

Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 161-170

Chapter 161

"I'm so stupid. Why am I still thinking about father-daughter relations? It's not like they don't have daughters." As I scolded myself for being an idiot, I walked to the park opposite and sat down.

When I was a kid, I used to go there a lot since Dad and Mom always brought me to play on the swings. Every time I said I wanted to go higher, Dad would pretend to be angry as he said, "Any higher and you're going to fall. Be good, Eve."

Then, when the swing was at its highest point, I would smile and reply, "But I'm not scared. If I fall, Daddy will catch me, right?"

"Of course, Daddy and Mommy will protect you forever, our little princess."

However, the more beautiful the memory was, the harsher the reality. I sat amongst the flowers with my head on my knees, feeling a little upset. Although I no longer felt heart-piercing sadness, as someone who had been hurt a lot, I still felt pain. At most, the feeling of pain was no longer as strong as before.

I then took out my phone and clicked on Christopher's contact. He should be in Coldbridge at that moment. Not knowing whether the call would bother him, I soon hung up after dialing his number. I'd better not bother him. After all, if a woman was too clingy, the man would get annoyed over time. Both parties had to have some personal space.

However, just as I hung up, Christopher called back. I blinked, taken aback as I picked up the call. Before I could speak, he asked, "Why'd you hang up after only one ring? You'll make me worried."

"I'm just afraid that I'd disturb you. It'll be a bother if you're doing business with a client right now," I mumbled. Then, I counted the hours. Since Christopher left Moon Village Restaurant and headed to the airport, it had only been two hours since he arrived in Coldbridge.

"The contract's only worth two billion. Don't worry. Your man can handle it. I'm not so busy that I don't even have time to pick up a call." I could feel his smile from the other end of the line. Just then, I heard someone talking beside him. It seemed to be his secretary, who was asking him to speak softer in case the client heard him.

Hearing the secretary's words, I pressed my lips together. Christopher was very daring to make such remarks with was a client around. He was acting a little too mighty and scornful.

"Why? Did you miss me? They say separation makes the heart fonder. For me, a second of separation already feels like a lifetime. I really want to go back and see you. I'll be back in three days, max. Remember to be good and wait for me at home," he said with a smile.

"You don't need me to pick you?" I asked.

"I don't want you to come to such a messy place. Just wait for me at home. I'll bring you a present when I'm back. I promise you'll like it, hehe," he replied while laughing.

I immediately became nervous then. "Don't give me weird presents. I don't want them."

"What counts as weird?" he teased.

However, I could not bring myself to say it out loud. He had always joked around and said he would buy some sex toys for us to use. Although he only talked about it, he had a very quirky personality. Thus, I could not guarantee that he would not buy it when he saw it. What should I do if he asks me to wear it?

"Excuse me, Christopher. You clearly know what I mean. You're not allowed to distort the facts."

"Oh," he said, dragging his voice out, "This is what you meant. Thanks for your reminder. I'll go and research properly about which is better to buy. Anyway, how has your day been?"

"Good, because you called me," I replied truthfully. Although such sweet words would thoroughly expose my thoughts and let him know what he meant to me, I did not want to hide it.

I was indeed happy because he had called me back so quickly. It was as if the sky had cleared after a storm. After we spoke a little longer, I heard the secretary urging him to meet the client again. Thus, I said goodbye and hung up since I did not want to interrupt his work.

Just as I was about to leave, I heard people arguing in the woods behind.

"Crystal, why're you doing this?"

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I turned back, quietly looking out from the flower field. Lyle and Crystal were talking in the woods and happened to be right behind me. Immediately, I mentally scolded myself for having such bad luck, for I saw them no matter where I went.

"Lyle, do you really not know why I'm leaving?" she asked, leaning against the tree trunk with an expression full of sadness and melancholy. "The same reason why I came back; you've always been very clear of it."

"I know. I really do. But Crystal, you know my feelings. Why do you suddenly have to leave? Are you going to abandon me?" he asked, pulling her into a hug. "I've torn the plane ticket. Let's not leave. We'll stay in Avenport and never separate ever again."

"But I don't want to go on like this anymore. You have a wife and family, so every time I go out with you, everyone looks at me strangely. Public opinion of me has also been poor. For you, I can accept the public condemnation, but I can't accept that my identity is merely your wife's cousin."

She sighed, then laughed again. "Recently, I've been thinking about something. Am I wrong to come back? If I didn't come back, you'll always be with Yvonne and won't be in such a difficult position either."

“I’m not in a difficult position. Really. Crystal, I don’t want to lose you.” His voice was full of affection every time he said Crystal’s name. Then, he leaned forward, wanting to kiss her, but she pushed him away.

“I don’t want to wait anymore, Lyle. Since you can’t get over her and don’t want to get a divorce, why shouldn’t I fulfill your wishes? If you actually tore the ticket, I can book another one. It’s really goodbye this time, Lyle.”

The moment I heard her words, I recalled what Christopher had said to her that morning at Moon Village Restaurant. It seemed as though she indeed wanted to force Lyle. Otherwise, she would not use the plane ticket trick.

“Okay, I’ll get a divorce. I’ll do it tomorrow. Don’t leave. Once I get a divorce, and everything subsides, we’ll hold a grand wedding so that you can marry me in style, okay?” he replied. He finally gritted his teeth and talked about the divorce.

“Really?” she asked, turning her head to look at him.

“Of course. You know me, Crystal. I’ve never lied to you. All these years, no matter how many women have stood next to me, you’ve always been the one in my heart. I can’t give up on you,” he said, looking at her affectionately.

“Lyle!” With tears in her eyes, she suddenly moved forward, pressing Lyle against the tree forcefully and kissing him. He responded enthusiastically, the two quickly pressing themselves together in ecstasy.

Since the sky was turning dark, he quickly flipped them around and pressed Crystal against the tree. Then, he lifted her off the ground such that she could only hold onto his neck to prevent herself from falling.

There were sounds of a zipper unzipping before I saw Crystal’s two pale legs rocking rhythmically. They were in the middle of it. I quickly turned around, hoping to wash my eyes with water as soon as possible.

Although society was open at that time, and many couples dated and did indescribable things in the woods, they were still a little too open. It was already not the first time I ran into them doing it in the woods.

“Don’t lie to me, Lyle. I’ll be very upset!” Crystal said as she tilted her head back, exposing her neck. Her skirt was pushed up to her waist, gathering in a lump, and her graceful figure was rocking in time with the tree.

“I won’t... I won’t... You’re most important to me in this lifetime. No one can replace you,” Lyle replied as he panted.

Quietly picking up my bag, I covered my eyes and quickly left that filthy place. Then, as soon as I got home, my phone rang. It was Lyle. “Come to City Hall tomorrow morning. We’ll get a divorce.”

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I was very calm when I heard that news. After all, I had already witnessed what happened between Crystal and Lyle in the woods.

Crystal's strategy was indeed very effective, for Lyle had called me so quickly. I guessed that they were either continuing their business in Crystal's bedroom in the Tanner residence or a hotel because Crystal was purposely making noises for me to hear.

"Okay," I whispered, "I'll wait for you outside City Hall at eight tomorrow morning."

"Yvonne, you... Forget it. See you tomorrow," he said before quickly hanging up. He was probably afraid that I would want to continue getting involved with him. However, he miscalculated something. I had no intention to do so at all.

I smiled to myself, feeling unprecedentedly relaxed. Although I was slightly worried about the situation with Sharon, I could not spend my entire life with a man who did not love me.

Moreover, my love for him had long dissipated with time along with all the sorrows.

That night, I slept very peacefully. There were no nightmares, and I instead dreamt happy dreams. In the dream, there was no Lyle and Crystal. Instead, I was living happily with Christopher.

When I woke up, there was still a smile on my face. Although I could not remember what I dreamt of, I knew that I was satisfied and happy.

Sometimes, I did not know whether I would actually marry Christopher. However, I was greedy for his kindness toward me. Even though such a feeling was unfair toward Christopher, but it was all I had.

It was a little sad, yet lucky.

Since I missed him a lot, I then gave Christopher a call. If he were in front of me then, I would pounce on him and press my face into his chest, absorbing his warmth to fill up the coldness in my heart.

As the phone rang, I had thought that I would hear Christopher's low and magnetic voice. However, I was disappointed, as a woman picked up the phone instead.

Christopher's assistant was a man. Yet, the voice was beautiful and womanly. It was very pleasing to the ears and also sounded rather familiar.

"Hello, this is Christopher's phone. May I ask why you're looking for him?"

Immediately, I squeezed the phone tighter, my fingertips turning white from the force. There was an uncomfortable feeling in my heart the moment I remembered that it was Monica's voice.

At that instant, I was afraid that she would make out my voice. It was a kind of innate inferiority that could not be removed.

“I’m looking for Mr. West. Is he there?”

There was a pause on the other end of the line. “Sorry, I think you got the wrong number.” Monica’s voice was gentle and generous and was neither eager nor slow. It carried the air of a noble lady.

I quickly hung up, my heart beating wildly as I put the phone down.

Christopher’s on a business trip, and Monica went to find him. Maybe it’s because of business, or maybe they coincidentally ran into each other. Right, that must be it. I desperately tried to make excuses for him in my mind, finding various reasons to conceal the panic I felt inside. However, only I knew exactly how sad I felt.

It was only six in the morning, yet his phone was with Monica. It was a very weird timing.

Afterward, as I washed my face, the cold water splashed into my eye, causing it to turn red. I raised my head and took a deep breath, trying to calm myself down.

I did not have time to think about the matter with Christopher, for I had to go to City Hall right then to find my freedom. Conveniently, I could also get out of that tragic marriage.

Just as I went downstairs and was about to hail a taxi, a Porsche suddenly appeared in front of me. The window rolled down, revealing Lyle’s haggard face.

His eyes were bloodshot, looking as if he had not slept the entire night. There were also dark circles under his eyes. He said hoarsely, “Get in the car. Let’s go there together.”

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Since he had come to pick me up in person, it seemed as though Lyle was indeed afraid that Crystal would leave. I did not refuse; I simply opened the door and entered. After all, I was going to meet him later anyway.

He slowly turned the car in one direction, then drove for a while before stopping by a street filled with food. He parked and got out of the car, then shouted, “Get down!”

I frowned. City Hall’s not here. What’s he trying to do?

Probably understanding what I was thinking, he said in displeasure, “I haven’t eaten breakfast. Don’t tell me you can’t even have a meal with me?”

I was indeed reluctant to. Although I had not had breakfast either, I did not want to eat with him. “It’s fine, I’ll wait for you in the car. Go and eat.”

“City Hall only opens at eight!” he replied coldly as he stared at me indifferently. “You can’t wait to go?”

Of course, I could not wait. I wanted to dump him right then if I could. However, what he said did make sense too. Anyway, it’s our last meal. I’ll treat it like a breakup meal. It’s better not to anger him. I don’t want him to cause even more trouble and make everyone unhappy.

That street was busy in the mornings, with many people coming and going. Although it was only six in the morning, those who had to go to work were already eating breakfast there.

I followed Lyle into a small shop. I did not even look at the menu, leaving the ordering to him. Then, as soon as the food arrived, I did not say anything before I began stuffing my mouth.

It was better to keep eating during a meal. After all, having a full mouth meant that no accidents would happen. He was unexpectedly quiet as well, merely eating while occasionally placing some food onto my plate.

I did not refuse and proceeded to eat the food he gave me. My attitude toward him was so good that it almost seemed like I was currying favor with him. It's because the divorce agreement will only take effect if both parties sign it.

When I was done eating, he suddenly said, "We had our first meal in this shop. Do you remember?"

I kept silent at his question, as I no longer remembered. Since I now had better memories to keep, I had already slowly forgotten the sad ones. Besides, so what if I did remember?

Was I to reminisce about our failed marriage with him?

He had never liked me and had always despised me. Now that we were about to get divorced, he was the one who reminisced the past, which only added to the trouble.

"You said you liked the fish stew here the most. Why'd you only take a mouthful today?" he asked quietly as a trace of melancholy flashed across his eyes.

I pushed the full bowl into the center of the table, raised my eyebrows, then said, "You forgot again. I don't like to eat fish. I didn't before and don't like it now either."

His expression then turned strange again. He stared at me, his gaze looking as if he were struggling with something. After a while, he sighed and took out the divorce agreement. "Read it. If there's no problem, then sign it."

I immediately took the file and read through it carefully. The last divorce agreement gave me too many bad memories. Thus, I had to read it carefully so that I would not fall into any traps.

Lyle's expression worsened when he noticed my actions. Moreover, there was a profound, meaningful look in his eyes. If it were the past, I would have said something about having to treat a villain in a manner suitable for their status. However, I held myself back.

Unexpectedly, the divorce agreement was written satisfactorily and had no major issues. He had also given me ten million as compensation.

Although the ten million was not a big deal to him, I was a little surprised. I crossed out that line and said quietly, "I had nothing when I married you, so I also don't want anything when I leave. Let's settle it like that."

Although I had helped him win the contract with the Ziegler family, which saved the Smiths' plight back then, I no longer cared about that.

"I only have one request."

"Tell me," he said.

"You have to keep our divorce from Grandma for now. She's always been worried about us, so I don't want her to be sad."

No matter what happened between Lyle and me, Grandma was an elder who treated me well. The shares from the last time were enough to show me that she did not harbor any ill-intention toward me.

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I didn't want to consider the real reason behind her exchanging my place with Crystal. I quickly passed the signed document to him.

"Okay." Lyle finally nodded after looking at me for a long time. Surprisingly, his hand shook slightly while signing the document.

We arrived at the City Hall and noticed it was still closed when we got out of the car. Since we seemed to be early, Lyle lit a cigarette and started smoking.

I stepped back. I still hated the smell of cigarette smoke and especially disliked anyone who smoked apart from Christopher.

At the sight of me stepping away from him, Lyle walked toward a tree in front of us and leaned against it. Suddenly, he pulled out a card and passed it to me. "Ten million may be a bit much, but at least take a million. It's your living expenses from the past two years. I helped you withdraw it since you never used it."

I didn't reach out for the card, so Lyle decided to just shove it into my hands. "Take it. I'll feel more at ease."

At his words, I finally tucked the card into my pocket. I had been living so frugally, always keeping money away for a rainy day in case Lyle ever ran out of money. I just hadn't expected it to be used like this.

So Lyle feels remorse too, I thought. Too bad that his guilt toward me was never a priority. I always came last to him.

His phone rang before he could finish his cigarette and as he picked up, his gaze softened.

“Yeah, go ahead and eat without me. I’ll be home soon, okay? Sleep in for a bit if you’re still tired. I’ll bring breakfast back for you. Okay, sure.”

I didn’t have to think too hard to figure out that it was a call from Crystal. The City Hall finally opened its gates and Lyle walked in as he continued talking to Crystal.

I checked the documents to make sure we brought everything. I was about to follow Lyle when I suddenly noticed a small car that was zig-zagging rapidly in Lyle’s direction.

In the split second before the car hit him, I leaped forward and pushed Lyle out of the way.

“Lyle, move!”

The car brushed past me and barely skimmed my arm. The adrenaline caused me to stumble and fall on the road, sending a sharp jagged ache down my ankle. I instantly paled in pain.

Lyle was standing, probably shell-shocked from what just happened. He stared at me with his phone still in his hand, not even thinking of walking over to help me up.

I cursed at him inwardly and tried to stand up when the sharp pains in my ankle forced me to sit down.

“Yvonne, you-” Lyle stammered as if he had gotten a concussion. He suddenly came to his senses and rushed over to help me up. “Are you okay? Did you get hurt?”

“I’m fine! Let’s go to the City Hall first,” I said as I bit my lip and balanced on one leg. Cold sweat dripped down my forehead.

“Who cares about the City Hall right now? We have to get you to the hospital.” Lyle picked me up bridal style and rushed into the car.

“Lyle! What are you doing? We need to go to the City Hall first!” I said urgently. If we left now, we’d have to make the trip back here again and that was just troublesome.

“Shut up!” Lyle yelled as he slammed on the accelerator and sped toward the hospital.

The moment we reached the hospital, Lyle started shouting for a doctor to come and give me a proper check-up. A doctor walked over and asked about our situation, but when he noticed that it was simply a sprain, he seemed slightly annoyed.

Still, it was quite a serious sprain seeing as my ankle had swollen to the size of a tennis ball. I also remembered seeing the car drive across my foot.

After an X-ray, the doctor explained that I had sprained my ankle and had a slight fracture in my foot that would heal over a few weeks. I let out a sigh of relief.

“You’re such a good husband. I bet you two must be deep in love. Don’t worry. She’ll only have to stay here for a couple of days so we can make sure she’s alright, then she’s all yours to take care of after

that. She'll get much better in just a few days," one of the nurses consoled Lyle at the sight of him pacing anxiously.

Lyle froze at the sound of the nurse's words and so did I.

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This was the second time I heard that. The first time was when we were in the restaurant and the waiter complimented Lyle for being so attentive toward Crystal in almost the exact same words.

I simply smiled in response, choosing not to explain too much.

At that very moment, the divorce papers in Lyle's hand fell to the ground because of his restless pacing. When the nurse bent to pick them up, she noticed that they were divorce papers and finally realized she had said the wrong thing with a surprised expression on her face. She quickly picked them up and passed them back to me before rapidly finishing up the bandage and leaving the room.

I heard her mumble as she walked away, "I shouldn't have been jealous at all! They're not even married anymore!"

I waved the documents in my hand. "What about I call Sabrina and ask her to bring me to the City Hall so we can get this over with?" I suggested to Lyle.

He simply reached out for the documents and looked at me as he muttered, "Why did you have to save me? Don't you hate my guts?"

I rolled my eyes. As if one could pick and choose when to save someone else! Lyle was way too calculative of a person. Apart from Crystal, he gauged everybody else based on what they could do for him.

At my silence, Lyle continued. "I used to always feel like you only married me for my money, but I finally realized that that's not the case. You love me, don't you? If you don't, you didn't need to save me over and over again while putting your own life at risk."

He was starting to change topics rapidly and I didn't like where it was going, so I quickly cut him off. "I don't think we need to talk about such things anymore. What about you?"

He never used to care about whether I loved him or not, so why would he start now? Besides, I had a crush on him for eight years and everyone could tell except for Lyle himself. There was no point in thinking about such things anymore.

"Of course we need to. Eve, you threw yourself into danger for me time and time again and I never appreciated it."

Lyle suddenly tore the divorce papers right down the middle and I inhaled in shock. "Lyle, have you gone insane?" I yelled.

“No. In fact, I’m more sober than ever. Yvonne, I don’t want to lose you.” I reached out in an attempt to save the two halves of the documents, but Lyle was quicker and he ripped them to even smaller pieces.

I stared at the ruined documents as Lyle tossed them into the trashcan. If it weren’t for my injured leg, I would have already started beating Lyle up.

He walked toward the bed and embraced me. “Since you love me so much, let’s not get divorced anymore, okay?” he said gently.

“Wait!” I was barely coherent in my urgency. “I didn’t save you because I loved you! I just didn’t want Sharon to be sad over you! Even if it was a random passerby or a stray cat in your place, I would still save them. Call me Mother Teresa for all I care, but it wasn’t because I love you, got it?”

“You don’t have to hide it anymore, Eve. The way you looked when you ran toward me and pushed me out of the way without hesitation...the worry in your eyes was so beautiful. Rest up, okay? I’ll go settle some things and come back as soon as I can.”

Lyle ignored my struggling and bent down to kiss me on the cheek before walking out of the hospital ward, leaving me completely stunned.

“Lyle, get your *ss back here right now! B*stard!” I yelled as I threw a glass of water in his direction. It slammed into the wall and shattered all over the ground.

Sadly, Lyle had already walked away. I continued destroying everything within arm’s reach in my ward before collapsing on the bed and pummeling my pillow. What the h*ll do I do now?

My phone continued to ring incessantly, as it had been for the past few minutes. Annoyed, I picked it up and hung up when I saw Christopher’s name on the screen.

He went out with Monica behind my back after all. Why should I answer his calls?

Despite me not picking up, Christopher seemed adamant to talk to me and kept calling until I finally picked up out of irritation. “Yvonne’s not here!” I yelled, frustrated.

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Regret quickly settled in after I shouted. I had always been a little too easily frazzled and never learned to keep my feelings to myself.

I didn’t think I could be blamed, though. Christopher and Monica were off at God knows where having the time of their lives, and being kept in the dark really rubbed me the wrong way, despite constantly saying otherwise.

I could feel those emotions slowly festering in my heart.

I continued punching the pillow relentlessly. What the h*ll is going on? Has Lyle gone insane? Should I have acted as if I didn’t see the car about to run him over and just let him die?

Maybe I should have let him die and just shed a couple of tears before sending him to the emergency room. It's up to fate whether he lives or not, right?

Almost instantly, I felt like explaining everything to Christopher. He treated me so well and yet I always exploded for no reason. It was as if I was trying to stay single for the rest of my life.

The phone rang again and I quickly picked up. "I'm sorry! I'm in a bad mood and didn't think before yelling at you. Don't be mad at me, okay?"

The person on the other end was silent for an eerily long time before I heard a loud chuckle coming through. "Yvonne, who did you think I was? First, you yelled at me and now you're apologizing?"

"Huh?" I quickly went through my recent calls and discovered that I had never gotten a call from Christopher. Sabrina had been on the other end of my sudden outburst.

"Ah, that really scared me." I wiped off the cold sweat forming on my forehead. "Thank God it was you the whole time, Sabby. You won't get mad at an idiot like me, right?"

"If you know you're an idiot, then maybe you should start learning from your mistakes." Sabrina clucked her teeth. "Recently, you've just been a bit quicker with the comebacks. Everything else is still the same ol' Yvonne. Where are you? Let's go shopping."

"In the hospital," I said with a sigh.

Sabrina reached the hospital surprisingly quickly. She knew that I must have been alone since Christopher wasn't around to take care of me.

Once I told her the whole story of what happened, her eyes shone in surprise. "Next time this happens, you probably should just close your eyes. Lyle's brain must have short-circuited."

"It's not like I wanted this to happen!" I cried out as I burrowed into my blankets. "Why did I have to be such a busybody?"

"Poor thing!" Sabrina looked at me pitifully and pulled the blanket off my head. After a second, she said, "What about you bring this up with Christopher? He'll definitely think of a solution."

I shook my head and massaged my temples in frustration. I always made everything out to be way too simple, but in reality, everything was much more serious than I thought.

I had a strong gut feeling that I would have a very intense rival if I wanted to date Christopher, and that rival's name was Monica.

They were a brilliant match no matter what you were looking at. When I stood next to Christopher, it was as if I were a scarecrow standing next to a handsome farmer.

“Did you argue?” Sabrina blinked in confusion before realizing, “So the one you wanted to scold was Christopher. I thought you were talking about Lyle! Calm down a bit. Don’t scare away the man of your dreams.”

I groaned in frustration. “Don’t get it wrong. we’re not involved in any way.”

“Not involved? What exactly is ‘being involved’ supposed to be, then? Just let Christopher come up with a solution for you to get divorced. After that, you can live out your dreams with him for the rest of your life. You might even become a CEO. Doesn’t it sound like heaven to get married to someone as rich and handsome as him?”

Sabrina’s teasing gaze caused me to flush in embarrassment. She was definitely aware of the relationship between me and Christopher. The last time she saw all the marks on my body when I was changing at the Lane house was enough for her to laugh at me for a long while.

This time, though, her words only served to get on my nerves and I huffed. “As if I want anything to do with him.”

Sabrina patted me on the head as if I was a child, which only served to make me feel even more like I was throwing a petty tantrum.

“Don’t make a fuss. He’s good for you.”

I was speechless.

What exactly had Christopher done to Sabrina for her to go over to his side completely?

Chapter 168

I was stuck in the hospital for a whole day. Lyle actually treated me like his wife for once, which I was completely unused to. Even though I tried to be petty and pick here and there, he treated my complaining as flirting and let me be.

I lost count of the number of times I had sworn at him in my heart. Even my appetite was affected and all I wanted was for Crystal to swoop in and take Lyle away.

My prayers didn’t go to waste. At Lyle’s second visit, Crystal walked in all decked out. Her elaborate outfit almost lit up the room as if she were a disco ball.

“Crystal! What are you doing here?” Lyle stood up nervously and put down the apple he was peeling for me.

“I just wanted to visit Yvonne,” Crystal said and she stared at me like she was trying to bore a hole through me. I lay there, letting her stare me down. I even returned her stare with a goofy smile.

If this had happened before, this smile would have seemed like confirmation that I was small fry to her. However, in this context, I knew this smile came across as mocking.

As expected, Crystal's expression darkened and she walked toward me.

Her stifling perfume threatened to choke me and I sneezed. Impatiently, I said, "Ugh, I don't like that smell. Please don't come closer."

She was practically hissing at me now. "Rest well, Yvonne. I'll be going now."

After that, she stalked out of the hospital ward. I even heard her sobbing faintly, and Lyle did too as he shot up and started running toward her. Before he stepped outside, he turned back to glance at me as if asking for permission.

I shrugged with a grin. "Go ahead. If you don't go now, you might really lose her. You can get tickets to Anglandur any other time."

"How did you know?" Lyle asked in shock.

Innocently, I said, "Next time, don't bang in the middle of a public park. It pains me to have to bump into that. Cleansing that scene from my brain took a long time, you know."

Lyle couldn't handle my eerie calmness and finally left, but not before he said, "Yvonne, give me three days to settle everything, okay? I won't forget your feelings for me."

Can someone please come and take this absolute fool away?

The hospital ward fell into silence once again after he left. I sighed softly, completely at a loss for what to do.

How long was Lyle going to drown himself in this puddle of infidelity? He was acting as if it were a heroic decision to only remain loyal to one of us.

He would just lose the housekeeper he had for years, but he could very well just hire another one.

I took out my phone and checked my caller history. Christopher hadn't called or texted.

I almost called him, but I didn't even know what to say if he picked up. I ended up sending a text after what seemed like hours of typing and erasing, only to settle on a lame 'Have you eaten yet?'

I was seriously cringing at my own awkwardness.

Someone knocked on the door and I called out, "Come in!", expecting the doctor to enter. I didn't expect Sabrina to suddenly show up with a package that the hospital guard passed to her when she came back from my place to help me pick up some things.

I was kind of surprised. I hadn't bought anything and I wasn't a regular at this hospital, so how did the sender know to deliver it here?

I glanced at the address and my heart skipped a beat when I noticed that it was from Coldbridge. Excited yet nervous, I tore open the package and saw a simple ribbon-entwined box inside.

There was another box within the first one that was also quite pretty. What is this? I opened the second box again only to see another box nestled inside.

I was more confused than ever. Did Christopher just send me a bunch of boxes?

I patiently opened all the boxes up and the true present finally showed itself: a set of paintbrushes and a box of regular paints.

At the sight of the art supplies, my eyes started to tear up.

I carefully positioned my fingers around one of the brushes as tears dripped silently down my face. Once upon a time, paintbrushes never left my hands and I painted artwork after artwork, never thinking of the day I would finally stop.

Even during my hard times in the Tanner family, I still saved up and bought some paints and brushes whenever I could. I would lock myself in my room and painted all my dreams and hopes for the future.

Painting remained my one true love until I got replaced by Crystal and got chased out of the Tanner residence. Then, I lost all faith in my skills and truly gave up on my future.

Chapter 169

I didn't know how Christopher could have known that I used to love painting. My tears fell relentlessly as I gripped the brush tightly, sobbing my heart out.

No one knew how much I loved and yearned to paint again. All of my love and hope for painting could be seen in Autumnal Panorama.

That oil painting took me two whole months to complete. After that, I sent a picture of it to an online friend called Key, who complimented it and told me that it could really be worth something.

At the time, I thought so too. The art teacher I've had since young had always told me that I was very talented and even felt sorry for me when he learned that my drawings didn't get selected.

Someone called and I saw Christopher's name on the screen. I stayed silent after picking up, so Christopher started speaking first. "Why are you so quiet? Did you forget me already? It's only been a few days. That's kind of sad."

I continued feeling the smooth handle of the brush in between my fingers. Even though it was just a normal paintbrush, the meaning behind it was completely different to me.

"I don't know what to say," I said softly, almost getting choked up.

"What's wrong? Did you cry?" Christopher asked both urgently and helplessly. "Did something happen?"

“No!” I shook my head and asked, “Are you mad because I didn’t pick up your calls the past few days?”

“Why would I get mad over something so small, silly? I would be angry about plenty more things if I were that short-tempered. Since you asked, though, you should tell me why you didn’t pick up my calls,” Christopher said in a faux-angry voice.

I couldn’t see him, but I could hear the gentleness and love in his voice alone. How could I bear to bring up Monica and ruin it?

No matter what they had going on between them, I could only feel gratitude toward Christopher right now.

I knew that I lost my principles when it came to Christopher, just like how I was with Lyle. If they treated me well, I was willing to leave everything behind for them.

“Something happened that morning and I sprained my ankle, so I was in the hospital when you called me and couldn’t pick up,” I said, trying to gloss it over. However, Christopher had already started to pester me about the foot injury.

“I can’t leave you alone at all, can I? How many times have you gone to the hospital since we met?”

I thought about it and was genuinely trying to remember when I realized that it was way more than I could count on one hand. With a pout, I murmured, “Just once or twice.”

What a lie. I could barely count all the small burns, sprains, and minor injuries that I had suffered at this point.

“If I could see you right now, I would spank you for being so careless,” Christopher said in a low voice.

I felt slightly warm. Spanking had become part of our bedroom activities and usually ended up getting pretty heated. He always said it was the best punishment for me to truly remember.

“Christopher!” I said urgently. After a pause, I asked, “Did you send me a package?”

“Why, do you have another boyfriend in Coldbridge?” he asked me instead.

Obviously I didn’t have a proper answer. If I could manage to attract so many men at one time, would I be in such a state? I would at least be someone like Crystal, who had people falling over for her left and right.

“Why did you send me brushes and paint?”

“Take a guess,” Christopher purposely teased.

I honestly had no idea, but it didn’t matter. I loved the gift too much to think too much of it. He always seemed to know more about me than myself, and could guess what I truly wanted before I even thought about it.

“Do you like it?” he asked with a chuckle.

“I love it. Thank you so much,” I said, feeling choked up again.

“Then draw something with it, alright? When I come back, you can give it to me in return.”

I jerked at the thought. Can I still paint? Could I actually go back to my long-lost hobby again?

“I don’t know what to draw,” I said. My mind was completely blank.

“Why don’t you paint me a pair of eyes that shed no tears?”

Chapter 170

After crying for so long and talking to Christopher for a while, I continued zoning out with the paintbrush in hand as all my emotions clouded my mind. I almost jumped out of my skin when I looked up and saw Sabrina’s face in front of me.

“Earth to Yvonne! I’ve been here for ages, so don’t tell me you forgot I was here,” Sabrina said huffily with her hands on her hips, looking like an interrogator.

I giggled and scratched my head sheepishly. “Of course not. I just got a little overwhelmed.”

Sabrina took the paintbrush from me and played around with it. When she accidentally dropped it, I picked it up tenderly and said, “Be careful. Don’t break these before I even get a chance to use them.”

“These are just normal brushes, aren’t they? Are you thinking of becoming an artist?” Sabrina chuckled. “I see how it is. You would probably treasure a piece of tissue paper if it was from Christopher.”

Sabrina and I met in college when both of us were fighting for our futures, so she had no clue that I could draw. I also didn’t plan on telling her.

It started feeling like my little secret. If Christopher knew, then it could be our little secret.

“It’s not just because of that! These are good brushes.” I blew off the dust on the bristles slightly, despite the brush still being speck-free. I felt as if I had gotten a set of new babies.

“Who was the one who said she wanted nothing to do with Christopher? I really wonder who that could be,” Sabrina said teasingly.

“Yeah, who would say such a thing? Come out so I can beat you up!” I said, playing along.

I continued zoning out with the paintbrush in hand for the whole afternoon. There were so many people in the world who had to let go of their dreams in exchange for the harshness of reality, and I was one of them.

I did think of painting throughout my university years, but after getting married to Lyle, I threw all that to the back of my mind.

What else did I lose during that cage of a marriage? I wondered. Perhaps I threw everything else that made me who I was away, too.

I opened a messaging app and looked at the grey profile picture under the name 'Key'. I remembered adding him as a friend in high school.

Key was always extremely understanding and kind. I never got to know his gender, but he was a great conversationalist and was always ready to listen to me when I needed to rant.

I painted Autumnal Panorama in my last year of high school. After what happened after that painting, I tried to find Key relentlessly so he could give me advice. Sadly, I never found Key again.

I didn't know where Key went, but I continued sending messages to the account every time I got wronged or beaten down. I even told them everything about Lyle.

Now that I had a paintbrush in my hands again, I felt like telling Key about it.

I sent a message. 'I think luck has been on my side recently. I got to know someone and he means the world to me. If I were to pick up a paintbrush again, do you think I could finally fulfill my future?'

I was used to waiting for a reply that never came, so I continued to type another text when a new message suddenly appeared onscreen.

Key: 'Your future is something you need to fight for. Don't get used to waiting. It's not good to always wait for something to happen. If you have the chance, you might as well try again.'

My heart leaped in my chest. After four years of university and half a year of being married, I stopped sending messages to Key. Now that I got a reply, it felt like I was dreaming.

I sent the text I was originally going to send after that. 'What do you think a pair of eyes that shed no tears look like?'

Key replied almost instantly. 'Why don't you draw the most beautiful pair of eyes you've ever seen? That's a pair of eyes that you won't shed tears over.'

The moment I read that message, I thought of Christopher's deep yet lively eyes. His gaze was like a beacon that shone through my fog of grief and lit up my life.

I chuckled and replied: Thank you, Key. I would love to draw your eyes one day. I'm sure they're absolutely stunning.

Despite meeting Key online, he was an important part of my life. Without him, I might never have gotten closure about all those things and I wouldn't have had someone who listened to me.

Have you been well? I texted.

Key: I wasn't too well a while back, but now I think happiness isn't too far off for me.

I replied: Same goes for me too. I'm glad we're both doing well.