

## When Love Lasts Chapter 10

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### Chapter 10

To most, home was a safe harbor, but to Heather, it was the coldest place on Earth. When her mother, Lilly, saw her return from Wrewell with a suitcase in hand, she showed little concern over Heather's well-being and instead mocked, "I can't believe you thought you could find work in the big city with that useless diploma of yours. Bit off more than you could chew, huh?" "Mom, I haven't graduated, so I don't actually have a diploma, and that was why I had a hard time looking for a job!" Heather snapped. Lilly was still contemptuous as she pointed out, "Maybe you should give up on your second year of college altogether. It's a waste of good money, and what's so great about getting a diploma? No big companies would consider hiring lousy graduates like you anyway!" The woman spared no tact, and her words stabbed through Heather's heart like arrows. Not wanting to waste her breath on Lilly, Heather dragged her suitcase up the stairs and pretended as if she had heard nothing. I knew I shouldn't have come back! "Hey, what's with the attitude? You're not even half as good as Julia! And if you think your father and I are going to keep paying for your sophomore year, you're dead wrong!" Lilly hollered up the stairs shrewdly after her daughter's retreating figure. Julia Winston was Heather's cousin from her mother's side, and she was an heiress whom Lilly absolutely adored. In fact, there were times when Heather was sure she was adopted and that Julia was Lilly's biological daughter instead. Presently, Heather slammed her bedroom door shut and let tears of resentment fall freely down her face. She didn't even want to go out of her room during dinnertime. She could still hear Lilly seething downstairs to her poor husband, Alaric. "I'm telling you, we raised that wench for nothing! Why can't she be like Julia? Julia is attending a first-class university, and she comes home every term with a first-class scholarship. Now that's what I call glory and honor! Our wench up there isn't half as good as Julia is!" "Heather comes home each term with a first-class scholarship from her university, too! Honey, you've got to cut our daughter some slack. Julia is Heather's cousin after all, and your sister happened to have married rich, so naturally, Julia is afforded more privileges. You can't compare the two girls; it simply isn't fair," he argued impatiently. Lilly was relentless. "Why can't I compare them? It's not as if the scholarship from some unknown college of Heather's could compete with that of Julia's first-class university. How could these two girls who shared the same birthday and were born in the same delivery room possibly be so different?" But there's nothing odd about that, since Heather isn't... "Honey, Heather isn't actually..." Alaric had only just started speaking when he fell silent once more, and this abrupt pause in his speech pulled Lilly out of her thoughts. She stiffened. Has Alaric discovered the truth about Heather? At that moment, Alaric changed the subject and sighed mournfully. "Heather isn't bad at her studies. Remember how she had to work part-time the year she took the SATs so that she could cover my medical bills and how she took care of me while I was in the hospital? She had fallen behind her studies because of me." Upon hearing this, Lilly realized that she had been worried about nothing earlier, and she retorted, "It was her duty as a daughter to take care of you. I didn't raise her for eighteen years just so she could abandon us when we are in poor health!" And to think that this woman who disparages me calls herself my mother, Heather thought grimly. In the following days of Heather's stay, she had had to tolerate her mother's condescending remarks on a daily basis. It didn't matter at all how many chores she had done in the house. She did laundry, made meals, and took care of the less-than-thriving pharmacy her family ran, but none of these made her good enough to receive praise from her mother. Instead, Lilly constantly put her down and found new things to grumble about. During dinner one evening, Lilly suddenly brought up Lara. "Heather, I recall Lara being your classmate in college. Isn't that right?" She was eating her food with much gusto, and she spoke as she chewed, "I heard that she found herself an incredibly rich boyfriend in Wrewell, and he gives her hundreds of thousands in pocket money a month! Apparently, she's bought a stately three-story house for her grandparents here in our town, and she even built a four-story villa somewhere in our village! Word has it that there's even an orchard and a garden in the front yard, and a pond and a vegetable garden in the backyard!" At this point, Lilly was growing green with envy. Heather, on the other hand, paused in her eating as she suddenly thought of something, then quickly feigned nonchalance as she went on with her dinner. She knew that Lara had suddenly gotten engaged to be married, but she didn't think her fiancé would be this well-off, so much so that he could fork out hundreds of thousands in pocket money for her. "You know, it just makes me wonder why you have such poor taste in men compared to Lara, Heather! It's not as if you aren't prettier than her, so why would you settle for someone like Ryan? Sure, he's the only one in our village who got into a program at Wrewell University, but he's dirt poor, and the whole village had to pitch in just to pay off his tuition! Lara's boyfriend is a million times better than him. And to think, you wanted to marry him after you graduate! What, are you so charitable that you want to take care of his old parents and his sickly grandparents?" Lilly nagged. At the mention of Ryan, Heather suddenly slammed her spoon down on the table, and the clattering sound made her parents jump in their seats. "You'll be happy to know that Ryan and I broke up! There! Is that what you want to hear?" she shouted with tears glistening in her eyes and anger welling up in her chest. This only spurred Lilly's rage as she snapped at Heather ferociously, "You insolent girl! What are you shouting for? Did you lose your manners in the big city? What does the two of you breaking up have to do with me? How dare you scream at me like this!" "Honey, just give Heather a break!" Alaric sighed tiredly as he tried to stop the two women at the dining table from blowing off the roof of their house. In actuality, Heather's family wasn't any better off than Ryan's. The little pharmacy that her mother ran barely spanned over a hundred square meters, and her father's legs wouldn't allow him to work any other jobs than manning the cashier at the pharmacy while staying put at home. More importantly, Alaric's legs required such expensive treatment that their family racked up debts with friends and relatives. As for Heather's brother, he still needed money from home to get by, even though he supposedly had a job out of town. Having been placated, Lilly let out a slow breath and softened up. She shot Heather a pointed look, then said, "You're friends with Lara, aren't you? Why don't you talk to her and see if she can't spare you some money to pay off your tuition?" Heather was outraged when she heard this. "Mom, do you even hear how ridiculous you sound right now?"