

UNREPAIRABLE LOVE / I MARRIED A MAN NOVEL ALTRERNATIVE

Chapter 11

Elizabeth went to the villa to retrieve the ring. She punched in the code and waited, but the door didn't budge. A mechanical voice said, "Incorrect code." She double-checked the address. Yep, Alexander's villa. She tried the code again. Still wrong. "Did he change the code?" she wondered.

After her third failed attempt, even her fingerprint didn't work. The electronic lock blared, confirming Elizabeth's suspicion—the code had been changed. How much did Alexander hate her? How badly did he want her gone?

Elizabeth pulled out her phone to call him, but then the door swung open. A familiar voice called out, "Elizabeth?" She spun around to see Esme, wearing a man's white shirt. Her legs were bare, pale, and straight. Esme's cheeks were flushed, hair tumbling down her back, looking quite seductive.

"Esme, who is it?" came a man's cold voice from the living room. Elizabeth turned to see Alexander in a bathrobe, towel in hand, drying his hair. Esme walked over to him, wrapping her arms around his waist with a playful smile. "You done with your shower? Elizabeth's here."

Elizabeth watched their intimate display, fists clenched tight. She could guess what had just happened in the villa. Alexander looked at her, his face blank. "You here for the ring?" Elizabeth nodded. "It's upstairs. Go get it yourself." He turned to change his clothes.

As Alexander walked away, Esme slipped into hostess mode. "Elizabeth, let me show you." Elizabeth shot her a look of pure disgust. "I can find it myself. Don't need an outsider's help."

"Outsider?" Esme laughed, dropping the pretense. "Elizabeth, I've always been the mistress here; you were just a stand-in." Elizabeth glanced at Esme, unable to argue. She marched upstairs.

In the study, she opened the third drawer, her hand hesitating. The gifts were tossed in there like trash, still wrapped. Elizabeth frowned, digging through them for the ring, her heart aching.

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It confirmed Alexander never liked...

“Still looking?” A mocking voice beside her. “Here for the ring? Or regretting the divorce and trying to get Alexander’s attention?” Elizabeth ignored her. Just as she was about to give up, she spotted the ring in the corner. She found it.

Dosbeth dove the drowen and stood up. Erme glared at...

“Sorry to bother you.” Elizabeth walked out. E grabbed her arm. Elizabeth stopped, waiting for Esme to speak.

...mart and finalize the divorce with Alexander soon. She raised her chin, her tone threatening. Elizabeth smirked, shrugged off Esme’s arm, and shot back, “No matter when I divorce him, you’ll always be Mrs. Alexander. What’s the...”

Som, turning, snapped, “Elizabeth, you’ve hogged my spot for three years. Don’t you feel any shame?” Elizabeth gave her a cold look. “It’s not my fault Alexander’s family didn’t want you. That’s on you.”

“Elizabeth, you’re shameless!” Esme hissed through gritted teeth. Elizabeth sighed, “Well, in front of you, I don’t really need to be.” Her face turned beet red with anger. From the top of the stairs, Elizabeth didn’t forget to glance back at Esme. Calm, but her eyes had a dangerous glint. “You blame me for taking the Mrs. Alexander title. Should I tell everyone it wasn’t me who used connections to get into med school, but you?”

Esme’s heart skipped a beat, and a chill ran down her spine. “Elizabeth, what are you saying?” Let the truth out. Elizabeth’s lips curled into a cold, sharp smile.

Years ago, during the exams, there were limited spots for med school. Esme had bombed and cried, insisting she had to go to the same university as Elizabeth. The Russells tried everything, but nothing worked. Feeling bad for Esme, Elizabeth gave up her spot so Esme could get into med school. The med school, pointing to how a genius from a family of doctors would let Elizabeth in...

Somehow, rumors started that Elizabeth used connections to get in. Em grabbed Elizabeth’s arm, glaring and gritting her teeth. “You dare say that!” Elizabeth pressed her lips together, be...

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Esme's grip tightened, her nails almost digging into Elizabeth's skin. "Elizabeth, you think ruining me will make Alexander love you?" Esme hissed, her anger rising. "He'll never love you. He'll just hate you..."

The tension was thick when footsteps sounded behind them. Esme's angry look turned sinister. "Elizabeth, I just love Alexander too much. I'm sorry." She grabbed Elizabeth's arm and slapped her. The slap echoed in the hallway, cutting off Esme's apology.

Alexander walked up just in time to see Elizabeth slap Esme back. "Elizabeth!" he shouted, furious. Elizabeth's face went blank, and she quickly shook off Esme. She turned to face Alexander, but before she could explain, Esme screamed and fell down the stairs.

"Esme!" Alexander's voice was tight with worry. Elizabeth reached for Esme, but something yanked at her waist. She lost her balance, hit the railing, twisted her ankle, and tumbled down the stairs with Esme! Elizabeth's hand shot out towards Alexander.

Esme, eyes wide with fear, screamed, "Alexander, help!" Seeing both women reaching for him, Alexander's eyes narrowed. In a panic, he lunged forward and grabbed a slender wrist!

C 12

Elizabeth saw it clearly—Alexander grabbed Esme's wrist and left her blind. He never chose her, not once. "Elizabeth!" Esme called out, fake concern in her voice.

Elizabeth stopped at the bottom of the stairs, pain shooting through her body and heart. She looked up slowly to see Alexander and Esme staring down at her. Embarrassment, despair, and pain didn't even begin to cover it.

Alexander glared at Elizabeth, disgust in his eyes. "You pushed Esme into the water, and now you tried to push her down the stairs. How cruel can you be, Elizabeth?"

"Alexander, she didn't mean it. She's just really upset," Esme said, trying to calm him down.

Elizabeth watched their cozy moment, and it felt like her heart was being ripped apart. She dropped her head, fists clenched so tight that blood seeped from her palms. Slowly, she stood up, using the wall for support, pain radiating from her forehead. When she touched it, her fingers came away stained with bright red blood.

She'd been pretending to be strong for days, bottling up her feelings. But now, she broke down. Elizabeth bit her lip hard, tears silently streaming down her face.

Alexander glanced at her, noticing her whole body trembling. He frowned, a flicker of concern crossing his mind. But remembering how she had just hurt Esme, his hatred flared up.

"Elizabeth, don't ever show your face here again!" Alexander spat out his final ultimatum.

Elizabeth looked up, clutching her forehead, her eyes empty. "Alexander, I didn't hit her or push her. Believe it or not, it's your call." Her voice was cold and weak.

"The facts are right in front of you, and you're still lying?" He stepped closer, his eyes cold enough to kill. He grabbed her neck, teeth gritted. "Elizabeth, do you have any conscience at all?"

She had bullied Esme over and over, and Esme had defended her time and again. Elizabeth leaned against the wall, tears streaming down her face, dripping onto her hand. She glared at Alexander, her lashes quivering. No love left in her eyes.

Chapter 12

His brow furrowed, anger flaring up inside him. Elizabeth sniffled, swallowing her tears. "Alexander, don't you have cameras all over your house? Can't you check them?"

"How many times have you accused me without checking? Scared your precious Esme—lost as innocent as she seems—or scared of finding..."

Esme's head shot up, wide-eyed. Esme's face paled, panic setting in. Alexander was spent.

Elizabeth shook off Alexander and glared at Esme, who was clearly rattled. She spat out, "Whore!"

Time's quite the actress," (Elizabeth thought)

Alexander grabbed Elizabeth, shouting, "Elizabeth, how can you talk to Esme like that? Apologize!"

Apology. Elizabeth locked eyes with him. Their gazes met, and the love in Elizabeth's eyes was now pure hatred and sorrow. She curled her lips and whispered, "Over my dead body."

She shoved Alexander away and stormed downstairs, gripping the railing. Alexander scowled and yelled, "Elizabeth, you're impossible!"

Elizabeth shot back, "No, you're the impossible one, you idiot!" If he was so infatuated with Esme, she hoped they had a long, miserable life together!

Alexander was livid, ripping a painting off the wall and yanking at his...

"Alexander," Esme called softly.

Alexander was especially annoyed because of Elizabeth. He snapped, "I'll have Nolan Powell take you to the hospital for a check-up."

"Are you coming with me?" Esme asked quietly.

"I'm busy," Alexander replied and walked out. Esme watched him, a lump of pure dread in her chest, her bloody hands clenching. She never used to...

Could he be falling for Elizabeth? Esme glanced at the surveillance camera in the corner, panic rising within...

Chapter 12

In the bustling downtown of Liban, three floors underground, was a fully automated, secret base called Hidden Camp. The leader, "M.," ran the show. This boss was a legend in the black market, able to pull off anything, and the base's reputation was rock solid. But the base had been quiet for five years. Even though Hidden Camp hadn't been seen in ages, its reputation and stories were still legendary in the black market.

When Elizabeth got to the base, Felix had been hanging around for a while. She'd patched up the cut on her forehead and changed clothes, looking a bit icy.

"Boss, did you snag the ring?" Felix asked.

Elizabeth nodded and popped open a black jewelry box. Inside was a silver ring with an M on it, simple and classy. Yep, Elizabeth was the secretive boss of Hidden Camp—M.

Five years back, chasing after Alexander, she shut down Hidden Camp. On her wedding day, she gave Alexander this ring and stepped away from that life. But now, she was back!

Elizabeth stood at the base entrance, triggered the mechanism, and placed the ring on it. A robotic voice chimed, "Welcome home, Glory."

The news of Glory M's return spread like wildfire through the black market. Elizabeth sat at her computer, the screen lit up, and the black market page popped open.

"Hello, M. You've been away for 1,609 days. Welcome home."

Chapter 13

As soon as Alexander reached the office, Nolan approached him. "Mr. Tudor, Ms. Russell isn't feeling well; I took her to the hospital. The villa surveillance footage you requested is in your email."

Watching the video, Alexander's face grew colder by the second.

At the hospital, Alexander stood outside the hospital room door.

"Mom, what do I do? I didn't know there were cameras."

"Why are you freaking out? Remember, it was that witch Elizabeth who shoved you..."

Alexander's face turned even colder. He pushed open the hospital room door and walked in.

Esme swallowed her words when she saw him. "Alexander,"

Alexander acted as if he hadn't heard anything, gently stroking Esme's hair. "What's wrong? Why are you crying?"

Esme just sobbed softly, not saying a word.

Clara Cooper spoke up for her, "It's your wife, of course. She and Esme fell down the stairs together, but you didn't catch Esme in time. She's too soft-hearted and feels guilty!"

"Yeah, Esme's just too kind." Alexander's eyes were calm, his fingers gently caressing her face, emotions swirling beneath the surface.

Esme looked at him, suddenly feeling uneasy.

"Alexander, Esme's put up with a lot over the years. When are you going to give her the status she deserves?" Clara's voice was sharp.

Esme felt a pang of sadness as Alexander remained silent.

"Mom, don't pressure him. He's already under a lot of stress," Esme sniffed, trying to defend him.

"You always think of others, but not everyone thinks of you!" Clara tapped Esme's forehead.

Alexander couldn't ignore Clara's sarcastic tone. "Clara, I need to talk to Esme alone. Can you give us a moment?"

Hearing this, Esme felt a little jittery. Had he seen the surveillance footage?

After Clara left, Alexander pulled up a chair and sat by the bed.

Esme leaned back, hands nervously twisting. "Alexander, what do you want to say?"

Alexander raised his hand, his fingertips brushing her still slightly red cheek, and gently asked, "Does it still hurt?"

Esme shook her head.

His gentleness felt like an invisible wall, making her envious.

Alexander smiled. "Why did you hurt yourself so badly?"

Esme, I told you many times. Why did you still do this? Alexander frowned, speaking bluntly.

“Alexander, I don’t know what you’re saying,” Esme lowered her head.

Alexander was silent for a few seconds, then took out his phone and played the video. In the footage, Elizabeth grabbed Esme’s arm, slapped her face, then fell toward the staircase and pushed Elizabeth.

Their eyes met; his gaze held anger, but his tone was incredibly calm. “You set this up?”

Esme choked up, lowering her head, her hands nervously clutching the blanket. “I...”

“Esme, do you know what you’re doing?” Alexander lifted her chin.

She had truly let him down. He trusted Esme so much. How could she pull this stunt?

Esme shot Alexander a displeased look. “Do you even know what you’re doing?” With red eyes, she asked, “Are you questioning me because of Elizabeth?”

“Esme, this isn’t the same thing. I hate mind games, and you...” He trusted her, but she made him look like a fool in front of Elizabeth!

“I just wanted to see if you’d choose me, is that so wrong?” Esme felt hurt.

Alexander gritted his teeth, lowering his voice. “You’re testing my feelings?”

“You didn’t make me feel secure,” Esme glared, tears streaming down her face.

Alexander’s heart trembled. Through her, he saw Elizabeth’s self-mocking yet calm face.

He lowered his head. If Elizabeth had said this, he’d agree. He never gave Elizabeth a sense of security.

Esme wiped her tears, her voice hoarse. “Alexander. One heart can’t hold two people. If you love Elizabeth, I’ll step aside.”

Alexander's eyes narrowed. Esme's words kept reminding him that he owed her his life.

He sighed, looking down. "Esme."

Esme knew mentioning the rescue would always make him give in. Seeing him lower his head, she seized the moment. "Alexander, I know I messed up. Please forgive me. I won't do it again."

"Alright," Alexander replied, his tone flat, not wanting to say more. But as he looked at Esme, his mind was a mess, filled with thoughts of Elizabeth. He had wronged her.

Chapter 14

Nighttime at Tranquil Bay. A high-end restaurant, serene and elegant. Elizabeth pushed open the door to the private room, and the chatter inside stopped. Everyone stood up.

"Ms. Percy?" A man in his fifties spoke first. It was Sawyer York, Declan's close friend. Yesterday, Declan had asked Elizabeth to attend this private dinner, organized by Sawyer and attended by industry bigwigs.

"She's Declan's precious daughter!" another man chimed in.

Elizabeth looked around the room, smiling helplessly. She walked in gracefully, greeting everyone one by one. After Elizabeth sat down, she noticed the two seats next to her were still empty. Clearly, some folks hadn't shown up yet. Seeing she wasn't the last to arrive, she let out a sigh of relief.

Out of nowhere, someone asked, "Mrs. Tudor's birthday is coming up. What gifts are you all getting her?"

Elizabeth was about to sip her coffee and looked up, "Have you heard about that rare ginseng in Lisbon?"

Elizabeth frowned and muttered, "Rare ginseng?"

"This ginseng is a one-of-a-kind tonic, super good for the elderly. Mrs. Tudor's health isn't great. If someone could snag this for her..."

Everyone laughed.

“There’s only one in the world. Who could find it?” Sawyer chuckled.

Marshall Cooper suddenly turned to Elizabeth, “Ms. Percy, does your family have any?”

Caught off guard, Elizabeth replied calmly, “Nope, my family doesn’t have it.”

“If even a medical family doesn’t have it, then this rare ginseng is really out of reach!” Everyone shook their heads, disappointed.

A younger guy in his thirties chimed in, “I know someone who can find it.”

“Who?” Everyone turned to look. Elizabeth also looked over, curious.

The guy said, “Glory M.”

Elizabeth suddenly started coughing. Everyone looked at her, “Ms. Percy, you okay?”

Elizabeth waved her hand, signaling him to continue.

“Hey, you guys heard about the black market? Glory M is back today! Sipos so powerful, a rare ginseng is nothing for her!”

Chapter 14

Elizabeth was about to take a sip of water when there was a knock on the door. Everyone looked up. Elizabeth glanced at the door and heard a familiar voice, “Sorry, I’m late.”

“Alexander? I thought your dad was coming.”

“Kieran, your dad coming too?!” Sawyer’s voice came from behind. Elizabeth’s heart skipped a beat. She saw two people walking in slowly: Alexander and Kieran. Alexander, in a black suit, immediately spotted Elizabeth among the crowd. Among the elders, she stood out. Alexander frowned, his heartbeat racing, looking a bit uneasy.

When it was time to sit, Alexander and Kieran walked over together. It was a dilemma who would sit next to Elizabeth. Kieran pursed his lips and eventually gave up the seat to Alexander.

At the dinner table, everyone was drinking and chatting, having a good time. But Alexander kept glancing at Elizabeth. Noticing his gaze, Elizabeth felt uncomfortable. She put down her glass and said to Sawyer, “Mr. York, I’m going out for some fresh air.”

“Alright,” Sawyer nodded. Elizabeth quietly left. Alexander got restless. After a while, he followed her out.

Elizabeth wandered the hallway, waiting for dinner to wrap up. She had zero interest in being around Alexander. Seeing him always brought back his harsh words. And that time on the stairs, when he saved Esme without a second thought, leaving her to fend for herself? Yeah, that still stung.

Lost in her thoughts, Elizabeth bumped into a drunk guy at the corner. He was in his forties, about six feet tall, and built like a tank. He grabbed her waist and took a whiff. “Mom, you smell good!”

Elizabeth’s face twisted in disgust. She kneed him in the groin.

The guy, now a bit more sober, was about to yell at her. But when he saw her face, he froze, then grinned. “Wh...a...beauty!”

Is there a stunning beauty in Lisbon? His words were slurred, and the stench of booze was overpowering.

Chapter 14

Elizabeth cursed him again and tried to walk away. But he blocked her path, grabbing her wrist. “Don’t play hard to get. How much for a night?”

Elizabeth looked at the idiot and laughed. “A hundred million dollars. Can you handle that?”

Unrepairable Love

Chapter 15

The guy laughed like a maniac and pulled her close. “A hundred million? No problem!”

“Who are you? Never seen you around,” Elizabeth said, smiling at the man in front of her.

The guy lifted his head, looking smug. “I’m Brady Brooks, president of Brooks Gnsup?” he declared.

Elizabeth burst out laughing. Brady? The Brooks family spoiled brat, she thought.

“What’s so funny? You think you’re better than me?” He glared at her, clearly annoyed. “Stick with me, and a hundred million dollars!”

Brooks, not interested. “Let’s just pretend we never met,” Elizabeth said, trying to be nice. You’ll get way more than a...

She was here for her dad’s sake. Causing a scene would just embarrass her family. Plus, she didn’t want any drama.

Brady didn’t like that. No woman had ever turned him down! “Playing hard to get, huh?”

Elizabeth pushed past him, trying to leave.

Seeing her act all high and mighty, drunk Brady felt a surge of desire. If she wouldn’t come willingly, he’d make her.

He grabbed her, trying to force her, and sneered, “Stop pretending. Didn’t you bump into me on purpose?” He shoved her against the wall.

Elizabeth gritted her teeth and yelled, “Let go of me!”

“Come on, you should be excited to be with me tonight! Stop acting all shy.”

Brady’s hand reached for Elizabeth’s dress. She frowned and quickly pushed him away.

But he leaned in closer.

“Brady, I’m Elizabeth! From the Percy family! Do you really want to mess with me?” She hoped her name would scare him off.

“I don’t care who you are. Tonight, you’re mine!” he growled, breathing heavily.

Elizabeth’s face tightened. Just as she was about to act, a shadow zipped by. Brady hit the ground with a yelp!

Elizabeth found herself shielded by a newcomer. When she saw who it was, her heart skipped a beat.

Brady got up, his face contorted in pain.

“Look closely and see who I...”

The corridor was dark. The man’s voice was icy, sending chills down her spine.

Chapter 15

Brady wobbled, rubbing his eye. When he saw the newcomer clearly, he looked terrified.

“Alexander...”

He glanced at Elizabeth, now protected. Alexander seemed slightly hesitant, his tone low.

This... Elizabeth blinked, shaking her head, a bit dazed. Elizabeth...

Alexander turned to Brady. “You there! Touched my wife?”

“None... the... uncouth... I drank too much. I didn’t know,” Brady stammered, shaking his head, barely making sense.

The “being drunk” is irrelevant. Alexander squinted, his right hand clenched into a fist, gently swaying his wrist, radiating dominance.

Then, without hesitation, Alexander punched Brady square in the face. Then he punched him again.

Alexander kept punching, each blow full of force, venting his frustration. All his recent irritations were unleashed on Brady.

By the time he stood up, Brady was out cold.

“Be more careful when you’re alone?” His gaze swept over Elizabeth, brows furrowed, his tone...

Elizabeth wondered if she’d heard wrong. Was he worried about her? But thinking of all the things Alexander had done to her, she couldn’t help but feel a...

“Thanks for helping me out, Mr. Tudor,” Elizabeth smiled, her tone indifferent and distant.

Alexander’s brows furrowed deeply, and he called out, “Elizabeth...”

Elizabeth pointed at his hand. “You’re hurt. Let me fix it.”

Alexander glanced at his hand; it had a scratch. No big deal.

Elizabeth just looked at him, then headed to a nearby lounge. Whether he followed or not, she didn’t care.

She watched him walk away, heart racing, and found him surprisingly calm afterward.

The lounge was empty. Alexander plopped down on the sofa. Elizabeth grabbed the first-aid kit, pulled out some iodine, and he extended his hand. She glanced at him and chuckled.

What to say? Alexander sighed, reflecting and...

As their time together was suddenly, surprisingly, maturing to badly...

Usually, you’re all bark and bite.

Back in high school, Alexander was perpetually getting into fights. Every time he got...

Chapter 15

He scolded, “Alexander, if you don’t take care of yourself, I won’t help you next time.”

But she always did. Alexander’s eyes drifted to the scar on Elizabeth’s forehead, and his heart ached.

Breaking the silence, he finally said, “I saw the surveillance footage.”

Irreparable Love

Chapter 16

Elizabeth paused, surprised he actually checked the surveillance footage, but for her, it didn't matter anymore. She slapped on a band-aid. All done.

Alexander frowned, disliking her indifferent vibe. "Elizabeth, I said I watched the surveillance," he repeated.

Elizabeth hooked up her hair and smiled. "Yeah, I meant you."

Alexander frowned harder. "That I heard you? No apology for anything?"

Seeing his confusion, Elizabeth stood up, put the medical kit away, and said calmly, "I used to love you and care about what you thought."

She turned around. "I don't care."

A flicker of annoyance crossed Alexander's face, a half-smile tugging at his lips. "You don't love me anymore?"

"Mr. Tudor, you're sharp," Elizabeth said, leaning casually against the cabinet, her smile enchanting. "Loving Alexander had left my heart in pieces; what more did he want?"

Alexander walked toward her, step by step. Elizabeth stayed cool, watching him get closer. When he reached her, he placed his arms on the cabinet, a handsome smile forming. "You sure fall out of love quickly."

Elizabeth smirked, her voice dripping with charm. "Mr. Tudor, you must be joking. I loved you for seven years before I moved on. Is that really quick?"

Alexander narrowed his eyes, his gaze fixed on her red lips. He couldn't help but ask, "Do you regret loving me?"

Elizabeth locked eyes with him and said, "Yes." She wished she could cut all ties with Alexander for good.

Alexander's pupils shrank, and he felt a strange tug at his heart. "Let's get a divorce tomorrow morning," Elizabeth said flatly.

Alexander's face darkened. The mention of divorce made him anxious and irritable. When he saw Elizabeth about to leave, he instinctively grabbed her.

Elizabeth turned to him, her tone growing colder. "Mr. Tudor, got something else to say?"

Hearing “Mr. Tudor” made Alexander snap. He yanked her into his arms, pinned her against the wall, and kissed her.

Elizabeth’s body shook. She shoved him away and demanded, “Alexander, how are you any different from Brady?”

He stared at her, eyes deep and slightly red at the corners. “There’s a huge difference. What Brady did was attempted rape. We’re... being intimate is natural.”

He kissed her again. Elizabeth clamped her lips shut, trying to dodge him. He grabbed her waist, pulled her close, and bit her lower lip, kissing her like a madman.

Footsteps echoed outside. Elizabeth frowned and tapped the door. Alexander quickly shut and locked it; then he raised her hands, pinning her wrists against the door.

Elizabeth felt nothing but shame. He hadn’t wanted her before, and now, with divorce looming, he was forcing himself on her. Did she deserve no respect?

Tears welled up as she thought about it. Just as Alexander was about to kiss her again, he felt her bitter tears on his lips. He paused, looking up to see her crying. Seeing her swollen lips, he realized how rough he had been.

Elizabeth wiped his tears, eyes full of hatred. “Do you even know what you’re doing?”

“Do you care about Estes’s thoughts?” Alexander’s voice was rough.

“I just pity Beth,” Elizabeth laughed bitterly. “She’s waiting for you to marry her, while you’re here with your ex-wife.”

Alexander’s eyes were dark, and he let go of Elizabeth. Her words hit him hard. Wasn’t he the one opposed to caring about that?

“Alexander, if you don’t love me, let me go. Stop with the mixed signals; it’s gross.”

With that, Elizabeth walked out, leaving Alexander standing there, stumped. Her word “gross” echoed in his mind. He never thought that would come back to bite him.

As soon as Beth stepped out, she bumped into Kieran, who was looking for Alexander. Her eyes were red, and Kieran asked, "Elizabeth, you okay?"

Elizabeth shook her head. Kieran then asked, "Seen Alexander?"

She pointed toward the lounge and headed to the restroom. Kieran went to the lounge door and peeked inside.

"What are you doing?" Kieran asked.

Alexander frowned. "Got a cigarette?"

Kieran was surprised. He pulled one out of his pocket and handed it over. "Well, now that you and Elizabeth are divorced, no one's stopping you from smoking."

Alexander paused. Kieran noticed his messy collar and thought of Elizabeth's red lips. Then he asked, "Alexander, be real. Do you regret the divorce now?"

Alexander couldn't stop sighing. Kieran crossed his arms, saying, "Man, you're such a mess. When she loved you, you didn't care. Now that she's gone, you can't let go."

Alexander shot him a glare, crushed his cigarette in the ashtray, and spat, "Shut up!"

"You're a real piece of work, Alexander," Kamran shot back.

Alexander chuckled darkly. "Long who's talking?"

Back in high school, he might have cared that she hated the smell.

Chapter 16

Alexander walked off, taking long strides. Kieran watched him go, sighing. They could only blame that kidnapping for screwing up all their lives.

Pairable Love

Chapter 17

Alexander left the restaurant, phone to his ear. Nolan's voice came through, "Mr. Tudor, there's something..."

“Spit it out.”

“Ms. Russell asked about your schedule. I told her you’re at Tranquil Bay. She might...” Nolan trailed off as Alexander spotted Esme waiting at the entrance.

Alexander hung up and walked over to her. “Esme.”

Esme spun around, grinning like a kid. “Alexander!”

Alexander glanced down, his voice soft. “Why aren’t you resting in the hospital? What are you doing here?”

“Alexander, I’m really sorry about what happened at the villa. I’ve been on edge all day.”

“I went to the company and home to find you, but you weren’t there. I had to ask Nolan about your schedule. Alexander, please don’t be mad at me. I truly realize my mistake.” She gently held his arm, her voice tender.

Alexander got it. She was always so careful around him, scared of messing up. She just wanted to see if he’d really marry her, so she played a little trick. But he actually went to the hospital to question her.

“I’m not mad at you.” Alexander pinched her cheek and held her hand.

“Really?” Esme was anxious. Alexander was so hard to read; she could never guess his thoughts. Every time he looked at her gently, she wished she could see if his tenderness was real or just an act.

“Esme, you need to trust me. Alright?” Alexander bent down slightly, full of affection for her.

As they spoke, Esme glanced back. Elizabeth was coming out. Seeing them, she turned to leave.

“Elizabeth!” Esme quickly called out.

Elizabeth couldn’t help but look over. She heard Esme say, “I’m sorry for what happened at the villa today. It was my fault.”

Elizabeth didn’t say a word, just got in the car. Her apology felt like a pile of crap—gross and attracting trouble.

Alexander called out, “Elizabeth.” Esme clung to Alexander’s arm, still uneasy.

Chapter 17

Elizabeth leaned against the car door, staring blankly at Alexander. “What?”

“Tomorrow at nine, City Clerk’s Office. We’re getting divorced.” His voice was ice-cold.

Elizabeth’s grip on the car door tightened, but she quickly pulled herself together. She smiled, calm and firm. “Fine.”

Alexander turned to Esme. “Let’s go. Have you eaten? I’ll take you to dinner.”

Elizabeth’s car zoomed past, no hesitation.

Inside the car, the air was thick. Esme had no clue where Alexander was taking her, her mind stuck on his divorce. She couldn’t help but ask, “Alexander, are you really divorcing Elizabeth tomorrow?”

Esme clutched her seatbelt, whispering, “Well, it’s a relief for both of you.”

Alexander’s eyes darkened. Was it really a relief? Had this three-year marriage been a burden? No. If it was a relief, it was for Elizabeth, not him.

“When you divorce Elizabeth, I gotta work even harder to make your family like me,” Esme said.

Alexander squeezed Esme’s hand. Esme had never felt so secure. She knew Alexander’s willingness to marry her wasn’t out of love but because she had saved him years ago. No matter the reason, being with Alexander was enough for her.

Esme looked out the window. She wished Elizabeth would just die. That way, no one would know it was Elizabeth who saved Alexander back then, not her.

The next morning, Elizabeth got up super early. She was on a call with Felix while doing her makeup.

Felix said, “There were two S-class big orders on the black market this morning. You interested?”

“What kind of orders?”

“Someone’s offering a hundred million for a rare ginseng plant!”

Elizabeth raised an eyebrow, her voice lazy, “Is rare ginseng really worth that much?”

There were a few seconds of silence before Felix asked, “Boss, be honest, do you have that rare ginseng?”

Chapter 17

“No, how could I have something so precious?” Elizabeth posted, her tone light.

Felix laughed.

Elizabeth glanced at the time. She needed to leave now.

“Bye, I gotta go get divorced. Talk later.” With that, Elizabeth hung up.

When Elizabeth went downstairs, she found her family sitting neatly in the living room, waiting for her.

“What are you all doing?”

Elizabeth stopped, slung her bag over her shoulder, feeling the weight of their stares.

Celine crossed her arms, “Elizabeth, get that divorce today, and I’ll teach you a killer medical skill.”

Declan looked nervous, “Sweetheart, you’re gonna get divorced, right?”

Rose blinked, “Elizabeth, you’re not having second thoughts, are you?”

“Don’t worry, Elizabeth won’t back out! Right?” Grant looked like he’d die if she did.

Elizabeth was speechless. Her family couldn’t wait for her to get divorced.

“Wait for my good news!” was all she could say. She was getting divorced, not married. Shouldn’t it be sad? But her family treated it like a celebration.

Unrepairable Love

Chapter 18

Elizabeth clutched the documents, waiting for Alexander at the City Clerk's Office. She remembered three years ago when they registered their marriage. It poured in Lisbon. Alexander said he was busy and would be late. Standing alone at the City Clerk's Office entrance, she watched laughing couples come and go, feeling a pang in her heart. If someone really loved you, not even a downpour would stop them. He just didn't love her and didn't want to marry her.

The staff were about to leave. Finally, Alexander showed up. His showing up, especially on a day as big as getting married, was notable. Elizabeth, bored out of her mind, started spinning in circles. She glanced at the clock. It was 9 AM. She looked, but still no sign of Alexander. Ten minutes later, still no Alexander. Impatient, Elizabeth pulled out her phone, ready to call him. Just then, her phone rang. It was Lily.

She skipped a beat. Did Lily find out about the divorce? Lily's health was fragile; she couldn't handle that kind of news. Elizabeth felt a wave of worry. She hesitated, then cautiously answered.

"Hello, Elizabeth?"

"Grandma," Elizabeth replied, trying to sound cheerful.

Lily chuckled softly. "I'm on my way to the villa. I made some delicious desserts this morning, and I'm bringing them for Alexander to try! I should be there in about fifteen minutes!"

Elizabeth's face fell. Lily was coming to the villa?

"Grandma, I didn't—"

"I went to buy the ingredients this morning and spent over four hours making them! Elizabeth, you'll love them. Once you're happy, you and Alexander can have a child, and our family will have four generations under one roof!"

Lily kept talking, and Elizabeth couldn't get a word in.

"Alright, I'm hanging up. Talking on the phone isn't cutting it. We'll chat when we meet." Lily ended the call.

Elizabeth felt lost, her mouth slightly open. She began scrolling through her contacts to Alexander's number, when his car pulled up. The window rolled down, and Alexander, looking annoyed, asked, "Who were you talking to? Your line was busy."

Chapter 18

Elizabeth leaned down, meeting his eyes. "Your grandmother."

Alexander went silent. He didn't get out. He'd also gotten a call from Lily about her visit to the villa. Usually, he and Elizabeth didn't live together. He only came back when Lily dropped by unexpectedly. Today was just a coincidence.

Alexander pressed his lips together, brows furrowed. *Tell Grandma about our divorce and don't go back, or keep it a secret for now.* His inner conflict was evident.

Elizabeth shot back, "Alexander, you're really good at dodging responsibility. You want me to decide now? If something happens to her, whose fault will it be?"

Alexander raised an eyebrow. In all their years of marriage, he'd rarely seen Elizabeth so blunt. Now that they were divorcing, her true self was coming out. Three years; it must've been tough for her to play the good wife.

"Get in the car." They'd deal with Lily first.

"Since we're here, why not get the divorce done? It only takes a few minutes," Elizabeth said, eyeing the City Clerk's Office.

Alexander stared at her, his expression unreadable. With no response from him, Elizabeth sighed and got into the car.

That's when Alexander noticed her outfit—she was dressed up, even wearing perfume. The light scent of orange blossom lingered. The car sped off, kicking up dust. Elizabeth gazed out the window, feeling down that they hadn't finalized the divorce.

Silence filled the car. At a red light, Alexander asked, "Are you eager to divorce me?"

Elizabeth, arms crossed, looked away, annoyed. “I’m upset because we didn’t get divorced.”

Alexander laughed, unexpectedly. Elizabeth glanced at him. It was a genuine smile. She hadn’t seen him smile like that in ages, especially not at her.

“You should be happier, right?” Elizabeth raised an eyebrow, a hint of a smile playing on her lips.

Alexander pressed his lips together, staying silent. Was *he* happy? He wasn’t sure. But that morning, thinking about the City Clerk’s Office, he felt a bit off. Then Lily called, and he felt oddly relieved.

Seeing him quiet, Elizabeth teased, “So, I’m finally leaving. You can meet your true love now. Did you stay up all night excited?”

Chapter 18

Alexander glanced at her. Elizabeth’s eyes sparkled with mischief, and she looked stunning.

He chuckled, “Yep.”

Elizabeth felt a bit relieved hearing that.

When they arrived, Lily was already there, standing at the door with Nolan holding an umbrella for her. Elizabeth and Alexander got out of the car together. Lily’s eyes scanned them, her presence commanding. “Where have you two been?”

Elizabeth and Alexander exchanged a look. Just as Elizabeth was about to make up an excuse, Lily’s voice turned icy, “I heard you two are getting divorced. Is it true?”

“Grandma, who told you that?” Alexander laughed, walking over to support Lily’s arm. “It’s hot out here. Let’s talk inside.”

Lily pushed Alexander away, her brows knitted, looking stern. “Don’t go inside yet! Elizabeth, you tell me!” Elizabeth had never lied to her, so Lily only trusted Elizabeth!

Alexander looked at Elizabeth, his brows furrowed, a flash of distrust in his eyes. Elizabeth met his gaze, sensing his worry, and felt helpless. He was

scared she'd say they were really getting divorced. If she did, Lily would definitely back her up. If Lily knew they were getting divorced, the chances of it actually happening would be slim.

Lily, clearly annoyed, snapped, "Elizabeth, talk to me. Ignore him!"

Chapter 19

Elizabeth took a deep breath, gently holding Lily's arm. "Grandma, it's all just gossip." No way was Elizabeth admitting to the divorce in front of Lily. If Lily got involved, the divorce would never happen, and Alexander would never marry the woman he loved. He already couldn't stand her, and she didn't want to live the rest of her life in his contempt.

"Look at me, all dressed up today. Do I look like I'm getting..."

Alexander felt a bit relieved but also suspicious of Elizabeth. He frowned, thinking, "Why did Lily show up on the day of the divorce? Did Elizabeth tip her off? Does she not want the divorce?"

"I don't buy it. You must've mentioned divorce!"

Elizabeth sighed, "Grandma, these days, rumors spread like wildfire! You're too smart to fall for that." She shot a shy glance at Alexander and told Lily, "Grandma, you know how hard I worked to marry him. Why would I give up so easily?"

"Even if I die, I want to die with him!" Elizabeth said earnestly.

Alexander lowered his eyes, chuckling softly. The words felt familiar. Maybe she'd said them before.

Lily still looked skeptical, "Really?"

"Of course, Grandma! It's so sunny outside. Let's go in."

Once inside, the bodyguards dumped all of Lily's things on the dining table. Lily noticed the sunset painting was missing from the living room. "Where's the painting?" she asked.

Alexander was about to say it was being repaired, but Elizabeth cut in, "I didn't like it anymore, so I tossed it."

Alexander glanced at Elizabeth. She was so nonchalant, like she'd thrown away more than just a painting.

Lily nodded. "You two should get a wedding photo up there. It'd look great."

Elizabeth smiled. "Sure, when we get the time."

"Grandma, you shouldn't come over so much. If you miss me, just call, and I'll come visit."

Lily was quick to avoid another incident like today. She'd already taken all her things from the house. She knew if she kept coming, their divorce would eventually come out.

"You both are so busy. It's easier for me to come here, I don't get tired!"

Elizabeth shot Alexander a look, urging him to say something. He just stood there, unsure.

"Is the food I made good?" Lily asked Elizabeth.

Elizabeth nodded. "Delicious."

Chapter 19

"If you like it, I'll make it again in a few days!" Lily smiled, holding Elizabeth's hand. "Elizabeth, if Alexander ever wrongs you, please forgive him."

Lily then said something like that, hinting at his mess with Esme.

"Got it," Elizabeth nodded.

Honestly, Lily felt bad for Elizabeth. She knew she was putting her in a tough spot. Elizabeth loved Alexander, but Alexander loved someone else.

"Alright, you two seem fine, so I'm out. Got a poker game with friends. Don't wanna waste your time!"

She stood up and walked out smoothly. Elizabeth and Alexander trailed behind.

Elizabeth swallowed her food and whispered to Alexander, "Let's hit the City Clerk's Office again later."

"Sure," Alexander agreed right away.

Lily smiled at them. As she got into the car, a bodyguard said, "Mrs. Lily Tudor, I checked. The City Clerk's Office confirmed Mr. Alexander Tudor and Mrs. Elizabeth Tudor haven't divorced." His voice was just loud enough for Elizabeth and Alexander to hear. Their faces changed instantly. Lily looked pleased, shut the car door, and the car drove off. It was clear Lily wanted them to hear that.

"Was this part of your plan too?" Alexander's cold voice suddenly sounded in Elizabeth's ear.

Elizabeth looked up at Alexander, confused. "Playing dumb? Why did Grandmother come over this morning? You don't know?" Alexander squinted, eyes full of judgment.

Elizabeth finally got it. He thought she had called Lily over on purpose? Elizabeth was speechless, not sure what to say. Whatever she said, he'd call it a lie. Once Alexander made up his mind, he rarely changed it.

With a stare, Alexander told Elizabeth, "If you don't want a divorce, just say it. Stop wasting my time."

Elizabeth laughed. She'd bent over backward to keep Lily happy, worried their divorce would hurt her health. And he thought she was scheming to avoid the split? "You really think I'm that awful?"

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Chapter 20

Alexander's brow furrowed, his calm look saying it all: he thought she was a schemer. Elizabeth felt a mix of anger and bitterness rise up. With a faint, bitter smile, she said, "If you think so little of me, why don't I just tell Grandma we're divorced?"

"Go ahead, I dare you!" Alexander stepped forward.

Elizabeth laughed. "What do I have to be afraid of? Alexander, remember, Lily is your grandmother, not mine!"

She hadn't told Lily about the divorce because Lily had been kind to her, and she worried about her health. It wasn't because she couldn't let go of this miserable marriage.

"As your ex-wife, I'm still willing to play along and keep your grandmother happy. You should be thanking me, not questioning me!"

Elizabeth shot him a look of disgust. Alexander felt a surge of anger. He stepped closer, his deep, mesmerizing eyes locked on hers. "So, I should thank you, huh?"

"Shouldn't you?" Elizabeth shot back, glaring up at him. Alexander grabbed her wrist, his eyes dark and intense. "Elizabeth, listen up. We're putting the divorce on hold until after Grandma's birthday."

"If you spill the beans before the party, you'll regret it," he warned, his voice firm.

Elizabeth yanked her arm free, mocking him. "Mr. Tudor, is this how you ask for a favor?"

Alexander studied her cold, unfeeling face, feeling a bitter irony. This was the real Elizabeth—sharp-tongued, arrogant, heartless. He narrowed his eyes. "What do you want?"

Elizabeth looked at him, sensing she could finally set some terms. She wanted to say, "Come see the sea with me," but before she could finish, his phone rang.

"Alexander, I crashed my car. Please come quickly," Esme's tearful voice trembled through the phone.

Panic washed over Alexander's face. "Esme, don't worry. Stay put. I'm on my way."

Elizabeth listened, her eyes stinging. "As long as you keep Grandma happy, I'll give you whatever you want," Alexander said, before driving off, leaving Elizabeth staring at his car, feeling nothing but self-pity.

When they first got married, all she wanted was for him to take her to the ocean. He always said no.

That night, Elizabeth came home to find the whole family waiting on the couch. She stood there, ready for whatever was coming.

Celine, hearing the news, knew Elizabeth hadn't gotten the divorce. She stormed upstairs, fuming. Elizabeth felt wronged. "Grandma," she said softly. She wanted the divorce too, but things got complicated.

"I knew it. She's too soft-hearted!" Rose shook her head, dragging Declan upstairs. Elizabeth felt helpless. She looked around and saw only Grant was left. Feeling upset, she hugged Grant's arm. "Grandpa."

Grant didn't ask why she hadn't gotten the divorce. Instead, he said, "Have you heard? Lisbur's been buzzing lately."

"Why?" Elizabeth asked, confused.

"Everyone's hunting for some rare ginseng to gift to Lily," Grant explained.

Elizabeth was shocked. Even Grant knew about this ginseng? How many people were after it? "It's just a plant. Have they all lost their minds?" Elizabeth couldn't understand.

"You're missing the point. This isn't just about ginseng. It's a shot at getting in good with the Tudor family!" Grant said, leaning in. "Wanna know a secret?"

Elizabeth raised an eyebrow.

"The Russell family is dying to get their hands on that ginseng."

Elizabeth looked puzzled. "Why would they care so much?"

"Because the Tudors and Russells aren't exactly best buds. The Russells want to use the ginseng to patch things up. And they're hoping to marry Esme off to Alexander! Duh!" Grant playfully tapped her forehead.

Elizabeth blinked, then it clicked. Alexander's family didn't want him marrying Esme. But if the Russells could impress Lily at her birthday bash and keep buttering her up, maybe Alexander's family would come around. The big four families have their pecking order. The Russells are at the bottom. If they team up with the Tudors, their status would skyrocket!

Elizabeth frowned. All this scheming was giving her a headache.

“The Russells are throwing money around and calling in favors to get that ginseng. They’re desperate!” Grant chuckled.

“Let’s see who actually shows up with the ginseng at the party!” Grant’s eyes sparkled with mischief.

Elizabeth raised an eyebrow and smirked, feeling a bit of excitement. The whole city was after this rare ginseng.

“Who’s gonna snag it?” Elizabeth wondered.

At the staircase, Declan suddenly called her. Elizabeth looked up and heard Declan shout, “You’re going on a date with the guy I set up for you tomorrow night!”