

# A Lifetime With You Chapter 71

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## Chapter 71

The truck showed no sign of slowing and continued on its path. "F\*ck! What the hell was that!" The driver cursed.

Fortunately, they did not get into an accident that evening. Seeing Ava as pale as a ghost, Damien comforted her, "It's alright, the truck driver was probably not paying attention."

"That wasn't a coincidence. I caught a glimpse of the truck driver, and it looked very much like Beth." Although it for a split second and everything was blurry, Ava was almost sure that the driver was Beth! "Are you sure you it was Beth?" Ava shook her head and muttered, "I...I'm not certain, maybe...it was just my imagination." After that day, Damien hired someone to investigate the truck. The investigation revealed that the truck belonged to a construction company nearby. It was driven out for approximately an hour on the day of the incident and was returned to the site afterward. As there were no surveillance cameras at the construction site, it was impossible to identify the driver.

It was probably nothing but because of Ava's suspicions, the issue was now under scrutiny. Damien contacted the private investigators hired by him to find Beth abroad previously. According to them, ever since Beth returned to the mainland, they had no clue about her whereabouts.

Beth disappeared as if she never existed.

"Damien, you can stop searching now. I was probably seeing things," Ava told him. "I don't care if she was the one driving the truck the other day, but if it was indeed her, we have to capture her."

Damien had a point, but where could Beth be hiding after all this while? The private investigator added that while no traces of Beth were found, he did notice that Enrico had purchased a flight ticket back to China and was on his way home. "Okay, I got it." It was no surprise to Damien that Enrico was returning home.

After all, their father's birthday was in two days and he had to come back anyway.

Speaking of that, Damien was troubled.

Ever since the dinner with the Newton family, he never returned to the Radbury residence again. But this time, Damien had no choice but to attend the party. It was their family's tradition to hold their birthday celebrations on the ninth year instead of the usual tenth of every decade. Damien's father was fifty-nine this year and the party was unusually lavish.

Moreover, there would be business partners and close associates attending as well.

As the party hosts, Daryl and Karen were obliged to entertain their guests attentively. Enrico did not arrive until the banquet had started.

"Mom and dad, I'm home!"

Enrico gave embraced his parents tightly in front of the guests. In addition, he gave his father emerald jewelry and claimed that it was an exotic treasure from abroad.

Daryl was grinning from ear to ear, "Rascal! You should have arrived two days ago. What took you so long?" "Well, I spent some time on the gift and there was an unexpected delay

by the airline." Enrico never left their side the whole night, and both of his parents were happy to spend time with him. The guests were envious of the Radbury family for having such a smart, attractive, and charming son.

Damien on the other hand was left out in the crowd.

Things got a little awkward when his mother spotted him with Ava earlier this evening for the party. It wasn't until Enrico's presence that the tension went subsided. Ava refused to follow Damien initially, knowing that her in-laws despised her. She did not intend to ruin the celebration by showing up uninvited. She noticed that Damien's expression went gloomy since Enrico's entrance. On the other hand, Enrico was approaching them with champagne in his hand. "Long time no see, Damien. Let me give you a toast."

Damien ignored him.

Enrico did not mind and continued by greeting Ava, "Wish you have good health, my dear sister-in law."

Just when Ava was about to clink her glass with Enrico, Damien snatched her drink and gulped it down.

"Aww, that's so sweet of you. Trying to finish it for your wife," Enrico teased.

It was at this moment that a business partner approached Damien and he took the opportunity to slip away with Ava leaving Enrico behind.

The relationship between the two brothers was steadily deteriorating. Sensing that she was unwelcomed at the banquet, Ava retreated to the garden alone as Damien engaged in a business discussion. Tonight, Ava felt lonelier than ever surrounded by these strangers in a place where she did not belong.

"Why are you drinking alone here?" Enrico appeared behind her with a chuckle. While the rest of the family treated her as a stranger and Damien who seemed weirdly passionate towards her recently, Enrico was the only Radbury member that treated her nicely.

Therefore, Ava was grateful to Enrico although she was aware of their sibling rivalry. "Please don't mind Damien just now, he's just being rude as usual," she told Enrico. "Wow! Since when did you learn to take his side, sister-in-law?"

"Just like you said, I'm your sister-in-law." Enrico grinned and whispered back, "Don't tell me that both of you reconciled again?" "...I don't know. Then again, no one knows what your brother is thinking." "Well, I do know." "What? Tell me then."

Enrico baited her slyly and said, "I noticed how prickly Damien gets when he sees me getting too close to you. There, you see..."

He pointed at a corner and Ava's gaze followed the direction. She saw Damien's furious expression. Enrico's grinned and said, "You know I love to tease him. Say, Ava, I've always admired you."

He raised his volume intentionally as he finished the sentence. Ava was unsure if Damien heard the first part of the conversation but judging from his swift footsteps towards her direction, he must have misunderstood everything.

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She followed Damien, and it was obvious that the latter a regular at the bar. The manager recognized him instantly and greeted him respectfully, "Welcome, Mr. Radbury." Damien ordered two glasses of beer. A pretty waitress bent over him and whispered seductively, "Mr. Radbury... we've missed you very much." Damien made a gesture and signaled her to leave them alone. "Is this where you spent the night when you didn't come back home?" Ava was feeling uneasy, and she muttered jealously. "The truth is, I am the owner here." "Are they your exes then?" Ava questioned. He sneered, "That lady is my employee." "Guess I am just an employee as well then?" Damien gulped his drink in one go and savored the warm sensation in his throat. Damien turned and gazed at Ava. He never knew that Ava was pretty cute when she was jealous. He was blinded by everything back then. "Ava, do you simply fall in love for every good guy out there?" He was slightly offended by her intimate interaction with Enrico in the backyard earlier this evening. Damien admitted that he was a cruel husband to Ava in the past and Enrico was probably the only member of the Radbury family that welcomed her. But, that rascal... Ava was annoyed and replied defiantly, "Wow, look who's talking now! You are the one fooling around all this while!"

Although she was clueless about the reason behind Damien and Enrico's soured relationship, Ava expected them to reconcile someday. But it seemed like everything was impossible now. While placing her glass down, Ava stood up and was ready to leave. But Damien grabbed and dragged her back onto her seat. "Stay away from Enrico from now on" Damien ordered. "Why should I agree with everything you've said? You're domineering and rude!" He tightened his grip on her. Under the influence of alcohol, he had a sudden urge to confess everything that was piling up in his heart for almost twenty years. "You can ignore everything but this. If you choose him between us, then...I will be alone forever." His voice was soft, but Ava could hear everything. What was he talking about? "Then tell me, what happened between the two of you?" The bar was loud but Damien couldn't feel anything. His cold eyes seemed to reveal the hidden intense emotions from the inside. That year, Damien and Enrico were eight and five respectively. He snuck out of the house together with Enrico to a park nearby. Once they arrived at the park, Enrico was craving cotton candy. Hence, Damien reminded Enrico to wait at the bench for him.

When he returned, Enrico was missing! He was kidnapped and the kidnappers demanded a huge ransom of money from their parents in exchange for Enrico. The police managed to nab the perpetrators shortly after, and the latter was jailed. However, Enrico was confined in a dark house for three days and he never recovered from the traumatic experience since then.

He was sick for a few years and underwent many therapy sessions before recovering. But, Enrico never forgave Damien for everything. Enrico blamed Damien for abandoning him in the park. He even thought that Damien hated him and had kidnappers took him away purposely.

Their brotherhood was destroyed since then.

Ava was surprised after listening to the story. This was her first time learning about the incident.

She had always wondered about the tension between Damien and Enrico. But, Ava couldn't seem to find any information about them no matter how.

Considering that the Radbury family had solid fame since twenty years ago, why was there no news publicized regarding the kidnapping incident? Also... Ava was puzzled and asked, "Since it was a misunderstanding, why did you have such a strong reaction just now?"

"Because everything I've just told you was a lie fabricated by my family to appease the media. Worrying about their reputation being ruined, my parents had some tricks to bury the news once again." "What is the truth then?" Damien chuckled and took another sip of the drink.

There were several empty bottles tossed across their table now. "If I tell you that I was the real victim of the kidnapping, will you believe it?" She stunned and nodded, "I believe you." Because Ava realized something that no one else knew. There were times where Damien would talk in his sleep as if he was having a nightmare. He would utter the same sentence repetitively, "Help...help me." Finally, Ava knew the truth behind his sleep talking. "How could this happened?"

"Since I had no money back then, I pawned my watch to pay for the cotton candy. Little did I know that it was a valuable item which then triggered the greed of the stall owner."

Damien was kidnapped by the stall owner and confined in a dark room for three days. After Damien was finally rescued, Enrico was sick then. It turned out that Enrico waited continuously at the park before his parents brought him home. He was terrified after discovering that his brother was captured. He felt guilty for demanding cotton candy. If it wasn't for him, Damien would still be there. The guilt was eating him until Enrico was struck down by fever and lost his consciousness. Enrico's illness only worsened when Damien was rescued. Enrico somehow started believing that he was the victim instead of Damien. He would scream in terror and cried for help every day. The Radbury family sought help from countless psychiatrists, but Enrico never recovered. According to the medical diagnosis, Enrico was remorseful for everything and started hallucinating that he was the victim instead. To stabilize Enrico's emotions, Damien discussed the matter with his family and everyone decided to play along with the lie. This explained why the Radbury family struggled hard to bury the actual news back then. "But, you have sacrificed yourself and why did you two remain tense after all these years?" Ava did not understand. "Because he hates me for everything until now." "What do you mean?"

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"Because Enrico thinks that I planned the kidnapping to eliminate him from inheriting the family wealth. So, my brother wants to seek revenge against me." Damien snickered. Ava was puzzled and blurted, "What kind of logic is that?" Well, Damien thought that Enrico's

little antics all this while were amusing. As a child, Enrico would place cockroaches on his dinner plate. Now, he chose to transfer the asset ownership of Radbury Group secretly to himself as revenge on Damien. All in all, Enrico was satisfied as long as it annoyed Damien. The more upset Damien was, the happier Enrico felt. "Why don't you tell him the truth then? You are worried about him and yet he is being selfish." "Do you think that he can handle the truth?" Damien asked in return.

Ava was at a loss for words.

Damien was right. Enrico would have a mental breakdown once he discovered the truth. Such a shame that things had to be this way. Ava then stated, "Damien, I know it's a mess between you two but I think there must be ways to resolve this..."

"What if someone tells you that everything that happened between you and Beth is just a misunderstanding and expects you two get back together, will you agree then?"

"We are not the same because Beth wants me dead!" Ava blurted.

This time, Damien replied, "Exactly. Enrico wants me dead too."

"But..."

"Plus, I have no intention of forgiving him either."

Damien went back to his old self. Ava was not good at consoling people up and she could only observe silently as he gulped the drink over and over again. If it wasn't for Enrico's stupid crave for cotton candy, none of this would have happened. Now both of them hated each other for everything that had happened, despite their brotherhood. Seemed like the two brothers could never resolve their differences. Ava sighed helplessly. Tonight, Damien was surprisingly talkative compared to the last two years. Suddenly, Ava realized that she knew nothing about Damien except for his cold facade. If it wasn't for the alcohol, he might never confess his secrets. Ava thought that Damien would be extremely drunk by the time they were done, but the latter went sober again as they exited the bar. Moreover, he was ready to drive. Ava was appalled and snatched the car key quickly to him.

Damien was surprised, "You can drive?" "Of course! I received my license back in college, but I never had the money to buy a car and practice driving." Knowing that Ava seldom drove, Damien felt uneasy, and he was convinced to be a better driver than her despite his drunken state..

In the end, they took a cab home. After arriving home, Ava noticed Damien's piercing stare. She felt uncomfortable, "Why are you staring at me like that?" "Everything I've said today, you must take them to your grave." "Don't worry, your secrets are safe with me. Plus, I have no one to share them too." "Swear it."

"Fine. I swear, alright?"

Ava discovered that Damien was completely a different person when he was drunk. Yet, she was glad that he chose to share his secrets with her tonight. Ava took it as a sign of trust from Damien.

The next day.

Probably because of the hangover, Damien was still sleeping soundly. This was rare, as he had a habit of waking up early. Ava did not attend the office since it was the weekend. She finished her breakfast and prepared to visit her mother. She found the butler standing by

the door and hesitated to wake Damien up, "Let him sleep. He drank too much yesterday." "How did he get so drunk at such an important party?" It was late when both Damien and Ava arrived home last night, and the servants had slept. So, they were clueless about what happened. Ava explained, "He had a few drinks at the bar, don't worry about it." "You went to the bar? Is everything alright? Did something happen between the Radbury brothers?" "Do you know something about their childhood stories, too?" The butler was taken aback and answered, "I've been working for the Radbury family my entire life and it is impossible for me not to know anything. Did he tell you everything last night, Miss Nagel?" Ava nodded.

The butler was surprised. Damien never told anyone his secrets unless he trusted them. "Looks like both of you are getting along well now." He was relieved. Ava stunned, "What do you mean?" "What I'm saying is, you are important to Mr. Radbury. It's just that he doesn't realize it yet," explained him.

Ava was contemplating over the butler's explanation. Was she really that important to him? She had longed for this day to come, but why was it difficult for her to believe it now? Ava was still distracted when she arrived at her mother's house Jessica noticed her behavior and said, "What's the matter? You've been lost in thoughts since just now. Did you quarrel with Damien again?" "Mom, I think Damien started to like me." The words felt wrong as soon as they left her lips and she shook her head, dismissing them. Ava had a crush on Damien for ten years and they were married for two years now. Despite that, he never cared for Ava. But...

Jessica felt her daughter's forehead and muttered, "You're not sick, so what's wrong with you now?"

"Mom, I'm serious. He... he seems to care about me lately."

"I thought Damien is having a thing with Miss Newton? So he's back to you again? Where's the dowry then?" Jessica complained. "He just paid off your debts of five million dollars. Isn't that enough for you?"

Jessica was in disbelief, "What! So he was the one helping me? I thought you pawned the wedding ring for the money?" Ava presented her with the box containing the wedding ring and said, "Yeah, about that...Damien bought it again." Jessica's eyes twinkled greedily as she touched the large gemstone on the ring. "I think he likes you then! How can anyone resist your stunning beauty? Looks like I can buy more jewelry soon," she giggled.

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### Chapter 75

It was afternoon when Damien woke up. His head throbbed and Ava was nowhere to be found. Suddenly, Damien sniffed the aroma of herbal soup in the hallway. Following the smell to the kitchen, he saw the servant attending a small boiling pot. "What is this?" "It's the herbal chicken soup made by Miss Nagel this morning. She instructed us to keep it warm until you wake up." "Oh, she cooks as well." It was his first time knowing about Ava's

culinary skills. Previously, Damien had never seen her entering the kitchen. It seemed like Damien had a long way to know his wife. "Will you eat the soup now, Mr. Radbury?" asked the servant.

Damien nodded.

The servant placed a yellowish broth in an ornate porcelain bowl in front of Damien. A faint herbal fragrance wafted from the soup's steamy surface. He assumed it to be tasty even before tasting the soup. Not bad, Ava. He scooped a mouthful of the soup and tasted it. He was hungry and thirsty after a night of drinking. As soon as he tasted the soup, Damien choked and nearly spit everything out. It was...horrible!

The soup tasted sour. It was like a chicken being dipped in a ditch and then boiled for a long time! Although the ginger was added to remove the stinky fishy smell, along with some herbs to enhance its nutritional value, it seemed like Ava had forgotten to add some salt into the soup. What a disaster!

"This tastes more like alkaline water instead of chicken soup!" At the same time, Ava sneezed loudly while enjoying a television show on the sofa at her mother's house.

On the other side of town. A low-profile yet elegant black car pulled up at the entrance of a motel located somewhere in the remote parts of the city.

A tall man with a hat came out from behind the vehicle and made his way up to the chipped stairs of the motel.

He stopped to knock on the door of the last room on the second floor. The door flung open and a foxy young lady was revealed.

"Finally you came! I am getting crazy!" The woman pulled him inside.

Then the door was shut.

The man took off his hat as he entered.

It was Enrico and the other woman was Beth.

"As expected, there's no way Damien could have thought that we were together after all this time." Enrico grinned slyly. Beth was not in the mood to beat around the bush and she asked, "When are you going to let me out?"

"You idiot! The last time you drove a truck and created havoc, do you think that Damien is oblivious about everything? If you try to pull off another stupid act and got me involved, then you're off on your own!"

"Fine! Then tell me what should I do, Enrico?" "Beth, we have different goals. You want to kill Ava, but I want Damien to suffer forever." A frightening and brutal look of anguish flashed across Enrico's face. "What are you planning to do?" Beth asked. "I want him to taste every piece of pain and despair that I suffered back then!" He gritted his teeth and made up his mind. With that, this foolish lady that stood before him was the perfect tool for his plan! Enrico smirked as he thought about the evil plans.

"I will go back in a few days and you need to follow my orders. Don't act recklessly, Beth!"

"Wait! Are you leaving me behind then?" Beth asked.

"I've told you that it's either you take it or leave it! Stop dragging me into the mess, Beth." What a sly man!

Beth clenched her fists.

Whatever happened in the end, Beth would be all alone and Enrico could escape from everything. What a detailed plan, Enrico!

Unfortunately, she had no choice.

Beth needed Enrico to kill Ava. Now that she was being hunted by the police, so she must cooperate with Enrico.

"Fine. Just tell me what to do."

Three days later. Damien and the engineering department were out to survey a theme park project operated by one of the subsidiaries. Usually, he went there with the chief secretary, but today, Ava was brought along. It was because the newly built theme park was undergoing pre-opening. Damien wanted Ava to enjoy the fun besides working.

Since it was a weekday, there were very few tourists visiting the park.

Ava followed Damien and listened attentively and took notes of the discussion.

Occasionally, Damien would pause to observe the operations of the park. There was a stall selling cotton candy nearby, and the owner was napping under a tree since there were no customers. "Are the staff not informed that Mr. Radbury will be visiting the park today? How dare they take a nap in the middle of the day?" yelled the deputy chief of the marketing department. The stall owner was awakened by the shouting and awoke to see a group of people in formal office wear standing nearby. He recognized the people as representatives from headquarters and rushed over to apologize for his behavior. Normally, Damien would have fired any lazy staff without much thought. But today, he issued a stern warning and left it at that. After few steps, Damien realized that Ava was missing from his side. Damien scanned everywhere and spotted Ava marching towards him with a giant stick of cotton candy in her hand. "Do you want to try some, Damien?" With the cotton candy shadowed by the sunlight, Ava was beaming and her cheek was pinkish than usual. At the same time, the colleagues went pale by her words. Though it was a field trip, they were still working. Everyone watched with bated breath as Damien reverted his dumbfounded look to being expressionless. "Stop messing around during working hours." There wasn't much irritation in Damien's tone. "Then let's take a break, alright?" Ava said cheerfully. "Fine. Let's rest for fifteen minutes then," ordered Damien.

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### Chapter 76

This was an unexpected order from Damien. Everyone went off to enjoy their break time and left the couple on their own. "No more next time, alright..." Before Damien could finish, his mouth was stuffed with the cotton candy. Damien felt it melted instantly and leaving only a trace of sugary sweetness in his mouth. "Do you like it?" Ava asked. Damien snorted and muttered, "I don't understand the pleasure of eating cotton candy." "Humph! Judging from your reaction, I bet it was your first time eating cotton candy," Ava sneered. She was right. Damien had never eaten cotton candy before. This explained why he had no idea that the large fluffy cotton candy could melt like that before swallowing. But it tasted very sweet.



nonetheless. After the incident twenty years ago, he never thought of having cotton candy anymore. After all, Damien was traumatized by the kidnapping incident until today. He watched Ava tore off a chunk of the candy and swallowed it off in one go. Damien then noticed sugary stains around her mouth. "You look messy," Damien commented. "Hey! You look the same too just now!" Ava tried to feed him by aiming the cotton candy at his mouth. Damien dodged and sooner, both of them ended up in a sweet and sticky mess. "It's all your fault that we're sticky now!" Ava berated him. Yet, Damien was in a good mood. It was a strange feeling. Ever since his confession that night, their relationship seemed to have improved.

Unlike previously when she used to walk on eggshells around him, Ava was more relaxed and cheerful now. Damien was reminded of her in a dress waiting under the cherry blossom trees in the past. He noticed that Ava was seemingly anticipating someone every day after classes. It took him some time to recognize her name and figured out that Damien was the one she was waiting for. "Hey, stop daydreaming! I'm going to wash my hands." Ava waved in his face to get his attention. Damien returned to his senses and nodded. The public washroom was nearby and both of them entered their gender-designated sections. However, Ava did not come out after Damien exited the washroom.

Women were always dawdling in the washroom!

Damien bit the remaining cotton candy and realized that it was melting and falling apart under the hot sun.

He could not resist and took another bite. It was his first time eating in front of a public washroom.

Until he finished the candy, Ava was still not coming out. Damien decided to yell her name from the outside. However, there was no reply. Only then Damien realized that something went wrong and he tossed the stick aside while rushing into the washroom!

As he swung open the door, Damien felt a heavy blow hit his nape. He then felt a pain through his skull and blacked out. When he woke up again, Damien could see nothing in front of him.

A voice called for him repeatedly, "Damien... Damien! Wake up, Damien!"

"Ava?"

He recognized Ava's voice and reached towards her instinctively. From there, Damien could feel her face.

"Where are we? What the hell is going on?" Damien sat up quickly His neck was throbbing and the pain was triggered every time he moved. Ava had regained consciousness before him and she was used to the darkness, though she too could not see anything. "I've tried patting around and there are walls around us. Perhaps we're in some kind of cellar," Ava concluded. Damien could smell a faint musty scent of old cabbages. Undoubtedly, they were either in the basement or a cellar.

But why were they here?

Ava remembered herself washing hands at the sink before a sudden blow hit her head and she lost consciousness. "Damien, are we being kidnapped?" Ava asked. The word 'kidnap' sent shudders down his spine. Damien could feel his childhood trauma coming back again.

The cotton candy, kidnapping, underground cellar, and the darkness... But who was behind this? "Don't worry. There must be a way out from this cellar." Damien held Ava's hand and stood up. Finally, they could feel a wall around. He traced his fingers along the wall in the dark and after half an hour, he bumped into something that felt like a ladder.

Damien asked Ava to secure the ladder as he climbed it. The climb was difficult as he could see nothing in the dark. The area was not high. In the end, Damien reached the top and tried to lift the cover, but to no avail. It was heavy, as if it was blocked by granite or marble slab. "I can't lift the cover with my strength while standing on a ladder," Damien said and went down again. While Damien searched around for some tools, Ava said dejectedly, "Forget it. Whoever's behind this shall have everything well-planned and there's no way we can escape that easily." They continued to fumble around in the dark and found a light bulb. Unfortunately, it was pointless as the bulb was not connected to any power source. Apart from that, there was nothing else. They held hands and sat down to rest. "Damien, what should we do now?" Ava was gradually frightened. It was normal for everyone to fear being trapped in the dark. Even a tiny sound could be heard clearly in the darkness. Damien hugged Ava and comforted her, "Don't worry, we'll find a way." Their cell phones and other items were confiscated. Hence, there was no way to communicate with anyone and their yelling could not be heard by the outside. Damien was calm as usual, "It's going to be alright. Once my family and the staff realize that I've gone missing, they'll figure out ways to track us down." "What if they failed?" Ava was scared.

"Since we're still alive, I assume the culprits have some plans. It's just a matter of time until they approach my family or confront us directly," claimed Damien.

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### **Chapter 77**

Damien was right. Within the minutes of abduction, his employees at the theme park realized their disappearance.

They searched everywhere and based on the CCTV footage, Damien and Ava never exited the washroom. It was normal to have no surveillance cameras installed in the washroom due to privacy. The employees hurried to the washrooms and found drag marks on the floor. Much to their dismay, Damien and Ava's phones were left behind and smashed to pieces. They must have been attacked!

The window of the washroom led to an unused road, whereby the surveillance camera installed was no functioning yet. It was most likely that both Damien and Ava were dragged out via this path! In a flash, the whole city was placed under lockdown. It was no laughing matter when the CEO of the Radbury Group being kidnapped in a broad daylight. Hence, nearly every police were dispatched to search for Damien and Ava.

But both of them seemed to vanish into thin air.

At the Radbury residence, Karen was sobbing hardly. "How could this happen again? Somebody, please tell me where is Damien!" Karen wailed loudly as she clutched her chest

from heartache, and Daryl was perplexed by everything. "Enough! Stop crying and let me think!" Daryl shouted at her. "Don't worry, Damien isn't five years old anymore. He will be alright, mom." Enrico sat on the sofa with one leg crossed another one and he was calmer compared to his parents. Daryl berated him, "You cold-hearted rascal! How could you say that when your brother is missing! We don't even know if he is still alive and you're not being helpful at all!" Enrico snorted, "I experienced the same thing as a kid too and I'm still alive now. Damien and Ava are together so nothing could happen to them." Daryl shot him a complicated look and did not reply to Enrico. Karen wiped her tears and started screaming, "The one being kidnapped last time was Dam..." "Shut up, Karen!" Daryl interrupted his wife. Having to suffer from high fevers and disorders, Enrico had no memories of the actual abduction details twenty years ago. He only knew that it was Damien that abandoned him when he was kidnapped. The Radbury family chose to play along with Enrico's delusional thoughts in order to stabilize the latter's condition. In the end, they couldn't reveal the secret after twenty years as well. Enrico had always been Karen's weakness and she composed herself quickly.

Enrico stood up and left the living room. After ensuring that no one was watching, he dialed a number. Beth answered the call and asked anxiously, "What should I do next, Enrico?" "Don't worry. Just hold them for all three days. In the meantime, you're free to do as you please with them as long as you don't kill my brother." "Fine. I couldn't bear to kill Damien too, but Ava..." "As you wish." Enrico ended the call. He smirked. This was the best feeling ever! It was Damien's turn now to suffer the same pain Enrico experienced before! "It must be exhilarating being trapped in a dark space and wait anxiously for your death. Right, Damien?" Enrico muttered to himself.

The cellar was chilly and damp. Ava started shivering after being confined several hours there. Damien took off his coat and wrapped it around Ava but the latter declined, "Keep it to yourself and stay warm, Damien. You are thinly-dressed than me." "I'm not cold." "Neither do I. Maybe you can hug me instead?" Damien chuckled and embraced Ava. She never thought that they could be such intimate, especially now. The warmth from Damien's body made her sobbed. "Damien, do you know that I've been longing for your embrace?" Ava thought to herself. Although they had no idea about the current time, Ava and Damien could sense that they had been trapped for quite some time now. Due to fatigue and hunger, both were not talking to save their energy.

Everything was silent. Suddenly, Damien chuckled. "How can you still laugh now?" How strange, Ava thought. Damien was always a stoic person. He replied calmly, "Last time when I was kidnapped in the dark, hunger was not much of a problem. I just needed someone beside me because everything was too quiet and scary." "Then, are you afraid now?" "Of course not. Because we are together now." "What a weirdo! Unlike you, I just want to escape as soon as possible," she grunted deliberately. Suddenly, Ava remembered her mother. If she knew that Ava was kidnapped, she would be extremely worried. As time went by, both Damien and Ava were getting weaker. Ava's eyelids became heavier and she was on the verge of fainting.

"Ava, don't sleep!" Damien shook Ava to keep her awake. He was worried that Ava might

never wake up once she drifted into her slumber. "But... I'm sleepy now. How about we have a conversation to keep me awake then?" "Alright." But Damien did not know where to begin. There was dead silence for a few seconds before Ava initiated the conversation, "How did you escape back then?" "My father paid the ransom. After all, money was the kidnapper wanted and he decided to spare my life." "Do you think it's the same this time? Are we going to be okay?" "Maybe." Ava leaned against the wall and murmured, "I wonder how much is your worth. Fortunately, I'm nothing otherwise your parents will not agree to pay for my safety." "We are of the same worth," claimed Damien. Ava was surprised by the statement. She was curious about Damien's expression now but nothing was visible due to the darkness. Though the ending was unpredictable, it was not a bad choice to have Damien by her side before dying. "Damien, remember that basketball court at our high school?" "Mmm..." Damien wondered why she brought it up suddenly. "The truth is, I was there for Selden. He was good-looking and every girl loved to watch him play basketball back then."

## A Lifetime With You Chapter 78

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### Chapter 78

Damien's mood soured when Selden was mentioned. But he did not interrupt her.

"Though I was quite good at sports, somehow I failed to evade that one particular basketball." "What basketball?"

"A cursed one."

Damien could not understand what she was saying. As far as he remembered, basketball was not his usual choice of sport. It was boring as no one could beat his skills.

Yet, Damien forgot he used to save a girl from being hit by a ball once. "You only recognized me during college but the truth is, I have been watching you since high school."

"Really?"

"I had a crush on you for a long time, a pretty... long time." Ava confessed. She felt her heart was beating so fast it hurt. From him being her crush until their marriage, Ava never confessed her feelings. Ava thought that as long as she put enough effort, Damien would eventually be the one to say it first.

But never did she get it... She decided to be the one to confess first. Damien stunned for a few minutes before answering in a flat tone, "I know."

"No, you don't. I've liked you long before you knew my existence." Ava inched closer to Damien.

He stiffened and remained motionless. "I even struggled to improve my grades from beyond the hundredth place to top three in the class just to attend the same college as you! I bet you didn't even notice that my name was merely below yours!"

It was said that people acted weird when death was approaching and Ava felt herself being insane now.

But life was boring without a little madness... She was afraid of losing the courage for

confession. "Damien, you never know how much effort I poured just to get closer to you. Not to say that you have been ignoring me blatantly all this while." Damien snorted, "Then it looks like you've been oblivious about one thing too."

"What is that?" Ava asked.

Damien leaned down and whispered in her ear, "I'm not telling you." "We're about to die and you're still not being honest?" "No. We will survive and I will tell you once everything is over."

He looked up towards the ceiling.

He heard footsteps from the above.

Following that, a ray of light flashed from the ceiling. Someone lifted the cover and appeared before Damian and Ava. "Aww! What a pair of lovebirds wasting their time on trash-talking while death is approaching." As the person spoke, the cellar was now lightened up. Since both Damien and Ava were trapped in the darkness for long, they were blinded momentarily by the sudden brightness and could not recognize the person that stood in front of them. But Ava could never forget that voice! "Beth, it was you after all!" Ava yelled. "Aww! Do you miss me, my dear sister? Anyway, I've been missing you crazily." Beth laughed like a maniac. Suddenly, two muscular men appeared behind her and held Ava and Damien down.

Damien resisted but to no avail because he was weak due to a long period of starvation.

"What do you want, Beth?" Damien sneered.

Beth smirked, "I want nothing but your life." Ava shouted instantly, "Let Damien go and come after me! You hate me and he has nothing to do with it!" "Woah! You still care for him after all." Beth grinned and mocked Ava, "Seems like you have forgotten how he used to treat you back then! I am touched by your devotion, Ava." Beth waved her hands and Ava was pulled to her by the two men. "Let her go now!" Damien yelled.

With his current weakened state, Damien couldn't escape as the rope tied around him. He was helpless when a knife was placed near Ava's jaw by Beth. The sharp blade was glinting in the dark. "Since we were kids, you just had to snatch my everything. Even the man that I loved, it was you he married in the end. Now that I've lost everything, you must have been satisfied."

A sad smile appeared on Beth's face.

Ava replied coldly, "Seems like you've made a mistake. It's you who tried to ruin my life just because I am much better than you!" "What? Don't forget that you're just a lowly illegitimate daughter from my dad! How dare you compare the both of us?" After the remark, Beth lunged at Ava furiously and aimed at the latter's chest. Damien used his last remaining strength and kicked the leg of a table nearby towards Beth. She took a step behind with the knife. "You leave me with no choice, Damien Radbury! You shall have the taste of witnessing your lover dying slowly in front of you!" Beth raised her knife again. Damien rebuked, "Do you think that without Ava, I will like you?"

"Say what you want because she will die today!" Beth's hatred overpowered the admiration that she had for Damien previously. If it wasn't for Enrico's instructions to keep Damien alive, both of them would be stabbed to death

now. Maybe Ava was right after all. Perhaps Beth was not in love with Damien and she just wanted to snatch everything from Ava! "You're just a b\*tch and you don't deserve to enter the Nagel family at all!" Beth was enraged and an evil smirk was formed on her face. Suddenly, a voice shouted from the ceiling, "Stop right there!" Beth's face changed. Who dared to interfere with her business at this time? "Who is it! Show yourself!" Before she could identify the person, a blinding light flashed before their eyes and everyone stunned. The two men behind Beth panicked and escaped quickly. But soon, they found themselves surrounded by armed police.

## A Lifetime With You Chapter 79

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### Chapter 79

Selden and a group of policemen appeared at the entrance. "Beth, you're surrounded. Put the knife down and surrender yourself!" Beth gave up and laughed madly as she knew everything had ended. She did not expect the police to arrive so soon.

"Ava, you've always been a lucky girl, but I guess today is your last day to live!" Beth's expression changed instantly and she stabbed Ava's chest. "Ava!" Damien screamed and the atmosphere was tense.

There was red everywhere all of a sudden and Beth's face was splattered with blood.

"Bang!" A gunshot was fired. The police fired a shot and the bullet passed through Beth's head. Beth stumbled and died with her eyes wide open. Instead of Beth, all Ava could see was someone standing in front and embraced her tightly! Blood gushed from Selden's back and his face paled as time passed. "Ava... are you alright...?"

".."

"It's alright." Selden gave her a weak smile, and he collapsed onto her shoulder silently. Ava's legs weakened as both of them fell to the ground. Selden's back was soaked in blood and no matter how much pressure Eva applied on the wound, the reddish fluid kept oozing out. She was frozen by the view as he was covered by blood... "Hey! Selden! Don't scare me, please!" Selden was rushed to the emergency immediately. In the hospital, Ava squatted on the ground and cried in despair. Just then, Damien finished providing his statement to the police and walked towards her. "He's going to be alright," he comforted her despite being unsure of everything. Much to his surprise, Selden threw himself to protect Ava while Damien could only watch helplessly from the side.

Damien was feeling annoyed and guilty. But Selden's life must be saved regardless of his own personal feelings. Damien contacted the best surgeons in the city and he had three blood banks nearby prepared for the surgery. He knew Ava could go mad if Selden lost his life.

It was after six hours and Selden was still in critical condition. "It's all because of me! It's all my fault." Ava sobbed while blaming herself. "This is Beth's fault, not yours," Damien said. "He did it to save me... If only I had..." Finally, the surgery door opened. "Selden!" Ava stood up and ran over immediately. Selden was looking pale, and he remained unconscious on the

bed.

"The patient is stable now, but the wound was extremely close to his heart and we have to monitor him closely," explained the surgeon. The patient is now stable... Ava was relieved upon hearing the words. She slumped on the floor. Her vision blurred, and she fainted. Luckily, Damien caught her in time before she hit the floor. After being rescued, Damien realized that both of them were held captive for more than thirty hours in the cellar. After suffering from exhaustion and severe emotional meltdown, it was natural for Ava to lose her strength.

When Ava woke up again, she saw her mother beside the bed. She was confused momentarily and it took her some time to remember everything.

"Ava! You're finally awake! You've nearly scared me to death!" Jessica said tearfully.

"Mom...where's Damien?"

"Now that Beth is dead, Damien had to leave to manage the aftermaths. He informed me everything before leaving."

Ava nodded and asked, "Right! Is Selden alright?" "He is alright but still unconscious," explained Jessica.

"I want to see him."

Ava pulled the IV out immediately and prepared to leave. "Hey, stop moving around! You have to eat something..." Jessica couldn't stop Eva as the latter limped out of the room.

Lying alone in the ward, Selden, who looked so pale was attached to several medical devices.

Upon seeing his current state, Ava was heartbroken again.

It seemed like she would have to owe him forever.

"What are you crying for? I'm not dead yet." Finally, Selden opened his eyes, but his voice was hoarse and weak. "Selden! You're awake!" Ava took a step closer, but she did not know what to expect. Selden was a doctor and after looking around, he found himself attached to the monitor and ventilator. Selden then chuckled, "Well, looks like I have escaped death narrowly."

"Don't move and I'll get the doctors now!" Ava dashed out and signaled the chief surgeon to have a check on Selden. After examining Selden, the doctor assured that it was a good sign that Selden had awakened. Once his wound healed, he could recover again. Finally, Ava heaved a sigh of relief. "Are you in pain? I was scared to death when the doctor said that the stab was merely two centimeters from your heart!" Selden forced a weak smile, "Hey, looks like you do care for me after all." "Of course I do! You were stabbed by Beth while protecting me! What should I do if you lose your life because of me!"

"Now that I'm alive, where's my reward then?"

Ava went speechless.

Huh? Even if Ava gave him her life savings, it was probably never enough to repay the debt. Moreover, Selden was the heir of Oakley Corporation, so money wasn't his main concern at all. With the painful wound, Selden mustered his strength and smiled, "How about giving your heart as my reward?" Ava was bewildered.

Ava was about to brush off his joke when she heard an upset voice suddenly, "You still have

the strength to tease someone, Mr. Oakley. Seems like you are okay after all?" Ava turned around, and it was Kelly standing at the doorway. Selden's smile froze. Kelly tossed the large bouquet on the shelf and huffed, "I heard that you almost die so I am here to send you off. Too bad you're still alive then."

In reality, Kelly was extremely worried, and she left the filming site instantly after learning about the incident. Yet, she lashed out at Selden to hide her true emotions.

## A Lifetime With You Chapter 80

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### Chapter 80

Selden huffed, "Then I apologize for coming back alive without your permission, Miss Hensley." "If so, then go and die so that I can have a close look this time." "I don't take stabs for an ex-girlfriend," replied Selden sarcastically. "What the f..!" Kelly was irritated and her annoyance grew when she spotted Ava standing nearby. Kelly couldn't bear to lay a hand on the weak Selden so she decided to send a slap across Ava's face. Ava knew that it was impossible to dodge so she gritted her teeth for the slap. Somehow, Ava felt nothing on her face.

She opened her eyes, and Damien was grabbing Kelly's arm and pushing her away abruptly. Kelly lost her balance, and she almost stumbled. "Mr...Mr. Radbury." Kelly was embarrassed by her act. After all, Kelly was a brand ambassador of the Radbury Group and she should behave appropriately before Damien.

Damien remained quiet. He ignored both Selden and Kelly before grabbing Ava to leave the room. "Hey! Wait..." Ava didn't get the opportunity to bid goodbye to Selden. "I just wanted to thank Selden for saving my life." Ava explained herself immediately to prevent Damien from having the wrong idea. "Are you so grateful that Selden sacrificed himself to save you?" Damien asked coldly. "Of...of course, I'm grateful to him." "Are you going to repay him with your body then?" "What are you saying! ....I'm married to you now!" Ava was furious and raised her voice unconsciously. She thought their relationship had improved after the occurrence but Damien's cold behavior revealed the opposite instead. This man was just... Damien pressed her forehead with his finger. "Anyway, I've repaid Selden on your behalf." Damien grabbed her hand and walked forward.

From his tone, Ava could hardly tell whether he was happy or upset. Ava followed Damien obediently despite having no clue about their destination.

"Why did you bring me here?" Ava was surprised that they were now in an empty restaurant. "Sit down." Damien motioned. As soon as Ava was seated, the waiters delivered all of her favorite food. It had been two days after the cellar incident and both of them did not have any meal yet.

It turned out that he was afraid that she was starving.

Ava was deeply touched and she started to dig in. While they were feeding themselves, a commotion broke out at the restaurant entrance. Suddenly, a middle-aged woman barged in. "Madam, the entire restaurant has been reserved by Mr. Radbury and you can't enter!"



The waiter couldn't stop her aggressive action. Ava recognized the woman as her stepmother, Cecelia Jerrison. The latter was holding a knife and charged towards them. Damien frowned and he protected Ava immediately. Fortunately, Cecelia was pinned to the ground by the security guards before she could do anything.

"Ava! I'm going to kill you! You shall pay for the death of my daughter!" Cecelia threw them a murderous look as she yelled loudly. She was heartbroken by the death of Beth. Even Ava couldn't bear to look her in the eye.

She then approached Cecelia.

Damien wanted to stop Ava but she shook her head while whispering, "It's okay, Damien."

"Go to hell, Ava Nagel! B\*tch!"

Cecelia spat at her. Ava was not afraid as she marched towards Cecelia. "I'm not the killer of your daughter." "Stop lying! If it wasn't for you, she'd still be alive! You're going to pay for this, Ava! Both you and your mother shall rot in hell!"

"It was Beth trying to kill me and she paid the price for everything," said Ava firmly without feeling

guilty.

But Cecelia had lost her mind. She tried to lunge at Ava but the former was being restrained by the guards. "Mrs. Jerrison, Beth has only herself to blame for this tragedy. To be exact, you and my father were the cause of her irrational behavior!"

"Nonsense! It's you and your mother! I'll kill you..."

"My mother wasn't a usurper, she was deceived back then, just like you were. She met my father before you did." Ava then took a deep breath. It was pointless to bring out the past again.

Beth was dead and everything should have ended by now. Still, it was hard to let go of an intense feeling of hatred.

"You...go to hell!" Cecelia was blinded by hatred and she wanted Ava to die! "You taught Beth to hate me and she never stopped plotting revenge against me. This is all karma! While I am not guilty of her death, you should be ashamed of yourself for ruining her life!"

"No...it...it's not like that! You're wrong..."

Cecelia shook her head intensely and shrieked helplessly. In the end, Cecelia stopped crying, and she cried her heart out. The knife then laid on the ground. Ava instructed the guards,

"Please escort her out and don't file a police report." "Yes, Mrs. Radbury." Ava turned around

and smiled at Damien, "Let's go." On the way home, she leaned against the window and was in deep thoughts. Damien was slightly worried and upon reaching the Radbury residence,

he asked Ava, "Are you alright?" "... it's nothing." The car pulled up at the entrance but Ava was silent and remained motionless. Damien accompanied her silently as well. After a long

time, Ava asked, "Should I be sad that Beth is dead now?" "Are you sad then?"

"I don't know."

The half-sister that she had always hated and avoided was dead. Ava was neither happy nor sad but she felt a vast emptiness as if something was gone forever.