

Love Amidst the Shadow

Chapter 6

My mother usually brought me lunch every noon. Today, however, she was a few hours late. When she arrived, her eyes were bloodshot, and her face was drained of color. A good chunk of her hair had also turned white overnight. "Mom, did something happen at home? Were there problems with Adam's health again?" I couldn't stop myself from asking her when she entered my ward. My mother initially deflected my question by urging me to eat, intending to just let things pass, but her current state left me worried. Under my persistent questioning, she couldn't hold back anymore and held me as she burst into tears. "Vivi, the police came and detained your father. Our family is done for!" "They detained him?" I frowned as I asked, "Dad's just a farmer, an honest man. Why would the police detain him?" My mother's eyes turned bloodshot. Her voice was hoarse. "They said that he hit someone. He can't even bring himself to slaughter a chicken; how could he possibly have beaten up someone? It's clear that that evil Mr. Meyer from Turing Corporation doesn't want to pay him his salary, so he accused your father of hitting him." She was crying so hard she had a runny nose. "What should we do, Vivi? Your father's in prison. And Adam's in the hospital, waiting for your father's paycheck to pay off his medical bills!" I consoled my mother, but I was also panicking. My parents were poor. They came all the way from the countryside to the city to work. A few years ago, my mother got into an accident at her workplace, and was unable to do heavy labor after that. Thus, my father became our breadwinner, who labored day in and day out every day to support his family. Under such circumstances, we survived for years. Just as I graduated and could finally help with the household expenses, my younger brother Adam was suddenly diagnosed with acute leukemia. It was around this time that I met Emil. In the world of adults, men worked and were responsible for putting food on the table, while women won the favor of men to earn money for themselves. It was simply a case of give and take. Emil was liberal with his money, but leukemia was a disease that ate through money reserves quickly. My income combined with my father's salary could barely sustain my brother's treatments. Now that my father had been arrested by the police, my mind was in a frenzy. It seemed that that Mr. Meyer clearly intended to renege on his word and deliberately dig my father a hole. After I had calmed my mother, I headed straight to the police station. When I saw my father, his hair had gone plenty white overnight; he looked far older. He lowered his head in guilt when he saw me. "I'm a terrible father, Vivi. I'm sorry for causing trouble for you," he said helplessly. I shook my head. The tugging on my heart was unbearable. I forced a smile onto my face. "You know that's not the case, Dad. Just give me a moment; I'll find a way to get you out of here. Please don't say that." He sighed. "That Mr. Meyer is a cruel fellow. He kept going back on his promises. We ordinary folks have no choice but to accept our fate. Listen, Vivian, don't bother with me anymore. Find a way to get the money for your brother's treatments. Be a good girl and do as I say!" "But Dad!" My heart ached terribly. "I can't just leave you here, no matter what. I already thought of a way to pay for Adam's treatments. Don't worry your head about it. I'll find a way to have

you walk free.” With that, I left the police station. My heart stung. The most important thing right now was to find Mr. Meyer. My father must not be sued. I had heard about this Mr. Meyer through the grapevine at Halonox—he loved indulging himself. I initially intended to go to his home to look for him, but I realized that he wasn’t home when I arrived. Later on, I found out that he was enjoying himself at Halonox. Fortunately for me, I got acquainted with a certain few people during the two years I was with Emil. That was how I found out he was at Halonox. I stood by the door to the private room he had booked. After hesitating for a moment, I pushed open the door. Compared to the faint noise down the corridor, the sound of music and wine glasses clinking together inside the room was deafening. I thought that Mr. Meyer had only invited a few of his fellow pleasure-seeking indulgers, but I froze the moment I entered; Emil’s presence was starkly obvious inside the massive room as he sat among the men on the leather couch. I paused when I saw this, thinking I had entered the wrong room.