

## **Love Coming from the Least Expected**

### **Chapter 31**

Crystal must have been sent by God to punish me because she would get her hands on the things I sought at the end of the day. Lyle would go to great lengths just to meet her in person. Thus, I was certain I would be banished once she made her way back.

The thought of filing for divorce crossed my mind again. In fact, I had never felt such a strong urge to leave him. No longer could I stand enduring his wrath and tolerating his absurd request anymore.

Once I made up my mind, I decided to have a conversation with Sharon as I was afraid the news would take her by surprise. Although I was intimidated by the thought of letting her down, it was the best alternative for Lyle and me. He had nothing to lose while I could regain my freedom.

Sharon was the reputable figure behind the Smith family's success. Once Lyle and I got married, she decided to retire and had Lyle inherit her role as the leader of the family. She stopped poking her nose into the family's affair and spent most of her time grooming her garden.

Afraid she would be heartbroken, I thought of countless methods to break the news to her. I decided not to mention anything about Lyle having an affair with

another woman and the part I was humiliated by his mistress.

The moment I reached the mansion, my heart skipped a beat because the entire place was surrounded by medics. When I rushed upstairs, I found Sharon on the bed with a doctor next to her. Concerned, I approached Josephine and asked, "What's wrong with Grandma?"

Josephine told me Sharon had passed out when she was in the garden. Thus, they had summoned the doctor over to check on her. I started pacing back and forth in the corridor, anxious about the result of the examination. I was afraid something bad would happen to the loving

woman who had taken great care of me. Truth be told, I had long considered her as my own grandmother.

“Isn’t this my beloved Yvonne? What’s wrong? What’s with your scrunched-up face? You don’t have to worry about me because it’s a common symptom for people around my age.”

When Sharon saw me, she grinned and assured me everything would be fine. I responded in a similar manner and grasped her hand in return. It had been a long time since my last visit – I stopped visiting her ever since I found out Lyle had an affair. I couldn’t believe I had forsaken the ones important to me because of the unreliable man.

Sharon’s expression darkened, and she started reprimanding her grandson, “Why do you have such a pale and haggard look? Has Lyle been neglecting you

again? Where’s that unfilial grandson of mine? Get him over immediately! I’ll teach him a lesson for not playing the role of a husband!”

In an attempt to keep Sharon in the dark, I rebuked, “Lyle has quite a lot of things on his plate because of the company’s ongoing issues. We should stay out of his way. As soon as he’s free, I’ll bring him over and visit you, okay?”

If Lyle showed up ahead of me, I wouldn’t get to bring up my plan to file for divorce with him in front of Sharon. Sighing, Sharon said, “You need to stop defending him because he’s going to get full of himself! I want you to take good care of yourself instead!”

When I heard Sharon’s advice, I was overwhelmed by tidal waves of emotions. Initially, I planned to tell Sharon I would be filing for divorce with Lyle soon, but the bad news the doctor shared with me changed my mind.

“Since the patient is getting old, her organs are deteriorating, including her heart. She still gets to live for another few years if she’s taken great care of. But do keep in mind not to provoke her.”

Afraid my decision would drive her to death, I decided to keep everything to myself and returned to the room to

keep her company. Once I ensured the room was properly illuminated with sunlight, I headed into the kitchen and made her something to eat.

Spending the last two years as a housewife had enabled me to polish my culinary skills. When Sharon showed up in the kitchen and saw my scrunched-up face, she asked, "Yvonne, can you tell me the truth? Have you been fighting with Lyle?"

I was afraid of sharing the details with her, so I made something up and asserted with a smile, "Grandma, isn't it normal for husband and wife to fight every now and then? Things will turn out just fine at the end of the day." "Are you sure you're not lying?" Sharon asked with her brows arched in confusion.

I repeated myself, "Have I ever lied to you? Aren't you aware of the affection I have for him? I will never hold a grudge against him!"

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Well, that was the case in the past because he was the one who had rushed to my rescue when Yvette tried to drown me in the pond. Whenever Lyle showed up, she would put on a timid front and stop picking on me.

It was very foolish of me to fall for him just because he had saved me. Those who had no near-death experiences would never figure out the way it felt to have someone to rely on in the nick of time.

When I struggled in the pond, those nearby wouldn't stop laughing at me. They couldn't care less if I would make it out alive or not. Lyle was the only one who had jumped into the pond and saved me in the nick of time without any hesitation.

As the one who had saved me, I felt indebted and obliged to repay the favor. Unfortunately, I might be wrong because the last thing he needed was my affection.

Unable to bring up the request to file for divorce, I returned home feeling dejected. The housekeepers hired to keep the place clean had been dismissed because Lyle

disliked being surrounded by strangers. After spending a few days away from home, the place was messed up once again, but I couldn't be bothered.

Suddenly, someone barged into the foyer. The drunk Lyle staggered his way into the dining hall and slammed the dishes I had prepared to the ground while yelling, "What have you told Grandma?"

Sighing, I put everything aside and answered, "I'm not as shameless as you. I have merely dropped by to visit Grandma because I'm aware she's not feeling well."

"Are you sure? If that's the case, why have Grandma terminated Bianca after your trip to her place? Are you jealous?" Lyle kicked the table with all his might and ended up falling to the ground.

I rushed over to help him up, but he shrugged me off, slapping me in the face the moment I touched him. The thunderous slap reverberated in the desolate mansion. Staring at him in the eyes, I ran my fingers across my swollen cheek. I thought he wouldn't be able to hurt me anymore, but I was wrong. My heart ached because he had taken out his frustration on me for his mistress' sake again.

"I'm not even a match for Bianca, huh?"

He glared at me in the eyes and scowled, "Of course! After all, you're just a loose woman who enjoys having all sorts of fun with different men!"

It turned out he had always deemed me a filthy woman. I chuckled and asked, "If that was the case, why had you chosen to get married to me?"

He grasped my chin and answered my only question with a vicious grin, "It's because I want to torture you!"

I want to torture you!

I had a nightmare and found myself drowning again. No matter how much I asked for help, no one around me would offer to save me. They surrounded me and started making fun of me for being a wimp.

When I was overwhelmed by despair, someone brought me back to the shore. I thought Lyle had rushed to my rescue, but I was wrong. Smirking, he pushed me back

once he brought me up and allowed me to take a breather.

In the end, he left me alone at the seemingly bottomless pond. When I roused from my sleep because of the nightmare, I noticed my pillow was completely drenched in tears. I thought my life would soon be over as I stared blankly at the ceiling.

When I received a call, I picked it up and heard Christopher asking in a petulant manner, “Why haven’t you picked up my call? Don’t you know I’m worried about you?”

As soon as I heard his question, I started wailing because the emotions I had been suppressing came flooding out. Christopher raised his volume and repeated, “Has Lyle picked on you again? What the heck is that jerk capable of apart from taking things out on a vulnerable woman?”

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He got increasingly anxious as I sniffled in silence. In an attempt to console me, he started praising me and picking on Lyle for being a foolish man. As I continued wailing over the phone, he sighed and requested, “Can you stop crying? It feels awful to be so far away from you. I hope I’m right next to you, so I can keep you safe in between my arms.”

“Christopher, I want to get myself some candy, but there isn’t any at home! What should I do? I want some so badly!” I searched high and low, but I couldn’t get myself the things I had been craving. Consequently, I wailed once again.

I could hear sounds of things being thrown around from the other end. It felt as though he was even more anxious than me. In the end, he suggested, “Dammit! If only I hadn’t come to Coldbridge today! Hmm... Why don’t I tell you a story to make you feel better!” He started sharing a fairytale with me. His deep baritone voice worked like a charm and allowed me to regain my composure. Shortly, I fell asleep once again because I

was feeling down.

By the time the loud bang on the door roused me from sleep, it was already five o'clock in the morning.

Intimidated by the presence of the one at the doorstep, I asked the person to identify himself and heard Zachary's voice.

He's Christopher's friend, isn't he? I once encountered him at the banquet! What brings him here today? I answered the door once I finished touching up on my unkempt appearance. "What brings you here in the middle of the night?"

"What? Do you think I wish to be here when I'm supposed to be sleeping? Someone told me to bring you this!" Zachary yawned and departed once he handed over a box to me.

Confused by the series of events that had occurred within the last few seconds, I couldn't figure out the sort of things inside the box he had handed over to me.

To be precise, I wasn't sure who had sent him to my place in the middle of the night because we had merely introduced ourselves to one another during the banquet.

Once I unwrapped the box, I found out there were all sorts of candy I had been craving. I couldn't believe Christopher had sent Zachary to deliver the candy on his behalf while he himself was all the way in Coldbridge. Has he brought me these just because I brought them up in the middle of our conversation? Why? What's the reason behind this?

I proceeded to stuff one of the candies into my mouth. Actually, I wasn't a huge fan of sweet things, but someone once told me consuming one would help when one was in a foul mood. Thus, I started consuming candy to keep myself happy.

The candy was the only thing that could temporarily ease the pain I felt. With that being said, that batch of candy was unique because Christopher had gone to great lengths to get them delivered.

I reached for my phone and drafted a long-winded text to him, but I thought that would be too much. In the end, I

omitted everything else and just expressed my gratitude.

Christopher: Don't you think that's inappropriate when you're such an enthusiastic one in bed?

He reverted to me within a few seconds. I flushed because he had mentioned the raunchy session we had once again. It felt odd to be teased by him, but the sort of intimate conversation we had, gave me a sense of serenity.

It felt great to know there would always be someone who was only one call away. If I were given another chance to change my decision, I would definitely get married to Christopher instead of Lyle.

I guess it's not impossible, huh? Since things have gotten to the point of no return, I don't have to spend the rest of my life with Lyle anymore! If Christopher isn't against the idea, I'll get married to him! Overwhelmed by the fantasy I had in mind, I drafted the text and asked: Shall we get married once I file for divorce with Lyle?

Immediately after I returned to my senses, I tried to delete the delivered message. As a member of a renowned family, I was certain Christopher's parents would never allow him to get married to someone else's ex-spouse.

Christopher asked me the reason I had deleted the message. My mind was all over the place because I was certain he had read the message before I could delete them in time. After one last reply, I put my phone aside and buried my face in my hands.

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To my surprise, the persistent man called me in an attempt to confront me. Unsure of the things to talk about, I hung up his call and made up my mind to deny I had dropped him the embarrassing message.

As he wouldn't give up and continued calling once after another, I forced myself to calm down and picked it up, replying in a callous tone, "It was a mistake, okay? Can you forget about it?"

Nancy, who was on the other end, asked, "What sort of mistake are you talking about? Are you having a fight with Lyle again?"

My heart skipped a beat when I heard Nancy's voice. I was grateful I hadn't addressed him as Christopher. Otherwise, things would get awkward. Although Nancy was a reliable friend of mine, it would be a hassle for me to explain everything to her.

At the very least, I had to keep everything confidential until I could sever ties with Lyle. Otherwise, we would both end up miserably should things spiral out of control. "Are you shocked when it's like something that occurs on a daily basis? What brings you to me today?"

"You're the one at fault for spoiling him! He's going to take you for granted if you don't teach him a lesson! He should've seen it coming the time we were at the

clubhouse! I tried to stop him, but he decided to humiliate you in front of others!"

Nancy once urged me to take everything into considerations before making the call to get married to Lyle. However, I wasn't in my right mind because I was overly thrilled. As a result of not taking her words seriously, I had to bear the consequences of my rash decision.

If I have exercised caution and thought things through, things won't end up as such. I left everything behind, including my job, to get married to Lyle. Over the past two years, he was the center of my life. Now that I think about it, no one is going to enjoy my presence when I don't even like my current self.

I brought something up and diverted her attention for a change of mood. "Alright, shall we talk about something else since I'm in a great mood for once? What are you up to? As long as I have time to spare, I don't mind tagging along with you."

Nancy announced, "My bad! I have received the invitation card to the banquet held by the Tanner family, but I won't be able to make it because I'm up to something else! I'm calling to beg for mercy!"

It was another one of the many absurd things I had to go through as an outcast of the Tanner family – I knew nothing about the banquet that would be held until a friend of mine told me about it.

Calm down, Yvonne! Haven't you gotten used to it after being ignored, neglected, dismissed, and picked on over the years? Apart from being biologically related, I don't think I have anything to do with the Tanner family at all! I deadpanned my question, "Is the banquet held to celebrate Crystal's return?"

Nancy noticed something was wrong when she caught me asking indifferently. She queried, "Are you telling me they have not informed you? I-"

I knew she would want to console me, but that wouldn't be necessary at all. In return, I chuckled and said, "Well, you're aware of the things that have occurred over the years, aren't you? Since it's not a banquet held for me, feel free to tend to the things you have instead."

On the day of the banquet, I received a call from my father. He reprimanded me the moment I picked up the call, "Crystal was back since a few days ago, yet you didn't bother to pay her a visit! Do you really consider yourself her sister? Have you forgotten I'm your father as well?"

I had long gotten used to being reprimanded for every trivial issue. Crystal was the family's sweetheart, while others had always deemed me the jinx of the family.

"Dad, I have just been discharged from the hospital after a miscarriage. As of now, I'm still in the middle of recovery."

It was not my intention to play victim, but he seemed to have misperceived it that way. He got increasingly infuriated and yelled, "Can't you even take good care of yourself when you're just a housewife? Just how useless can you be?"

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Usually, others would express their concerns over their

child's wellbeing after such a serious incident. As I couldn't take it anymore, I interrupted him and said, "Dad, if you're going to talk about the banquet in the afternoon, don't worry because I'll be there. Is there anything else?"

"Crystal has been away for a few years. Hence, I don't want anyone to mess up the banquet. You better keep that in mind and show up on time with Lyle. Otherwise, get yourself ready to bear the consequences of your mistakes!"

He hung up the call once he made himself clear. I had a hard time comprehending the reason he was worried Lyle wouldn't show up. My so-called husband was way more pumped up than me the moment he found out Crystal would soon be back.

Has he no shame at all? He picked a fight with me on Bianca's behalf a few days ago, yet he's currently pumped up for Crystal's return.

Since Crystal has forsaken him for once for the sake of her career, I'm pretty sure she's going to do it again! When the image of Lyle returning to Crystal and being ditched all over again flashed back in my mind, I realized how pathetic I was. At the end of the day, I was nothing more than Lyle's backup, and Lyle was the same to Crystal.

After putting on a relatively plain-colored dress, I departed without going through the hassle of dolling myself up. On my way there, I encountered Nancy going on a date with a handsome man.

The man had a pair of aqua-blue eyes and a charming smile. I winked at her because I finally figured out the reason she couldn't make it to the banquet. Well, who would want to waste their time attending a pointless banquet when they could spend some quality time with their loved ones?

Once Nancy greeted me and noticed I had a relatively simple look for the banquet, she rolled her eyes and yelled, "Yvonne, are you giving up already? Oh, God! Come on!"

I noticed the differences between us once I compared myself against Nancy, who was in her best fit for the date. We were both from a renowned family, but we were nothing similar.

Never had I learned the proper way to doll up myself because I wasn't given a chance to pick my clothes. The

ones I had were the used ones from Crystal and Yvette. They were either of the right sizes with odd patterns or vice versa.

"I don't think it's necessary for me to put on my best fit for a banquet that's held for Crystal." I could barely convenience myself with the random excuse I had made up out of the blue.

Immediately after Nancy encountered me, she bade farewell to the man next to her and brought me to a nearby studio. "Yvonne, if you refuse to dress up, I won't allow you to step out of this studio! How can you not do anything when everyone's aware Nancy and Lyle used to be in a relationship?"

Standing at the entrance of the studio, I rebuked with my lips pursed, "Actually, he still has a thing for her as we speak. Since it's not going to change a thing, shall we forget about it? It's not like I'll be a match for Crystal even if I doll myself up."

Nancy almost strangled me to death as she dragged me all the way into the studio. She forced me to take a seat in front of the makeup artist and said, "I want you to prove yourself wrong! Where's the woman that kissed Christopher in front of everyone? Who's this coward in front of me?"

She had been exaggerating things because I was just a pathetic woman who had little to no savings. The dress I had put on was the one I purchased more than a year

ago. It was about time for me to get myself a job.

Otherwise, I would have to live on the streets soon.

I told them to try their best within the budget of three thousand, but Nancy stopped me and instructed the makeup artists to get me their best fit. In the end, she

dropped me off at Tanner residence and urged, "Show me the things you're capable of if you're afraid of wasting my time and effort! I'm sure you're going to be just fine without Lyle!"

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The fact I had friends that cared about me made me felt assured. As I marched into the mansion, I noticed a lot of guests, including heirs of different families, who had been invited to the banquet. Although the family wasn't a member of the upper echelon, it was considered a renowned family in Avenport.

It felt as though it was a blind date set up for Crystal.

The moment I marched into the manor, I could feel the guests looking at me. The sense of inferiority had caused me to behave oddly. I just couldn't get used to being the center of everyone's attention.

However, after spending a few years in the corporate world, I could conceal my emotions and keep everything to myself. I looked at the guests and nodded in return.

All of a sudden, I saw Nathan, Scarlett, and Yvette

engaging in a conversation nearby the staircase. The family of three seemed to be having a great time.

I was supposed to get used to it, but it would still get to me as the one next to Nathan used to be a loving father. The one next to her wasn't Amelia as well. However, those were merely sweet memories of mine.

When I reached Nathan's side, I greeted him, "Hey, Dad."

His expression darkened the moment he saw me. As Lyle was nowhere to be seen, he craned over and queried, "Where's Lyle? Why are you here on your own?"

I had long gotten used to his irritated look after spending the past decade being neglected by him. "He'll be joining us soon because he has to deal with something else."

"Go entertain our guests and mind your manners! Otherwise, I'll hold you accountable if anything goes wrong!" Nathan beckoned me away with his face puckered in irritation, joining other guests once he

finished humiliating me.

I couldn't figure out the reason the loving father of mine had turned into an indifferent man over the night. On top of having an affair with another woman, he had a daughter that was around my age. The thing that hurt me the most was the fact my mother had left me behind. Scarlett scowled at me and wrapped her arm around Nathan's arm, joining him in entertaining the other

guests. On the other hand, Yvette approached and greeted me enthusiastically, "Hey, Yvonne! You look different! It took me a few minutes to figure out you're my sister! Where's Lyle, by the way? Why isn't he here? Are you guys fighting again? I hope that's not the case, otherwise, it's a bad omen!"

She wouldn't stop rubbing salt into my wounds, but I had no intention to waste my time with her either. It seemed like everyone was conscious of my strained relationship with Lyle and couldn't wait to gloat over my misfortune. Smirking, she added, "You should have listened to me when I told you to stay away from Lyle because he obviously had a thing for Crystal! Had that been the case, you wouldn't have gone through the ordeals over the past two years. You don't think you can turn the tables around, do you?"

I would never be on good terms with my stepsister unless some sort of miracle occurred over the night and allowed us to patch things up with one another.

All of a sudden, I recalled the great time I had as the only daughter of the Tanner family. I was my parents' sweetheart, but everything changed the moment Scarlett and Yvette showed up.

My mother, Amelia, couldn't stand being around them and decided to leave everything behind, including me. I ended up being the extra one as Nathan deemed Scarlett and Yvette the nucleus member of his family. When Crystal joined the family along with his mother, life got

worse for me. I should consider myself lucky for making it through adulthood.

“Why don’t you stop poking your nose into my business since you’re aware I’m Lyle’s legal spouse? Well, I guess you can define a mistress better than others, huh? After all, you’re the daughter of a mistress,” I rebuked with my head held high.

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When I was young, I had to brace myself through all sorts of humiliations because no one was there for me.

Although that was still the case, I no longer needed others’ backings because I could rely on myself.

Irrked, Yvette gasped out her reply with her face puckered in irritation, “Yvonne, what makes you think you’re in a position to pick on me? Have you no shame at all?

Crystal is the only one who deserves Lyle!”

Christopher had taught me silence would be the best response to a fool. As I winced in silence, Yvette could no longer keep herself calm. She sprinted over in an attempt to slap me in the face.

I took a step back to evade the slap. In return, I warned her in a hushed voice, “If you don’t want to hurt yourself, you better keep that side of yours to yourself since most of the guests are here for you.”

Thrilled to be able to get the better of Yvette for once, I sprinted in the direction of the courtyard and made up my mind to defend myself from that day onwards. I was about to take a breather and spend some time alone, but I accidentally bumped into someone.

I staggered and thought I would embarrass myself again because of the pair of heels I couldn’t get used to.

However, a man wrapped his arm around my waist in the nick of time. I felt a strong urge to push him away but paused when I caught a whiff of a familiar scent.

It was the scent of tobacco exclusive to that man. I

gaped at the presence of Christopher and tried to push him away to prevent drawing unnecessary attention.

Nonetheless, he grasped me with all his might and leaned over, whispering in a hoarse voice, “I miss you so much because it has been quite a few days since our last

meeting.”

“Hurry up and move away from me!” Afraid others would run into us, I started shuddering in fear. The reason I had an affair with another man was just to provoke Lyle. “No. Not unless you give in to my demand!” Christopher rubbed his chest against mine. He could take advantage of me because the evening gown I had put on was quite a revealing piece.

“What do you want from me?” I was about to burst into tears when the things awaiting me should others run into us crossed my mind. Since Crystal was back, I was certain Lyle would try something silly again. In other

words, I had to ensure he wouldn’t be able to accuse me of having an affair.

“I want to finish off... Forget it. I want you to go on a date with me tomorrow!” Christopher groped my bottom and nibbled my earlobes with a cheeky look.

He brought up another request out of the blue. As confused as I was, I wasn’t in the mood to figure out the rationale he stopped talking about the message he had received.

As I couldn’t wait to wrap up the session, I nodded and promised him, “Alright! As long as I have time, I’ll meet you for a date!”

“Great!” Christopher beamed in satisfaction and licked my earlobe. That had always been the most sensitive region that could easily arouse me. I could feel my legs turning to jelly as I started flushing.

The moment he moved away from me, he licked his lips and announced with a smirk, “Tastes great!”

“You’re such a jerk!” I took a few steps back with fear written all over my face. In the end, I fled the scene because I couldn’t stand being around him anymore. I was grateful he had chosen the right place for the session. The courtyard was the most desolate place in Tanner residence – others would have to make their way through the woods to reach us.

As I was in a hurry, I bumped into another person on my

way back to the banquet hall. Immediately, I apologized for not paying attention. I couldn't believe I had bumped into two people, twice in a row, at my own home. When I raised my head and saw the man, I found him familiar but had a hard time recalling the time I encountered him. I kept apologizing as the stranger helped me up. Unable to rule out the possibility I had lost my sense of direction since this was my own home, I secretly blamed Christopher for messing around with me.

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All of a sudden, someone grasped my wrist. A few seconds later, a man showed up in front of me with his face puckered in irritation.

It was none other than my beloved husband – Lyle! I arched my brows because of the racking sensation I felt. “Stop it, Lyle! It hurts!”

The man started behaving like a maniac and dragged me into an isolated room against my will. He pushed me to the ground and yelled, “Yvonne, do you want it so badly? Can't you behave yourself when you're here for your relative's banquet? If that's the case, allow me to satisfy you and your lust!”

My mind was all over the place as he started removing his belt. Afraid he would force me into submission, I

brought myself up and catapulted in the direction of the couch. “What the heck is wrong with you? Are you seriously doing this when you're aware that this is a banquet? Have you lost your mind?”

“Ha! Haven't you been indulging yourself with another man a few minutes ago? I can't believe you have the guts to flirt around when you're home! It has merely been a little more than a month since our last session, but since you want it so badly, I'll give it to you right now and right here!”

I could not fathom the maniac's statements anymore because never would I engage in such an intimate session with a stranger. It was nothing more than an accident, but he made it sound as though we had been

doing something shady behind his back.

He won't stop accusing me when he's the filthy one! Does he deem others as shameless as him?

The man then got on top of me on the couch and started undressing me against my will. I tried my best to retaliate against him, but I gave up the moment I caught a glimpse of his ferocious look.

Staring blankly ahead, I allowed him to finish the things he had in mind. After all, the only thing he cared about was his satisfaction; he didn't bother to consider my needs when it was supposed to be a mutualistic session.

I had always thought things would turn out just fine at the end of the day, but I was wrong. In fact, I had to learn my lesson the hard way.

To my surprise, I couldn't feel the urge to cry when I thought I would end up in tears again. When I thought he was about to let loose of himself after unbuttoning his shirt and having my hands tied, he brought himself to a halt and looked at me in the eyes.

Slouching against the couch, I stared at him with a look of despair because I had completely given up on him. I started acknowledging I was a pathetic woman with nothing to look forward to in life.

Suddenly, he put on his clothes and started touching up his appearance. Once he ensured he was ready to head back out, he ran his fingers through my unkempt hair and disheveled dress.

He picked up the hairpins that were all over the place and returned those to me. Unable to withstand him playing the role of a lovely husband after trying to force me into submission, I stopped him from kissing me when he leaned over.

Whenever I thought things would take a drastic turn for the better, he would prove me wrong by coming up with something new to torture me. After getting used to his tricks, I no longer wanted any of the "mercy" he would show me.

"Grandma has been missing you since she's not really

feeling well. She's diagnosed with heart disease. If she mentions anything about us, just make something up to keep her in the dark. She won't be able to take it."

Once I finished my sentence, I walked out of the room. So what if it's the Tanner family's banquet? What if I'm a member of the Tanner family? The guests out there are aware I'm inferior to the housekeepers of the family! If I'm not a finance graduate, I might have long lived on the streets!

Since I'm not even a match for the daughter of a mistress and the relative of the family, I guess my presence isn't necessary! No one really cares if I'm here for the banquet or not! The only ones that care are the ones whose dignity is at stake!

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I shrugged Lyle's hand off mine and strode in the direction of the entrance. The moment I opened the door, I saw Zachary smoking next to the balcony. As confused as I was, I couldn't be bothered by his presence.

After greeting the man with a simple nod, I was about to leave, but Lyle stopped me and asked, "Where are you going?"

"I'll head over to somewhere I won't be discriminated!" I replied with my teeth clenched because Sharon was the

sole reason I had chosen not to file for divorce with that shameless man.

He frowned and said, "Dad will be mad at you if you leave unannounced."

After much considerations, I changed my mind and decided to stay as it would be too much of a hassle to deal with Nathan.

Lyle then showed me the way back to the hall and had me join him in greeting his friends. I forced a smile and played along with him, being the dutiful wife as I should. When we heard the crowd gasping, we turned around and looked in the direction of the commotion. Upon a glimpse, I saw Wendy walking down the stairs with Crystal. They seemed to be having a great time as they

beamed in satisfaction, behaving as though Crystal was the rightful daughter-in-law of the Smith family.

Wendy had always wanted Crystal to be her daughter-in-law. When Lyle and Crystal were still in a relationship,

Wendy would show up at our place just to meet Crystal in person.

I guess she's never fond of me because I'm not as exceptional as Crystal. After all, Crystal is the Tanner family's sweetheart and a famous artist. Meanwhile, I'm just a talentless finance graduate.

Lyle shrugged me off the moment he saw Crystal in her best fit. He must be charmed by the woman who seemed

like a princess who had just stepped out of a fictional world in her white tulle dress.

Since she's the one you have a thing for, why have you asked me to stay? Do you enjoy watching me suffer in silence? Albeit reluctantly, I had to greet Wendy since she was around. Otherwise, the gossipmongers would spread rumors the moment they saw me ignoring my mother-in-law.

I forced a smile and greeted, "Mom."

Wendy, who seemed to be having the best time of her life, pulled a face when she saw me. Once she sized me up, she started reprimanding me, "What the heck is wrong with this dress of yours? Can't you put on something else that's not as revealing? You're embarrassing me!"

The mother and son duo had been picking on my dress over and over again. In fact, they talked about the same thing. Unwilling to carry on with the fight, I went dead silent.

I couldn't believe she had the guts to pick on me for putting on something fashionable when she once picked on me for being a country bumpkin because of the color of my dress.

Well, she just needed something to justify her actions.

Over the past two years, I had been groveling myself at her mercy and carried out every instruction of hers.

As always, I gave in to Wendy's instruction again. While I was on my way to get her a glass of wine, I saw Christopher and Zachary from afar. The duo was engaged in a conversation.

Similarly, they turned around because they noticed someone had their eyes glued to them. The moment we exchanged glances, I sprinted in the other direction as I was afraid Christopher would approach me and cause me unnecessary trouble. Others might think that something was going on between us.

Love Coming from the Least Expected

Chapter 40

I was glad only a few close acquaintances of mine were male. Otherwise, Lyle would accuse me of having affairs with them.

The first time he confronted me, I was clueless about the things he had brought up as I was overly attached for my own good. I couldn't be bothered by his sarcastic remarks anymore. If he continued pushing his luck, I would sever ties with him.

Suddenly, I heard another commotion coming from the crowd as another bunch of strangers approached the hall. I noticed they had one thing in common – they were on their way to Christopher's side. The thing that shocked me the most was the fact they seemed to have great respect for Christopher.

All of a sudden, the onlookers said, "Wow! It turns out he's the one everyone's talking about! No wonder he seems so familiar!"

"He's so handsome! Others said he had been staying abroad to further his studies, but it turned out they were wrong! He had long made his way back!"

"I'm so honored to have him hand me a glass of wine just now! The Lane family is the talk of the town because of the tens of billions deal they have just sealed! Do you guys think he's here for those from the Tanner family? It's such a shame!"

My mind was all over the place when I heard their conversation. No wonder Wendy had been taking

Christopher courteously. The Lane family was the one behind Avenport's success. Only those from the Miller family and the Goldstein family were on par with them. Christopher greeted the crowd, including Nathan and Yvette, with his hands tucked in his pocket. As always, he had the same charming smile, but everything felt so different the moment I figured out his identity.

It turned out the differences between us were beyond my imagination. I was glad I managed to suppress the affection I had for him instead of falling head over heels just because of how well he treated me.

Otherwise, things might end up ugly because no way would those from the upper echelon take someone inferior like me seriously. I couldn't even deal with the

douchebag from a second-rate member of the upper echelon, let alone a superior one.

I tried my best to play along with the crowd and forced a smile to conceal the concerns I had in mind.

Shortly after the banquet was commenced was a dance party. The host would join their guests for a dance. Thus, after a few minutes of pleasantries from Crystal, she started dancing in front of the guests.

The guests wouldn't stop applauding because of her uplifting speech and elegant dance. Conscious I would never be a match for her, the best fit I had put on could barely conceal the sense of inferiority. As the sweetheart of the family, Crystal had everything she would ever need, including everyone's attention.

A lot of bachelors couldn't wait to join their ideal better half for a dance. Even Lyle, who had been gawking at Crystal the moment she came into the room, was probably thinking of dancing with her. Aware of the thing he had in mind, I started inching away from the man.

After going for a round, Crystal stopped in front of Lyle and asked with a bright grin, "Lyle, care to join me for a dance?"

He nodded without a second thought. Thus, they waltzed across the floor in front of others as though they were a pair made in heaven. Meanwhile, the onlookers started

sizing me up with a sympathetic look.

As much as it would hurt me, I had no choice but to force a smile in response. Otherwise, I would humiliate myself in front of others once again.

Why won't they stop staring at me with that look? I don't need your sympathy! No matter what that dancing duo is up to, they have to get rid of me! Otherwise, Crystal will be considered a mistress because I'm still Lyle's legal spouse!