hit her. He knew that if he started, he would not be able to stop. He took a deep breath to calm himself, and then he said, "If you want to keep it, don't pretend that you don't. Be honest."

"I am being honest," Nancy smirked as she unclasped the necklace and put it into his hand.

As Paul stared at the ring, his ire began to rise once more. He thought - You are a fucking bitch!- and he threw the ring as far away from himself as he could. "You have soiled the ring just like you soiled our marriage!" he shouted. "Why would I want it?"

"Just leave," Nancy whined. "Please..."

"Not before I give you your wedding present." He grabbed her by the waist with one hand and said, "You're going to like this." He had already spread her legs with his other hand, and as he finished his sentence, he forced three fingers inside her."

Nancy gasped, and all the air rushed out of her lungs. It was as if she'd been punched in the gut. "No!" she cried. "Let off, please..."

Paul did not let off, though. Instead, he began to force himself in and out of her at a rapid pace. He was determined to ruin her for her wedding night. He leaned into her ear. "How ironic is this?" he whispered. "When we were married, you begged me to touch you, but now that I'm touching you, you're begging me to stop." He began to laugh. "You women, you're all so indecisive. Even if you don't know if you're coming or going."

Nancy begged and pleaded with him, but he refused to show mercy. For convenience, he tied her hands behind her with her stockings. Then he picked her up, sat on the chair, and straddled her on his lap so that they were facing each other.

Nancy could feel his manhood pressing up against her ruined core, and she tried to squirm away from him. She did not care that her hands were tied and that she wouldn't be able to catch herself if she fell. All she wanted was to be away from him.

"I'll charge you with rape," she cried. "Whatever you are thinking of doing, you had better think again!"

"Charge me." Paul laughed and said, "Here, in Kuerto, I have the law in my back pocket, so go ahead and do your worst!" As he said this, he gripped her buttocks and pulled her closer so that he could force himself inside her.

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When the journalists were finally finished with Crystal, she made a beeline for the dressing room. It was the only place she could think of that would be quiet. It was only a half-hour until the wedding was scheduled to begin, and she was already exhausted. She had not wanted all this attention, and she was still worried about Nathan appearing and ruining everything.

When she walked towards the dressing room, she was surprised to find two of Paul's bodyguards at the door. Something is wrong - she realized. She stood akimbo and said, "Let me in. It's my wedding!"

One of the bodyguards looked at her sympathetically and said, "I'm sorry, but we can't do that. We were given strict orders not to let anyone in, not even the bride."

"I understand." Crystal turned around and pretended to leave, then she rushed past the guards, turned the knob, and pushed her way into the room.

When Nancy saw her friend, she turned away in shame. "Don't look at me," she cried. Nancy was sitting on Paul's lap, and he was fucking her. The back of the chair was facing away from Crystal, which meant

that she had his wicked grin to contend with, and her tied-up wrists were a dead giveaway that she was being forced.

Crystal's face turned red from rage. "Paul Burnett!" she shouted. "What the fuck are you doing! Get off her!"

Paul laughed as he fucked Nancy. He looked Crystal in the eyes, and he did not even slow down.

The bodyguards appeared, and they grabbed Crystal. Meanwhile, Nancy was still begging her to avert her eyes. "Please don't look at me," she cried. "Just go... I am nothing now..."

One of the bodyguards asked Paul what to do with Crystal, and he said, "Get her out of here and be more careful next time. No one should be able to get past you, let alone a weak woman! Do you hear me?!?!"

The guards lowered their heads in shame.. They nodded, and then they dragged Crystal away, kicking and screaming.

### **Chapter 1736 - 254: You Can't Back Out Now**

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After having been thrown out of the room, Crystal took out her cell phone and called Eric. When he answered, she told him everything that she had seen.

Paul put his fingers under Nancy's nose, and when she smelled the scent of her vag\*anal fluids on his fingers, she nearly threw up. Paul grinned. "You like that," he said. "Don't you?" Then, when she opened her mouth to protest, he crammed his fingers between her lips.

Nancy began to gag and squirm, but Paul held the back of her head with his free hand so that she could not get away. "What a dirty girl." He laughed as his fingers rubbed over her tongue.

Nancy growled deep in her throat, and she bit them as hard as she could, but it did not help. Paul did not let up. Instead, he sighed and said, "We were just about done, but now I have to punish you for biting me. You just don't learn, do you?"

"No!" Nancy cried. "Please. I learned my lesson. I won't bite you again. I can be a good girl!"

Before Paul could reply, the door burst open, and five people barged in. He recognized Crystal and Eric but not the three burly men behind them. He figured that they were his bodyguards.

Paul smirked and pushed Nancy to the ground. She hit the floor like a sack of potatoes, without a word or grunt. For now, at least, she had disconnected from the world, drawn inside of herself- and that was a mercy.

"What a pity," Paul smirked. He nudged Nancy with his foot, and when she didn't respond, he said, "If your friends were not so annoying, I could have had you one more time."

"You've gone too far this time!" Eric shouted from across the room. "Get out of here. You have three minutes to dress and leave. If you are here at the end of the three minutes, I will sic my bodyguards on you!"

Paul's brow furrowed. "Look at you, Mr. High and Mighty," he scoffed.

"I may not be innocent," Eric argued, "but I've never been this guilty." In the past, they had tag-teamed women, but they had never raped any of them.

Paul nodded. He wiped off his manhood, put it away, and zipped up his trousers as if nothing had happened. Except for the wrinkles on his suit, he looked the same as he had come in.

Nancy, on the other hand, was a total mess.

Paul began to walk towards the door, and as he passed Crystal, Crystal rushed to him and slapped him across the face. Paul frowned. Being slapped by two women in one day was humiliating.

Crystal lifted her hand, wanting to slap him again, but Paul seized her arm this time. He looked her in the eye and said, "You are Eric's wife, but it doesn't mean you can do whatever you want. Touch me again, and you'll see what will happen. How about that?"

Eric warned him, "Paul!"

Paul gave Eric a glance before he smirked, "Twenty minutes until 'Go Time,'" he said. "And it looks like there will only be one couple getting married today. Congratulations, Eric."

Although Crystal still wanted to give Paul another slap, she saw that her friend needed to be her priority. Nancy was curled up on the floor. She was trembling all over, quietly weeping, and when Crystal looked into her hollow eyes, she felt heartbroken.

Crystal asked Eric for his coat to cover Nancy. Then she knelt, and as she rubbed her friend's back, she said, "I'm here. Don't be afraid..." When Nancy did not reply, she turned to Paul and shouted at him. "Paul Burnett, you are going to go to hell for what you've done to her today!"

"Whatever." Paul shrugged and said, "I'm looking forward to your wedding."

The room went silent for a moment. Then Paul patted Eric on the shoulder and left the room. Once he was gone, Crystal's attention returned to her friend. She ran her hand through Nancy's hair and said, "Don't worry. Someday we will pay him back for this. You will see."

"But what about Clark?" Nancy asked. "I don't want to lose my son."

"Silly girl." Crystal laughed and said, "Trust me. Things will work out. We have bigger things to worry about right now. The wedding is supposed to start in eighteen minutes. At least your dress is intact - Thank God for minor miracles."

"I'm not in the mood anymore," Nancy whined.

Seeing Nancy in the state that she was in made Crystal not want to get married either. After all, who was to say that Eric would not be just as abusive as Nathan or Paul?



"You can't back out now," Eric cut in. "The whole world is watching us. What do you think people will say? I will not allow you to shame me in this manner. If need be, I will drag you down the aisle myself. You would look much more dignified if you walked down the aisle without the need for force, though. Don't you think so?" He eyed Crystal. "And that goes for you, too. So, I do not want to hear anything about you getting cold feet. Is that understood?"

Crystal sensed his determination, and she nodded dutifully. "I really don't think Nancy is up to this, though." She used her eyes to plead with Eric. He was overbearing, but he had promised to do anything she asked.

"Fine." Eric sighed and said, "Her wedding can only be canceled. It's not real, anyway."

When Nancy heard that, she found an inner strength that she had been unaware of. She gritted her teeth and said, "No! I will not be intimidated by Paul. He wants to stop me from getting married, but the likes of him won't scare me!"

Crystal was astonished to hear that.

"He said that I didn't deserve to be happy," Nancy continued. "I must prove him wrong!" She looked at Crystal and said, "Help me get ready. I don't want to be held back by him anymore!"

Crystal gave her a curious look. "Nancy, are you serious?"

"Yes." Nancy nodded forcefully and said, "I used to be a coward. I let him bully and humiliate me, but those days are over!"

Crystal smiled and said, "I am glad to hear that. I had hoped that you would find your backbone... for Clark's sake, if not for your own."

Nancy nodded and said, "I have to set a good example to him and teach him to be strong and brave."

Eric looked at his watch and frowned. It was ten minutes till Go Time, and they needed a few minutes to get from the dressing room to the church. "I don't know how you'll get Nancy ready in time...." he said.

### **Chapter 1737 - 255: His Plan B**

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Nancy turned to Eric and said, "Go to the church. Tell them to delay the wedding by thirty minutes."

Eric sighed and said, "I can give you twenty minutes, but not a minute more. I will wait for you at the church. Don't be late!" Once Eric was gone, Crystal shouted for the makeup artist.

"Do we have enough time?" Nancy asked nervously.

"I'm not sure," Crystal admitted. "Your makeup is one thing, but what about your dress? It looked fine at first, but now I can see that it is not. Hand it over. I'll see if I can fix it?"

"How?" Nancy frowned and said, "There are no needles or thread here..."

"Just give it to me!" Crystal exclaimed. "I need to wash it before I can even try to mend it."

Nancy nodded, picked the dress off the floor, and handed it to Crystal. The garment stank of sex, and Crystal flinched when the scent hit her nostrils. Never mind that she told herself - You have smelled worse things in your life. She went to the sink and turned on the faucet.

By the time the makeup artist had arrived, Nancy was waiting for her. The girl quickly washed Nancy's face, and then she began to reapply her makeup. "You will be better than ever," she said. "You have nothing to worry about."

Once the dress was clean, Crystal held it in front of her so that she could inspect the damage. It was worse than she had thought it was, but she had an idea. She picked up a pair of scissors and cut off the torn pieces. The zipper was broken too, but that was an easy fix. She untied the bow-chain belt and created shoulder straps with them. It took a lot of pins, but she was able to hide them, and in the end, she thought the dress looked better than ever.

Crystal looked over at Nancy nervously. They needed to be at the church in five minutes. Thankfully, the makeup artist was finishing up. "Quick!" she exclaimed. "Get dressed!"

Nancy frowned. "But what about my hair?" she asked. Indeed, her updo had been ruined, but it had settled, and it hung beautifully over her shoulders.

"You look perfect as you are," Crystal replied. "Trust me. Noah is going to be pleased."

Nancy blushed. Once she was dressed, Crystal covered her head with hazy gauze. Stepping back, she smiled and said, "Nancy, you look like a princess that has been lost in a misty forest."

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Eric had arranged for a pianist to perform for their guests to stall the wedding, and while the man played, a ballet dancer fluttered about in white dress. Then, as the last notes of the last song rang out, Crystal and Nancy appeared.

For an instant, the beams of lights fell on the two brides, and everyone "Ooo'd" and "Ahhh'd" as they approached their grooms.

Eric looked at the watch. They were five minutes late, but he paid for those minutes, not mind.

The journalists began to take pictures all around them, and the church lit up like Main Street on Christmas Day.

Crystal smiled. She looked as decent and elegant as a goddess.

Nancy appeared gentle and sweet and innocent and attractive.

The flower girls stood on either side of the aisle, and they scattered petals in front of brides. And when the ladies reached the front, their grooms held their hands, knelt on one knee, and kissed the backs of their hands.

Paul was sitting in one of the reserved seats. His legs were crossed, and there was a casual smile on his face. But that changed when Nancy came into view. His body stiffened, and his ire began to rise. Do not worry- he told himself- Calm down. You still have Plan B.

Once the grooms stood back up, the bridal party took their places, facing the crowd. Almost immediately, Nancy spotted Paul's disgruntled face, and all her fears returned. He glared at her, and she quickly looked away. She thought - If I pretend that I don't know him, maybe he will leave me alone. She knew that it was wishful thinking, but it was all that she had to keep her fears at bay.

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Kitty-corner to the church, a large number of aircraft, tanks, and artillery had appeared from nowhere. A platoon of soldiers was marching towards the church, and suddenly, the wedding didn't seem quite so interesting to the people outside.

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After reading from their Bibles, the priests prayed and then asked the two couples the routine questions:

"Eric Bush, do you take Crystal Smith to be your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day on, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?"

"And Noah Laurent, do you take Nancy Carter to be your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day on, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?"

Eric looked at Crystal, and Noah looked at Nancy.

"Yes, I do," the two grooms answered at the same time.

The audience laughed affectionately as the priests turned to the brides.

"Crystal Smith, do you take Eric Bush to be your lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day on, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?"

"And Nancy Carter, do you take Noah Laurent to be your lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day on, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?"

Nancy and Noah gazed affectionately into each other's eyes. She smiled and looked around, and she happened to spot Paul again. I will not be beaten by you! - she thought. Her oath was like a declaration of war; she turned back to Noah, smiled, and said, "I do."

Unlike Nancy, Crystal seemed to be in a daze. Eric furrowed his brows and coughed. In a low voice, he said, "Dear...?"

When Crystal heard Eric's voice, she finally came to herself. She took a deep breath and said, "I do."

The audience burst into thunderous applause that echoed throughout the church.

Once the cheering died down, one of the priests said, "And now, please exchange your rings."

Suddenly, Paul jumped to his feet and shouted, "Hold on! Before the ritual is completed, I have a slide show that I have prepared."

Everyone thought the wedding had been coming to an end, so they were quite curious to see what the slide show would be about.

Around the church, there were a few large screens.. Prior to the wedding, they had been showing wedding photos and videos, but nobody knew what Paul had in store for them.

### **Chapter 1738 - 256: Do You Like Present?**

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The journalists adjusted their cameras so that they could get the best possible pictures. These were seasoned reporters, and when the slideshow began, even they were caught off guard. The images on the screen were pornographic. They were not expected or appropriate for a wedding.

The audience gasped in unison. Even though the private parts had been blurred, the photographs left nothing to the imagination.

Nancy was dumbfounded. She was the woman in the pictures!

The slides kept changing, and each photograph was more incriminating than the last. Worst of all, the pictures had been carefully chosen to protect the identity of the man in them. The one thing that people could tell about the man, though, was that he was not Noah.

Nancy's mind went blank. She could not believe that Paul had humiliated her like this, and on her wedding day of all days. She looked in the direction of where Paul had been standing, but he was already gone. She was not surprised about that, though. After all, the sooner he left, the fewer questions he would have to answer.

Paul had not left the building, though. He watched the chaos from an inconspicuous corner, and he sneered like a demon. Luckily, I had a plan B - he thought - Do you like my present, Nancy Carter?

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Nancy felt like her head was in a fog. She had taken all that she could from Paul and then some. She was unable to bear the humiliation he had caused her. She looked around the room. Everyone was staring at her. They were making ugly faces, and they were whispering amongst themselves. Suddenly, the walls felt like they were closing in on her, and she cried out for help as her body started to fall to the ground.

Luckily, Noah was there to catch her. "There, there," he said as he kissed her forehead, "Everything is going to be alright."

"It never will be," Nancy cried. "Why is Paul humiliating me? Does he want to kill me? Or is he trying to force me to commit suicide?" The flashes from the reporters' cameras were making her head hurt, and she thought - maybe I'll have a stroke - and the idea did not bother her as much as it should have - After all, things could not get any worse, could they?

Some of the reporters were taking pictures of Nancy and Noah, but most of the cameras were pointed at the screens. They were all talking at once, and the church was in chaos. Upfront, a priest was shouting for everyone to settle down, but no one was paying him any mind.

As Noah led Nancy to the lounge, Eric ordered his bodyguards to take control of the situation. The first thing that they did was cut the power, and all the screens went blank. As far as the big picture went, this was inconsequential. By then, the videos had gone viral, but not having to see them gave Nancy some peace of mind.

Eric frowned. He hadn't anticipated Paul ruining his wedding. He turned as one of his guards tapped on his shoulder. "What is it?" he asked.

"The building is surrounded by military tanks," the guard replied.

"Military Tanks?" Eric raised his eyebrows and said, "It looks like he has finally arrived."

"Where is Paul?" Crystal asked anxiously. "We need to find that bastard and make him pay."

Eric sighed and said, "I am afraid we have bigger fish to fry at the moment."

"What do you mean?"

"Nathan is here."

When Crystal heard that, she felt a cold chill run down her back, and her body broke out in gooseflesh. "He's here for me," she murmured. "Isn't he?"

Before Eric could say anything, another guard burst through the crowd. He was out of breath, and his face was red. "The first tank has entered the building," he gasped.

Suddenly, cannon blasts could be heard coming from the foyer, and black smoke: poured into the sanctuary.

"What is going on?!?!" the priest shouted.

"Who dares to defile this house of God?!?!" A second tank smashed through the outer wall, and this one did not stop in the foyer. It pressed on, barging into the sanctuary and smashing the pews under its treads.

People were running around like chickens with their heads cut off. They were screaming and crying as they trampled one another. The smarter ones headed for the emergency exits, and when the doors opened, they set off alarms. When the dumber ones heard the sirens, they saw what the smarter ones were up to, and they followed them, and it was not long before the church was mostly empty.

The tank did not stop until it was inches away from Crystal.

The priest was holding his Bible in his hand and screaming as he ran towards the door. Eric stopped the priest with a word, and as he turned his head, all the color drained from his face.

"My wedding is not over yet," Eric said. "So, where are you going?"

The Priest muttered something unintelligible. His whole body was shaking. No doubt, he thought that this was the Armageddon that he had feared all his life. Suddenly, a platoon of bodyguards flooded into the sanctuary, and they stationed themselves between Eric and the tank. They were all carrying submachine guns, but the guns looked like kids' toys compared to the tank's cannon. Eric had Crystal, though, which meant that he still had the upper hand. She was in his arms, and Nathan would not do anything to jeopardize her life.

"I've been waiting for you for a long time," Eric shouted. "Unless you are a coward, come out."

A minute passed, and when Nathan did not come out, Eric motioned for the priest to carry on. The priest nodded and opened his Bible. Then, in a trembling voice, he said, "Mr. Bush, do you take Miss Smith to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part, according to God's holy ordinance?"

Eric smiled. "Yes, I do."

The priest turned to Crystal and said, "Miss Smith, do you take Mr. Bush to be your lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part, according to God's holy ordinance?"

Crystal stared at the big tank. Her heart beat rhythmically in her chest, and it seemed to be getting louder and louder.

Suddenly, the top of the tank opened, and Nathan appeared. "There are fifty cannons outside the church," he said. "You must have some inkling of what will happen if she marries you."

Eric laughed contemptibly. "Fancy meeting you here.." He took Crystal's hand into his own and said, "I was starting to think that you weren't going to show up."

### **Chapter 1739 - 257: Do You Want To Kill Me?**

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Nathan glared at their hands, and the daggers that shot from his eyes cut deep into Crystal's heart. Why is he here? she asked herself. - He must have known that nothing good could come from barging in like this...

"Remove your dirty hands from my woman," Nathan shouted. There were over a dozen guns aimed at Eric's head, but they did not seem to faze him.

"Your woman?" Eric scoffed. "Good Sir, she is my wife!"

"She didn't say, I do." Nathan chuckled and said, "If yet she goes, I will let you live."

Eric shrugged, "I'm not afraid of your tanks. However, you should look outside and see how the situation has changed."

Nathan pulled out his radio and asked for an update, and as his second in command gave him the report he had asked for, his face turned white. Tanks surrounded the church, but black ops helicopters were hovering over them, and each one was prepared to drop a bomb on the vehicles below them.

It was a Mexican Standoff.

Except for the sirens, the sanctuary was silent, and for a while, it seemed that it would stay that way until finally, Crystal spoke up. She glared at Nathan and said, "Can't you just leave? I do not love you, and I do not want to be with you. You knew that, though, so why did you even come here?"

A tear ran down Nathan's cheek. He looked Crystal in the eyes and said, "Do you really not want to see me, or are you worried about my safety?"

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Crystal felt a sudden inexplicable urge to go to Nathan, and her heart melted when he whispered her name. She knew better than to let her feelings show on her face, though. She shot icicles from her eyes into his, and in the coldest voice she could manage, she said, "I told you to leave. Are you an idiot? What do you not understand? If you do not leave, I will kill you." Nathan revved the tank's engine. "You are going to kill me?" he scoffed. "I would like to see you try."

"I can't believe that you came here and ruined my wedding!" Crystal growled. "Just leave. Haven't you done enough damage to me?"

Eric tightened his grip on Crystal's hand and said, "Since he is here, we should ask him to participate in our wedding. He should at least have a glass of wine before he goes."

Crystal looked indifferent, but she had already begun to worry. Eric was not an ordinary person, and she was worried that he had an ulterior motive for inviting Nathan to their wedding day.

Suddenly, a bodyguard fell to the ground. And then another. And then two more.

Crystal looked around, and she quickly discovered that there was gas seeping out of the flowers that adorned the church.

Eric smiled gloomily and said, "It seems that the toxic gas has begun to work."

Nathan's eyes began to droop as he inhaled the noxious gas, and his body began to feel weak.

"Are you poisoning everyone?" Crystal asked.

"It's a dr\*g that makes peoples' limbs lose their strength," Eric replied. "It's not harmful." He saw the worry on her face, and he chuckled. "Don't worry. I already gave you the antidote." Of course, he and his bodyguards had also consumed the potion.

Nathan's hands began to shake, and even if he had his gun in hand, he wouldn't have had the strength to lift it.

"Using poison gas is despicable," Crystal remarked. "Wasn't it banned at the Geneva Convention?"

"It may have been," Eric admitted. "But who the fuck cares? I certainly don't. After all, look at all the damage Nathan has done and how far he is willing to go to take you against your will. I am sure you can see that my action here today will save a lot of lives."

Crystal sighed and said, "You may be right, but he'll just come after me again when he wakes up. Or do you plan on killing him?"

"I think that is a good idea." Eric smiled as he motioned for one of his bodyguards to give him a pistol. "Didn't you say that you wanted to kill him?" He checked to make sure that it was loaded, and then he handed it to Crystal.

Crystal's whole body shook. She wanted to shoot Eric in the head -I wish I could do it- she thought. "Do you want me to kill him with one shot?" she asked calmly. "Or do you want him to suffer?"

"Do it however you want," Eric whispered. "Would it be okay if I just severely wounded him?" Crystal asked. "Then he will learn his lesson..."

That's fine." Eric chuckled and said, "Be careful where you point that gun, though. I don't want you to shoot me accidentally."

Crystal frowned and said, "I don't know if I can do it."

"You can!" He rubbed her back and said, "He deserves it. After all, Helen's miscarriage was his fault, and he makes her life a living Hell."

Suddenly, Eric was as giddy as a child on Christmas morning. "Do it!" he squealed. "Shoot him now, while he is vulnerable!"

"Will you let him go after I shoot him?"

"Of course."

Crystal's brow furrowed, and she said, "If you lie to me, I will kill you!"

Eric smiled grimly. "It is enough for me to see him suffer," he said. "The main thing is that he gets it into his thick skull that you are mine, and he leaves us alone."

Nathan nervously watched them as they casually discussed whether he would live or die. His life was in their hands, and he was shaking in his boots.

Crystal glanced at Nathan, then she looked at Eric - and a wicked shark-like Cheshire's grin appeared on her face.

She is going to kill me - Nathan realized, and he used what was left of his strength to hold his composure. If this was his time to die, he was determined to die with dignity.

Unbeknownst to him, though, Crystal had not made up her mind yet. Things had really gone to shit, and he had done some very bad things to her, but there had been good times too, and those old memories made her hesitate. She would never love him again, but that did not necessarily mean that she wanted him dead.



Nathan tried to catch her attention with her eyes. He wanted to hug her. He wanted to tell her how much he had missed her and how much it hurt not to have her by his side. Unfortunately, the cold expression on Crystal's face was unreadable.

Crystal walked over to the side of the tank, and she looked up at him.

Nathan looked up at her. "Do you really want to kill me?" he asked.

"I don't want to," Crystal admitted. "But you said that if I wanted to end our relationship, I would have to kill you. And I told you that if I saw you again, I would kill you. Since you are here, I must assume that it is because you want to die, so who am I to deny you?"

Nathan sighed, and another tear rolled down his cheek. "Do you really want to kill me?" he asked again. His voice was hoarse and weak.

"I suppose that I do." Crystal raised the gun until it was pointed at Nathan's head.

"Yeah," she said. "I want to kill you. Your existence is my greatest misfortune!"

"Then do it," Nathan whispered.

#### **Chapter 1740 - 258: I Will Kill Myself**

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The gun seemed to weigh a thousand pounds, and Crystal's arms were trembling. Her face was flushed, and her forehead was damp with perspiration. She had thought that she could shoot him easily, but something was holding her back.

Crystal wanted to turn around and point the gun at Eric. She felt like she was in a nightmare, and she wanted time to stop so that she could walk away from all of this.

Nathan smiled weakly and said, "If you are going to do it, do it. You have my blessing. I cannot live without you anyway."

Crystal's whole body began to shake, and she began to weep quietly. She turned to Eric. "I'm sorry," she whined. "But I'm not a killer..."

Eric nodded encouragingly. He smiled and said, "You can. I believe in you, you just need to believe in yourself."

"She can't do it!" Nathan laughed out loud.

"She is nothing but a chicken. Even in the state that I am in, I am an eagle compared to her. She is nothing but a garden variety prairie hen. Peck peck! Peck peck!"

"I am not a chicken!" Crystal roared as she turned and pointed the gun at Nathan's chest. His eyes lit up as he realized his mistake - and then she pulled the trigger.

Crystal's eyes went wide. Had he not antagonized her, she never would have had the strength to pull the trigger. And now that the deed was done, she was deeply ashamed, and she prayed that he was not dead.

The sound that the gun made in the cathedral was deafening, and as it echoed through the hallways, it seemed that it would go on forever.

Nathan was not dead, though. The bullet struck his sternum, its path deviated, and then it lodged itself in his abdomen. That being said, the attack had shaken him to his core. Never in a million years would he have thought that she had it in her to shoot him.

He looked down at the hole in his chest. It was seeping blood, and he put two fingers in the wound to stop the bleeding. It hurt like Hell, but he was determined not to let her see how much pain he was in.

Eric sighed as he turned to look at Nathan. He said, "It's a pity that I didn't hit your heart. It was a good shot. You must have a horseshoe up your ass. You are lucky to be alive. Anyway, you once shot me, so I guess we are even now." Eric wrapped his arms around Crystal's waist, and he imprisoned her in his arms. "You have avenged me," he said. "For that, I thank you."

Crystal glared at him. She wanted to put the pistol into his mouth and force him to shut up!

He was completely oblivious to her thoughts, though. For the moment, he was more interested in what Nathan was going through.

"How are you feeling?" Eric asked.

"I'll live," Nathan muttered absently.

Despite the blood oozing out between his fingers, he looked like a man that didn't have a care in the world.

Eric nodded to one of his guards and said, "Bring him out."

Crystal grasped his hand tightly and stared at the tank. "He won't die, will he?"

"Look at him," Eric cackled. "He won't die." He pointed to Noah and said, "Luckily, we have a doctor on hand."

Crystal's lips were pale, and she found it difficult to breathe - what with the smell of the poison in the air, that and the smoke, and the tangy scent of Nathan's blood. She looked over at Nathan, and she felt sympathy for him.

Eric cruelly pinched her jaw. "The more you care about him," he hissed, "the more tortured he will be in Mrs. Bush, we need to make something clear: You are married to me now, and that means that you belong to me."

"You are the devil," Crystal growled. "Why did you make me shoot him? If I knew how cruel you are, I might not have been so quick to marry you!"

Eric was startled by Crystal's candor, and by the time he had formed a response, it was too late. The guards had brought Nathan to him, and they were waiting for their next instruction. Nathan's bleeding had increased, and he was fading in and out of consciousness.

Crystal's heart was beating extremely fast, and she was scared. "Is he going to live?" she asked. "You promised me that he would live!"

"He will live!" Eric hissed. "If I tell you a thing, you don't need to keep pestering me about it! Why do you care so much about this piece of shit anyway? At first, I thought that killing bothered you, but now I see that it is the thought of killing Nathan that bothers you?!?!"

Crystal composed herself. "I don't like the idea of killing Nathan or anyone else. He isn't special in this regard." She denied her feelings for Nathan because she did not want it to be something that Eric could later use against her. "Anyways," she continued. "You said that if I shot him, you would let him go."

"I promised to let him go," Eric admitted. "But didn't I promise to let him leave..."

Crystal frowned. "What do you mean?"

Eric explained: "When I said that I would let him go, I meant that I wouldn't kill him, which is fundamentally different from letting him leave the premises."

"Fuck that!" Crystal shouted. She pulled herself away from Eric and said, "I am not going to play your word games. You knew what I meant, and you promised that you would do whatever I said. Now, if you do not fulfill your end of the bargain to my satisfaction - I won't finish this wedding, and you can go home alone for all I care!"

"Just half an hour ago, our wedding was broadcast live worldwide," Eric said coldly, "and don't forget that you signed the marriage agreement last night. The legalities are complete. This ceremony is nothing but a bunch of traditional nonsense." He spat on the ground in front of her. "Legally, you are my wife, and I don't need you to say, 'I do!'"

"I will kill myself," Crystal threatened.

"Then kill yourself," Eric scoffed. "But what will happen to your parents if you do? What about Nancy and Clark?" He smiled leisurely. "And if you die, then Nathan will be the first one to follow after you." He smirked.. "How do you like them apples?" he asked.

### **Chapter 1741 - 259: Stop Fighting**

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"Fine, then," Crystal growled. She glared at Eric and said, "If you insist on acting this way, our marriage will never be consummated - That, I guarantee!"

Eric's pupils dilated, and when he spoke, his voice was cold. "You do not fulfill your obligations to me, I will not lay a hand on you. Instead, it will be your family and friends that feel my wrath. You should think carefully about what you say next, because it may come back to haunt you.

"If you break your vows, then I can also break mine, and without me, what will happen to Nancy and Clark or your ailing father? And Carlos?"

Crystal's eyes went wide. "What does any of this have to do with Carlos?"

Eric burst into laughter. "I will give you time to think about that," he said. "I am sure that you will figure out what I'm talking about."

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In the lounge - Since Nancy and Noah had left the auditorium before Nathan made his attack on the cathedral, they had no idea about the chaos that had ensued after their departure.

The newlyweds had a few drinks, and then he took her up to the room that they had reserved for the night. Once the door was closed behind them, Noah put Nancy on the bed. He was cool and calm, she was anxious and nervous.

"It's okay," Noah said. "We can take it slow." He ran his fingers through her hair, and just as he went to kiss her, the phone rang. He picked it up, and Crystal was on the other end of the line. She said that there was an emergency and that they needed him in the sanctuary. "I'm on my way," he told her, and he hung up the phone.

When Nancy heard that, she began to cry. "Please," she whined. "Don't leave me." With everything that had happened, she felt helpless and alone, and Noah was the rock that was keeping her anchored to reality.

Noah sighed and said, "Nancy, someone has been injured. I need to go. I'll come back soon."

"Don't..."

Noah frowned. "I have to," he said, and he opened the door to leave. Before he could take even one step, though, Nancy had jumped out of bed, ran to him, and wrapped his arms around his waist.

"Just stay with me for a while," she begged. "If you stay for ten minutes, or even just five, then I will be okay. Please, will you stay?" She was afraid that if he left her alone, she would die. At this point, she did not even care about Clark, let alone some stranger in the sanctuary.

Suddenly, the wardrobe opened, and Paul stepped out.

Noah and Nancy were completely gobsmacked.

"Bravo!" Paul began to clap. There was a wicked grin on his face. "Behold! The great wh\*re of Babylon - the Mother of prostitutes and her bastard lover!"

The sight of Paul, and the sound of his mocking them, caused Nancy to tremble.

"You are an abomination on this earth, Paul continued, "a succubus whose appetite knows no bounds - and by tomorrow morning, the entire world will see you for what you truly are."

Nancy recognized his words from the Book of Revelations, and they terrified her. "What are you doing here?" she cried. Please, get out of here!"

Noah looked at Paul, and then at Nancy, and for a second, she was sure that he was going to stand up for her. Thus, it felt like her world was crashing in on her when he walked towards the door instead.

"Look at that!" Paul laughed. "Even he doesn't want anything to do with you."

As Noah passed Paul, though, he punched him in the jaw. Noah had been fighting since he was a child, so he was strong, and his fists were like iron.

The force of his attack almost shattered Paul's bones; he swayed backward, and it looked like he would regain his balance, but then Noah pushed him, and he fell hard on his ass. "Oomph!" Paul groaned. "Why did you have to go and do that?"

Noah hovered over him. His face was grim and cold. "I have had enough of you," he said. "Now that Nancy is my wife, I will no longer stand by and let you continue to mistreat her."

Nancy was terrified. She had seen Paul at his worst, and she knew what he was capable of. "Stop," she yelled. "Noah, stop! You can't beat him..."

Noah turned and looked at her in dismay. He could not believe that she didn't believe in him. "I've got this," he whispered. "You'll see." While he was distracted, though, Paul's leg shot up, and his shoe planted itself in his groin. All the air burst out from his lungs, and he keeled over.

Paul tried to punch Noah, but he blocked it and landed a successful counterpunch.

As they fought, Nancy shrank into the bed and tried her best to stay out of harm's way. Noah was a good fighter, but Paul's cheap shot had given him the upper hand, and it quickly became apparent who the winner would be. Finally, Nancy crawled to the end of the bed, and in the act of desperation, she grabbed Paul's arm.

"Please!" she begged. "Stop fighting! You're killing him!"

"If I killed him, would you feel sad?" he asked.

"Of course, I would," she shouted. "He is my husband!"

Paul's face darkened, and he shoved Nancy away with all his strength. Then he turned his attention back to Noah, and he began to wail on him mercilessly with his fists.

Noah gasped. He was quickly losing his strength, and the will to fight had long since left him. Paul hit him in the mouth, and two teeth flew across the room. Blood seeped from his lips and streamed down his chin.

Noah fell backward, and he hit his head on the floor, and if it were not for Paul kicking him in the ribs, he might have passed out, maybe forever.

He is going to kill me - Noah realized, and with the amount of pain he was in, he almost didn't care. From somewhere far, far away, though, he thought he could hear Nancy begging for his life.. His eyes focused on Paul's right leg, and he thought, I am not going to die like this....

## Chapter 1742 - 260: Her Strong Prayer

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Noah grabbed Paul's ankle, and he pulled it towards him as hard as he could. It was totally unexpected, and as Paul fell flat on his ass, he shrieked in pain. His tailbone was shattered.

For the first time in her life, Nancy's reflexes were quick. She grabbed the lamp on the bedside table and smashed the base against the back of Paul's head, and he went down like a sack of bricks. Then she crawled off the bed and went to sit with Noah. She cradled him in her arms and asked him if he was okay.

Noah did not reply. He was severely injured. His face was bruised and puffy, and there was congealed blood under his nose and mouth.

She ran her hands through his hair as he flickered in and out of consciousness, and she wept over him. "There, there," she cried. "Everything will be alright."

Beside them, Paul slowly opened his eyes, and when he saw that he was not being watched, he quietly got to his feet. First, he looked down at Nancy scornfully. Then he lifted his foot and stomped on Noah's chest as hard as he could. "That's what you get!" he roared.

There was a satisfying crunch as Noah's ribs broke and popped out of his chest.

Nancy was stunned. "Paul..." she gasped.

"You..." This was beyond anything that she would have guessed he was capable of.

Paul nudged Noah with his foot, then he looked at Nancy and said, "You must be disappointed by such a miserable failure. Can you believe that he actually thought he could beat me?!?!"

"Let him go!" Nancy wailed. "He is innocent!"

"No one is innocent," Paul scoffed.

Nancy grabbed Paul's leg, and she tried to pull him away, but he was like a rock. He could not be moved. Finally, in desperation, she grabbed the lamp that she had hit him with before, but he just laughed and said, "Fool me once, shame on me. Fool me twice... Ah, who are we kidding? I will not be fooled again. You stupid bitch. It would be best if you had killed me when you had the chance. Now your little boy toy is going to pay for your mistake with his life!"

Paul stomped on Noah's chest again, and two more shattered ribs popped out.

Nancy swung the lamp with all her strength, and he caught it. Then, he slapped her across the face with his free hand, and she let go of her weapon. The force of the blow sent her reeling. Her thighs hit the bed, and she fell backward into it.

Paul kicked Noah in the head, and he did not even make a peep. This frightened Nancy, and when she sat up, she realized that she could not tell if he was breathing. She begged Paul to stop, but she might have well saved her breath.

Finally, when it seemed that Noah was gone, Paul turned his attention back to Nancy. He walked towards the bed, and she backed away from his approach. She knew that there was no escape for her, but her brain continued to look for a way out.

She clasped her hands tightly in front of her chest as if she were getting ready to pray. "What do you want?" she asked. "If you are going to kill me, then kill me. Just don't make me suffer the way that you did, Noah..." She closed her eyes in preparation for death. In her head, she was reciting Psalm 23 - Ye, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...

She felt his scorching breath on her face and his spittle on his cheek, but she refused to open her eyes. She just kept on praying - For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, thy comfort me...

Paul looked at her in a weird way, as if it were his first time seeing her. There was a glow about her, and he suddenly realized that no matter what he did, he would never again control her. She began to mutter something, and he leaned in so that he could make out what she was saying.

Nancy was surprised that she was still alive, but she still refused to open her eyes. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." She prayed in a whisper. "Thou anointed my head with oil."

Paul recoiled from her words. He suddenly felt guilty over everything that he had done, but before he could atone for his sins, the demon inside him clawed its way to the surface. "Woman," he hissed. "Is this how you want to die, sniveling like a dog to an impotent God?" He sneered like a devil, and his eyes practically glowed red; they were that bloodshot.

Had Nancy opened her eyes, she might have been so frightened that she wet herself. She did not open her eyes, though. She squeezed her eyes shut as tightly as she could, and as she continued to pray, her voice grew louder. "And my cup runneth over!"

Then, as she opened her eyes, Paul's inner demon fled, and his heart softened towards her. His hands fell to his sides. He got off the bed, turned, and left the room.

Nancy knew that this was not the end, but she thanked God for this: Her first victory. She sat there for a moment, basking in the silence, and then she remembered Noah.

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A bomb fell from one of the helicopter's gaping mouths. It landed beside one of the tanks, and then it began to hiss. Before long, poisoned gas began to billow out of it. All around the cathedral, other bombs just like this one were being dropped, and soon the fog on the ground was so thick that you could not see through it.

Vic looked around frantically. It was not in him to give up or surrender, but the battle was lost.. His boss had been captured, and there was nothing left for him to do but to call for a retreat.