

## Love Like You Never Loved Before Chapter 9

Out of kindness, I decided not to cook caramelized pork anymore. Instead, I opted for trying my hand at pan-grilled fish in an attempt to show off my culinary skills.

Christopher laughed as he leaned against the sink, watching me roll my sleeves up dramatically.

I gave him a sidelong glance. "What are you laughing at?"

He shook his head, but his eyes were still sparkling with mirth. "Let me clean the fish. You might get hurt."

He took off his coat as he said so, draping it over my head and using me as a human coat hanger. The faint, intoxicating smell of tobacco enveloped me, and I almost couldn't bear to take the coat off.

In no time, he was done and promptly took over the rest of the preparation process; pouring oil into the pan, frying up some chopped onions and garlic, and finally putting the fish in the pan. Unfortunately, he had put it down a little too quickly, and drops of boiling hot oil splashed out of the pan as soon as he did.

Thanks to Christopher's quick reflexes, the oil didn't splash onto me but onto his outstretched arm protectively covering mine. I noticed his skin instantly start to become an angry shade of red in certain spots.

"Are you okay? I'm going to go grab the first-aid kit," I fretted, holding his hand up close to inspect it. For some inexplicable reason, I felt my heart clench at the sight of his reddened hand.

"I'm fine." He pulled me into his arms as he patted my head comfortingly. "I've dealt with worse before."

I raised my gaze to meet his. "You're used to cooking for yourself?"

Lyle could never cook or do anything useful in the kitchen, so I had naturally assumed that Christopher couldn't either, completely forgetting the fact that just because they were friends didn't mean that they were the exact same person.

Christopher shrugged and silently turned back around to focus on the fish in the pan.

At that moment, I had the sudden urge to hug him from behind and comfort him. It must have been hard living by himself all this while.

But I didn't do so for two reasons; the first being that I couldn't muster up the courage, and the second reason was that the doorbell rang.

I was about to go and open the door when he suddenly said, "I swear, I'm going to remove the doorbell one day."

"Why?" What had it done to offend him?

He reached out to hold my chin while replying playfully, "I don't want it to keep interrupting us in the middle of our sessions."

The doorbell rang once more, and I didn't dare keep the mystery guest waiting.

I opened the door to see Lyle's mother, Wendy standing there with a gloomy expression on her face. "Why did you take so long? What were you doing? Needed some time to hide away your boy toy, huh?"

I was aware that she was never particularly fond of me, but her words caught me off guard and caused my palms to grow clammy.

Fortunately, she was just picking on me and spouting nonsense like usual before squeezing past me to conduct a cleanliness check on the house.

She brushed her finger against one of the decorations on display, squinting at it in disdain. "This is dusty."

Of course, there's dust. We're on earth, after all. There's dust everywhere.

Despite my thoughts, I kept mum, not wanting to provoke her even further. I merely followed behind her as she walked around.

It was apparent that she was here to find faults with me, so talking back to her would be falling right into her trap. Besides, I didn't have the energy to deal with it right now.

"What is this?" She picked up a sock from the ground while I was silently praying for her to leave as soon as possible.

"That's Lyle's sock. I must have dropped it after washing it this morning."

Her eyebrows were knitted together. "Washed? This is clearly still grey with dirt!"

But that's... the color of the sock. It's a grey-colored sock.

She must have quickly realized her mistake, but instead of apologizing to me, she chucked the sock into a nearby rubbish bin. "You need to buy white socks for him from

now on. And remember to dry them out in the sun after washing them so that the germs are all properly killed...”

Yes, yes. I nodded along. Whatever you say goes, oh great mother-in-law.

Wendy seemed disappointed at how quickly I admitted to my mistakes as she was now unable to find fault with me.

Then, she turned to focus her attention on Christopher, who was sitting at the dining table. “Why are you here, Christopher?”

Nearly every muscle in my body tensed up from sheer nervousness.