

Love Coming from the Least Expected Chapter 601

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"My mom is so weird. She's so nice to Crystal. Shouldn't she be nicer to me? We haven't seen each other for years, so it's fine if she's estranged from me, but she treats my arch-enemy really well. Crystal's an opportunistic b*tch. Even my mom can't resist her charms. Gosh, she must be a seductress! She charms and manipulates the important people in my life, including my mom."

As soon as Christopher asked me, I began to pour out my sorrows.

I babbled on, "I should be the one spending time with Mom as her daughter, be it shopping, getting a facial, having lunch, or joking around. Since when did I become a stranger to her? It's fine if Mom didn't defend me when I got bullied by Crystal, but she wanted me to apologize to her! Who is her daughter now? Me, or Crystal?"

Christopher listened with a serious expression on his face. He frowned as something crossed his mind. He fell into silence for a while before saying, "Don't be angry. You haven't seen each other for years, so it's normal for a barrier to exist between you two. Your mom doesn't like it when you meet my family. Thus, she'll have her own opinions about it. Perhaps she's behaving like this to get you to be nice to her and let go of the Lane family."

"Really?" I thought Christopher had a point. "But why Crystal? She's the bane of my life, and I can't shake her off. Have I been cursed by her?"

"I met Mr. Goldstein this morning. He's supportive of us, so you don't have to worry about it," Christopher said coolly.

"You've met my dad?!" I blinked.

"Yeah, we talked about business. Mr. Goldstein seems rather friendly as if anyone can get some goodies from him. But when it comes to business, he's really shrewd. I was nearly ensnared by him," Christopher said.

"What? You should be careful, then. Don't be manipulated by him. Julia left the Lane family's business to you, so you must guard it properly," I replied hastily.

"Relax. Do you think I'll be easily manipulated? Even though Mr. Goldstein is your father, I won't sacrifice my business for my lover," he said.

With a smile, Christopher gently brushed a finger against my nose. Still, there was a flash of worry in his eyes. Undoubtedly, what he had discussed with Mark was related to the latter's illegal dealings that brought huge profits to him. Now that his business had expanded, he wanted Christopher to join him and grow the business further, instead of putting a stop to it.

As a soldier from the special forces, Christopher would not tolerate people who did such things under his watch. He had advised Mark against it. In return, Mark scowled and gave him an ultimatum.

"Christopher, you have two choices now. One, join us. Two, become our enemy. Whether you become our friend or foe, it's up to you to decide. However, I must remind you that if you become our enemy, Yvonne will get hurt regardless of the outcome. You'd better think this through," Mark threatened.

This issue bothered Christopher, and he still had not made his decision. Mark was right. If he became an enemy of Mark and something bad happened to him, Yvonne would be devastated. Similarly, if something horrible occurred to Isabelle and Mark, she would be upset, too, as they were the parents she always longed for.

Christopher was stymied. The challenge he faced had transformed into an unalterable situation. He wanted to come up with a win-win solution so that Yvonne would not be caught in between, but his effort was in vain.

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Remington carefully placed the painting on the table and pointed at a corner of the canvas. "Here, you're very skilled at drawing plants. Draw this part for me, and once I get Spencer to autograph it, this painting is complete. I'm going to display the works of The Three Art Musketeers of Avenport at the front row of the art exhibition for everyone's viewing pleasure."

"Haha! The Three Art Musketeers!" I could not help but laugh. "Have you been reading too many adventure stories, Remington? I didn't expect you to think of this nickname. How cheesy."

"It isn't cheesy; it's manly." Remington lifted his head proudly. "You should know that every man fantasizes about swashbuckling. I'm just projecting my swashbuckling dreams. I'm sure Spencer will love this nickname, too."

I shook and tried to stifle a laugh. I pointed at the blank spot in the middle of the canvas and chuckled. "I think you'd better paint an iris that represents the fleur-de-lis from The Three Musketeers. It suits the whole picture, and you'll also please your flower-loving friends."

"Good point!" It was merely a casual remark on my part, but little did I expect Remington to take it seriously and agree to it. "The Three Musketeers is good! I resonate with the fleur-de-lis. Great, I'll go with it, then."

"All right, I'll look at some pictures of The Three Musketeers when I get back. I promise I'll finish the painting." After that, I got out my own painting and placed it on the table. "It took me a long time before I managed to paint this landscape painting. I wanted to support your first art exhibition. Take a look and tell me what you think of it."

Instead of using brightly colored paint, I used muted colors for the entire painting. Remington was trained in classical landscape paintings, whereas I loved modern oil paintings. If a painting with vibrant colors appeared in the midst of paintings with dark colors, it would either seem like I was trying to steal Remington's spotlight, or I was trying to offend him. That would not be good.

To accommodate Remington's preference, I pondered for a long while before I finally came up with this classical piece.

Remington's eyes lit up with glee when he saw my painting. He gave me a thumbs-up and praised, "I knew I was right about you. When I first saw you at the National Youth Art Exhibition and Contest, I knew you weren't a regular participant, Yvonne. You should be learning classical landscape paintings instead of modern paintings. I won't be able to achieve fame with you around."

"You're too kind. I know my abilities." I rubbed my nose. In recent years, Remington had been hailed as the most promising young artist in the nation's art sector. The older, established artists would sing praises about his artwork. An amateur like me was nothing compared to him.

"Don't humble yourself. Didn't you notice how Christopher snorted when he heard your remark? It shows that I'm a good judge of talent." Remington winked at me and smiled charmingly.

I rolled my eyes at him. I'm just being humble. It's not like I can agree with whatever praises thrown at me. I might not know all the ways of the world, but I'm no idiot, either.

"Is this painting still unfinished? I notice a blank spot." After admiring the piece for a while, Remington pointed at the middle of the canvas and asked the question.

"Yes." I nodded and groaned, "It's my first time painting a piece with muted colors. Whenever I try to add something to the middle of the canvas, it just seems inappropriate. Thus, I decided to leave it blank. I brought this painting over today because I want you to advise me on the most suitable thing to include in the blank spot."

Remington studied the piece silently. Then, he suggested, "Perhaps you want to add a bird's nest on this tree branch and two flying birds. Not too big. Just a dab."

"All right, I'll add the birds." I clapped joyfully. Indeed, Remington was an expert. He could easily identify the error of the painting and offer me a good suggestion.

We were chatting happily when Spencer entered. He tossed Remington's phone to him. "Your phone has been ringing all day, but you didn't pick it up. Answer your phone now."

Remington accepted his phone call. Suddenly, he looked at me. "What? Did you say Crystal?"

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The slice of fruit in my mouth slipped out and landed on the floor. I turned toward Remington and realized that Crystal had called him. Doesn't she know that a righteous man like Remington hates frauds like her?

"I'm sorry, Ms. Yates. This is just a small, personal art exhibition organized by me. It's not a large exhibition by a famous artist, so you don't have to lower your standards. This year, a number of foreign young artists will come over to our country for an exchange program. You're the most capable heiress of the Tanners, Ms. Yates, and I'm sure you'll be able to participate in that program. All right, I have to go now. Goodbye, Ms. Yates," he said.

Remington looked pissed after hanging up. He slammed his phone onto the table and threw a sideways glance at Spencer. "What a coincidence. I received a call from Crystal as soon as you came in. Don't you agree, Spencer?" He spoke in a low voice.

Spencer looked away, and the muscles on his face twitched. He let out a dry laugh. "Yeah, what a coincidence. Haha!"

"Hmph!" Remington laughed coldly. "I hope this coincidence doesn't happen again!"

Apart from Remington, Christopher and I could tell that it was Spencer who connected Crystal with Remington. His purpose was to make Remington agree to Crystal's participation in the art exhibition.

I frowned and got anxious. Crystal had said something to me at my house two nights ago, and it deeply troubled me. As a result, I had been on guard for the past two days. I feared that if I let my guard down, Crystal would gain the upper hand over me, and my reputation would be ruined.

I did not expect Crystal to call Remington. Apparently, she was hell-bent on using this opportunity to restore her reputation as a new school artist and redeem herself.

My lips curled into a smile, and I chuckled. Crystal can do whatever she wants, but there's one thing she can't do. She can't affect me.

"Spencer, I recall that you hate people who steal the works of other artists. Years ago, someone stole your artwork, and you nearly lost the opportunity to become my junior. If our mentor had not seen your art earlier, you wouldn't have had the opportunity to study under him. Back then, you were harsh toward that thief, and you haven't changed much recently. So why do your principles change when you're dealing with a different person? Or should I say, everything is forgivable if Crystal's the one who committed it?" Remington said.

I wanted to clap and cheer after hearing Remington's words. He said my thoughts out loud. Why are her bad deeds justified just because she's Crystal Yates?

Spencer glanced at me and sighed. He said to Remington, "I just don't have the heart to reject Crystal. We used to regard her as a promising artist. However, she has fallen from grace and detached herself from art. She has already received her punishment, and if she wants to come back, why can't we give her a chance? I implore you, Remington."

"Yvonne, you're the biggest victim here. Tell him your decision." Remington regarded me with a darkened expression.

"You're the organizer. Why are you asking me?" I detested hearing Crystal's name. It was repulsive.

“Yvonne, you’re Crystal’s cousin. No matter what happened between you two in the past, she’s still your cousin. Please, would you help her just this once?” Spencer begged me.

Spencer must have loved Crystal. Else, a proud man like him would not have lowered his pride for a woman.

I sighed and said coldly, “Spencer, I’m not going to involve myself in this issue. It’s your business if you manage to persuade Remington. You probably don’t know how much I hate her. Whenever I bump into her, simple things will eventually turn out to be complicated and a pain in the *ss. I don’t care about your intentions, but me helping her is out of the question.”

I no longer hid my true feelings. I was not a saint. I helped Nathan because he raised me, but there was no reason for me to help Crystal.

“Let’s go, Chris!” I tugged Christopher’s arm and strode out of the studio angrily.

“Christopher!” Spencer cried loudly. “Please help me, just this once. I’ll owe you a favor if you do so. Please persuade Yvonne for me.”

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The relationship between Spencer and Christopher came to my mind, and I stopped in my tracks. Their families were very close, and both Spencer and Christopher were best friends. I should not only think about my own feelings.

“Don’t worry, Eve. Just do whatever you want.” Christopher took me into his arms and grinned. He knows what I’m concerned about. How can I not worry about it?

I turned around and stared at Spencer, who had fallen under Crystal’s charms. In a low voice, I said, “You’ll regret this, Spencer. You’ll definitely regret this.”

“No, I won’t regret this,” Spencer asserted.

I shook my head. Sometimes, I did not understand what was so appealing about Crystal, to the point that so many men were bewitched by her. I guess I’ll only understand this when I become a man in my next life. Why am I a woman? I’m straight, so I don’t find other women attractive.

I sighed and told Remington, "I'm not against it, Remington. Just think of it as granting a lovesick man's last wish."

In spite of my approval, I regretted my decision as soon as I walked out of Remington's house. My head drooped as I scolded myself for being too soft and allowing myself to be waylaid by a proud man. Christopher noticed my expression and could not help but laugh. He patted my head and grinned. "Look at you. Earlier, you sounded so confident when you said that you were granting another man's wish. I bet you regret what you said now."

"Yeah, it's Crystal we're talking about. She's invincible and hard to shake off! I'm really nervous, and I have a bad feeling that something will go wrong at the art exhibition if she's around." I shrugged and rested my head on Christopher's chest. "I'm not sure whether I'm overthinking, or whether I'm traumatized by Crystal."

"I bet you're traumatized by her, which resulted in your constant catastrophizing. What is there to fear? You're a daughter of the Goldstein family, and you're also my wife. You can do whatever you want in Avenport, and no one will dare to offend you. If anyone does so, you'll just have to smack them in the face, and we'll clean up your mess afterward," Christopher consoled me.

"Yeah, I can do whatever the heck I want. I'm so sick of hearing this." I pouted and let out a bitter smile. I decided not to tell Christopher that Crystal had looked for me earlier. Nothing has happened yet, but I'm already catastrophizing. He must think that I'm a wimp.

The following morning, I placed my painting on the table and pondered over my next strokes. All of a sudden, a servant knocked on the door and told me that Isabelle was looking for me. I placed my brush on the table. Usually, I would spend these hours in my studio, and people tended to leave me alone. Why would Mom visit me today? Isn't she supposed to attend some party or luncheon with Crystal?

I stored my painting and descended the stairs. Then, I saw the servants putting various objects from the house into the car. Upon closer inspection, I realized that those objects were meant for mourners. Who is Mom going to mourn?

"Why are you standing there? Get in the car now. I'm waiting for you," Isabelle urged when she noticed that I was standing still in the doorway.

"Mom, who are you going to mourn?" I got into the car, and I was not surprised to see Crystal who was ready to head out with us. In fact, I would not be surprised either if Isabelle told me one day that she would make Crystal her goddaughter.

"Today's your uncle's death anniversary. I told you when I came back, but you've forgotten about it," Isabelle muttered unhappily.

Isabelle did say that. However, I remembered clearly that she did not mention the exact date. Nevertheless, she must be in a bad mood as it was my uncle's death anniversary. Therefore, I decided not to talk back to her.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I forgot," I replied calmly.

"Who else do you remember apart from the Lane family? If I were uninformed, I would have assumed you were a member of that family," Isabelle scoffed and chided me.

"Mom!" I frowned. Why the sudden change in Mom's attitude? She was still rather gentle and kind when she first returned. Later, she behaved harshly toward me, particularly when the Lane family was involved. There was simply no room for negotiation.

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Isabelle would always mock me with what happened in the Lane family when she was unhappy. Truth be told, I thought Crystal treated me way better than her at some point.

"You said before that you would give me time. Can you please give me some space during this period and stop mentioning the Lane family in front of me? If you're unwilling to do so, why did you suggest it in the first place? You're just ruining everyone's mood."

"Yes, I did say that I would give you some time, but that doesn't mean that you can take forever. Are you trying to keep delaying so that you can stay with your enemy forever?" Isabelle did not even plan to sit down and talk nicely to me. She continued fiercely, "Listen, don't even think about it! There's no way I'm letting the two of you get together."

She got so agitated that she raised her hand high, wanting to give me a slap. However, she gave up doing it the next second as a desolated expression crept on her face.

"Mom..." I was still angry with her, but before I could say anything, I noticed a bruise on her fair, delicate wrist. Instantly, I pulled her arm over and pointed at it. "Mom, what is this?"

Isabelle panicked upon hearing that. She struggled to withdraw her arm back and stuttered out of nervousness, "N-Nothing. I accidentally fell down."

"Let me have a look. Is it serious?" The purplish bruise was large. It was a terrifying sight. I could not help but feel sorry for her.

"It's okay. I'm fine. Get your hand off now," Isabelle yelled frantically. As we struggled, I accidentally pulled up her sleeves.

The next second, my whole body stiffened up. Isabelle's arm was covered with wounds and bruises. Not one part of her arm was left unscathed. She struggled so hard to free herself from my grip that some of her wounds started bleeding.

I was no longer an ignorant kid. After all, I used to have those marks around my body too. Lyle had hit me before when we were together, but my scars were still not as bad as hers.

"Mom!" I stared at Isabelle in a daze. My mind went blank, and I was left speechless. "What happened to you?"

Isabelle withdrew her hand back swiftly. Then she pulled down her sleeves to cover her skin. I scanned through her body slowly and noticed that she was wearing a white turtleneck, which had completely covered her neck.

"I told you that I fell down accidentally. Sit still. I'm going to drive now." Isabelle turned her head away to avoid my gaze. She stepped on the accelerator, and the car started moving.

I fixated my gaze on her face, but she remained silent all along the journey, the impudent aura of hers disappearing all of a sudden. However, I found it hard to relax as if I was sitting on thousands of needles. Who injured Mom? Was it Mark? But then, why would he do that?

I always thought that they had a happy relationship. Moreover, Mark looked like a loving and caring husband. Is he pretending? Is everything fake? I did not stay long in the Goldstein residence. Hence, there were many things I did not know. Perhaps it was time for me to go and see Lucas. I believed he would know what was going on with the Goldstein family since he was the only son.

After what happened to Lyle, I was utterly afraid to visit any cemeteries as I tended to recall how he lost his life to save me. Words could not describe the pain. It was really unbearable.

Robert's grave was located deep inside a forest. There were a lot of old-looking tombstones in that area. Some of them got abandoned, so

there were weeds growing around them. Robert's tomb, on the other hand, was clean and neat. The turfs around it looked like they had been moved before.

As soon as I saw Robert's name on the tombstone, I realized that was my first time visiting him. My uncle, Robert Anderson, was a clever man who died at a young age. He was the man whom Julia had pushed down from Centurion Tower.

Mom walked to the grave and bent down to put her flower. Suddenly, she shouted and lunged forward.