

Love Coming from the Least Expected

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A family dinner, huh? And to think Crystal's the one sending me the invitation instead of them. What a failure I am. Nathan hadn't even called me up until this moment, nor did anyone send me an invitation.

Nathan did call me to ask for my help when the Martins were trying to make them go out of business, but he never came to me again after that.

I handed the invitation to Christopher and shrugged in dismay, while Crystal strutted away like a peacock. "Do you think I should attend this wedding?"

"Of course you should. You are the young lady of the family, aren't you?" Christopher puffed his chest proudly. "You're my wife. You can go wherever you want, and nobody can stop you."

"Thanks to you, darling." I grinned cheekily.

Monica was hospitalized for two days, but Christopher never went to see her again after the first day. He was at home with me while I prepare my artwork. The exhibition last time was a mess; however, an opportunity was still an opportunity, so I would definitely take another shot.

If I could draw together with Remington, it would have been perfect, but such a perfect chance wouldn't come knocking twice.

Christopher's phone was ringing incessantly, so I looked at him, wondering if he'd take it. At that time, he was working on his PC and delegated tasks to his employees through an online meeting. I went over to him to see who was calling, and as expected, the caller was Julia.

I handed the phone to him. "Take it. She knows where we're staying anyway. She'll come knocking if you don't take her calls."

"Ah, it's always the same thing with her. Taking her calls is just a waste of time." Christopher turned away, stubbornly refusing to take the call.

I didn't want Christopher to get into a fight with Julia because of me. He loved his family deeply, so I couldn't be so selfish. After a moment of silence, I took the call for him.

"You sure took your own sweet time, Chris. You don't care about me anymore, don't you? Come to the hospital right this instant or you're getting it!" Julia bellowed furiously.

I looked at Christopher and nudged him, telling him to answer. Nope. He closed his laptop and turned away. Left with no choice, I said, "We'll come over right away, Mrs. Lane."

"Yvonne?" Julia's fury was stoked further when she heard me. "Monica's still in the hospital right now. I don't care what you're doing, but don't you dare stop Chris from coming over."

"Well, we'll be right there." I smiled awkwardly and hung up. Then, I dragged Christopher by the hem of his shirt. "Let's go."

Christopher knew he couldn't dissuade me, so he sighed and pulled me into his embrace. And then he put me on his lap before he leaned against my head. "My mother can be really harsh. It won't end well for you if you go to the hospital."

I shook my head and leaned against his chest. "But she's still your mother. You can't run from her your whole life. I know you're angry at her and Monica, but she's acting like this because she's worried about Monica. After all, she is injured. But Julia's a smart woman, so she'll know what you want once she thinks this through."

"Fine. Let's go then." Christopher and I put away the canvas and art materials before we went to the hospital.

But we realized something was off the moment we came into the ward. Everyone was staring at me curiously, as if my arrival was something to be surprised about.

I tried my best to stay calm and greeted everyone, while Monica was staring at me darkly. To be precise, she was staring at Christopher and me, who were holding hands. Her face fell, and she bit her lips. She wanted to say something, but she remained silent as if seeing us together was torture for her.

Julia noticed that, so she came up to me. "I need to talk to you, Ms. Tanner. Please come with me."

"Huh?" I blinked and gave it some thought, then I nodded. Just when I was about to leave, Christopher held my hand. "No," he growled.

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"I'm not going to hurt her, Chris. Don't get all jumpy, will you?" Julia shouted at him and tried to drag me out with her. However, Christopher stepped up to stop her. "I said no!" he answered adamantly.

"Chris!" I pushed him softly, telling him to stop.

However, he didn't let me go. "Now that everyone's here, I think it's time to make things clear once and for all. Let's not waste anybody's time."

"What are you talking about? We're in the hospital, and Monica's still recuperating. You'd better not make things worse." Julia was starting to panic. She thought Christopher was going to say something bad, so she tried to stop him.

"What do you think, Monica? You don't want to drag this out anymore, don't you? Especially with how the media is talking about me. Honestly, they're getting on my nerves." Christopher was still holding my hand tightly, but he was looking at Monica sharply.

I had no idea what Christopher was talking about, but Monica wasn't looking too good. It was as if she was... afraid. All the color drained from her face, and she clutched her head. "M-My head hurts, Julia. It hurts..."

"I'll get the doctor right away. They'll be right here, so don't worry." Julia quickly called the doctor after Monica said she wasn't feeling well. A moment later, a doctor and some nurses came in to check on Monica.

Monica was lying in the bed, looking as weak as a wilting flower. She was so beautiful and weak, or at least that was what I would think if I hadn't found out what she did. If I didn't know any better, I would have felt guilty for hurting her.

Christopher was gazing straight at Monica. "I see. You're worried I might expose you," he blurted something out, not giving her any chance to defend herself.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Chris. If you really hate me that much, you can leave. I'm really tired, and I don't want to argue with you right now." Monica held her head with one hand, her eyes half-closed.

"Chris!" Julia shouted. "Get out!"

"You know what I want to say, don't you? You knew it all along." Christopher ignored Julia and hugged me. "After we came back from the island, you told the doctor to spike my and Eve's meds with a debilitating drug, didn't you?" Christopher played with my hair, asking Monica coldly.

I froze up, for I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I couldn't believe Monica was already drugging me when she had just met me for the third time.

"Julia, I want them out, please. I'm really feeling uncomfortable right now, and I don't want to see them. Please tell them to get out!" Monica suddenly screamed like a maniac, and she squirmed on her bed violently. The nurse was trying to inject some meds into her, but because of her sudden movement, the needle pricked Monica's arm and drew blood instead.

Julia went over to her in an instant to calm her down. "Calm down, Monica. I'll chase them out right away." Then she shrieked at us, "You heard her! Get out! You're not welcome here!"

"You're scared, aren't you, Monica? Scared of me exposing the truth." Christopher refused to get out. "I didn't want to tell anyone about this because I still think of you as my sister. But what did you do? You kept using my mother's guilt to hurt the woman I love."

"Julia! Julia!" Monica started crying helplessly, clutching at the air. She looked at Christopher in horror, pleading for his mercy. "Please, Chris. Please don't tell them! Please!"

I glanced at Christopher. This was the first time I saw him looking so determined. The flame of fury was roaring in his eyes, threatening to engulf everything in its way. I had never seen

Christopher looking so terrifying before. He looked like a different person, but I wasn't afraid at all. Instead, I huddled closer to him.

"Don't tell them what? About how you spiked my meds and kept me in a coma? About why I was wheelchair-bound after I woke up? About how you played a part in that?"

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"Chris!" I quickly checked on him. Christopher was already weakened back then, and Monica spiked his meds to keep him weak? He was even puking up blood left and right!

"How do you feel? Are you hurt?" I was on the verge of tears. Does Monica really love Christopher? If she really loves him, why did she hurt him so badly?

"I'm fine. Got all of it out of my system already." Christopher patted my hand, his gaze gentle. A moment later, that tenderness was replaced by a fiery ferocity that targeted Monica.

"You thought nobody realized your little trick, but you forgot one thing. I used to be in the special forces. I was trained to recognize and resist the very kind of drug you spiked my meds with. I knew something was wrong with the meds the moment I woke up."

"Chris!" Monica didn't struggle anymore, for she was already breaking down, but there was one last hope for her—Julia. "Julia..."

Julia had been keeping her silent ever since Christopher started exposing Monica. She couldn't believe what she was hearing, but she had to accept it. When Monica called out to her, she finally looked up, but she wasn't struggling to pick a side anymore. This time, she was calm and determined.

"Fine. Let's make things clear once and for all. Why did you spike Chris' meds, Monica? I want a reason."

"I..." Julia's sudden interrogation caught Monica by surprise. Monica kept stammering, but she couldn't even make a coherent sentence.

Apparently, Monica had forgotten that Julia was Christopher's mother. She could let Monica get away with a lot of things, but she would never allow Monica to hurt her son. That was the line Monica should never cross.

Julia was already starting to get annoyed with Monica after the problem with the meds last time. With the truth out of the bag, Monica might have finally erased the last bit of guilt the Lanes had for the Martins.

"That's not all. You spiked Eve's meds too, making it look like she has brain cancer so the doctor would make a false report. I mean, it's your family's hospital anyway, so you're the boss. I bet all the medical staff was just following your orders.

"You knew Eve would fall into despair in the face of imminent death, so you bade your time after the report was out. Once the opportunity presented itself, you persuaded Eve to leave me, making her believe that's the only way I can be happy."

"What? She masterminded the fake diagnosis as well?" The news was as much as a bombshell as Jetroina's destruction to me. I could still remember the day I broke away from Christopher. My heart broke into a million pieces, and whenever I thought of it, it was still very painful.

I thought it was my health problem. I thought the doctor made a wrong diagnosis because I contracted some virus that made my condition look like brain cancer. But now you're telling me that was all just Monica's plan? Oh my god, this woman is scary.

I realized she was ten times scarier than I first thought she was. She even came up with such an elaborate plan that managed to fool everyone without batting an eye. All because she wanted me to leave Christopher.

"Tell me the truth, Monica. I want to hear it from you." Julia glanced at me before slowly moving toward the left side of the room. She sat on the sofa with her legs crossed, then she waved her hand. Her assistant went over to pass her a cigarette and lighter. At that point, I knew Julia was fully calm and collected, unlike how she was earlier.

Monica was looking more and more fearful with every passing moment, but she suddenly buried her face in her hands and cackled like a maniac. "Julia, Chris has told you everything. What more can I say? He knows everything I did. I don't think I could have said it better myself."

“So you confess? Why then?” Julia put her cigarette out, staring at Monica quietly. I knew Julia was having a hard time processing the truth since this must be very shocking to her as well.

“What do you mean why?” Monica was still laughing, but she was wiping the tears that streamed down her cheeks. “I knew something was up between the two of them back at Mr. Lane’s birthday party, so I tailed Chris during the fireworks display. Eventually, I found out he was meeting Yvonne on the ship in secret.”

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I felt my face burst into flames and looked down at my shoes with clenched fists. Christopher and I had done much more than just ‘dating’ on that boat. Had Monica seen everything?

She scoffed coldly and looked at me in disdain. Pointing at herself, she said, “I had the exact same expression when I saw you two. After all, who were you? Just some pathetic divorcee who couldn’t even keep an eye on her own husband. What did I have to be scared about? Besides, maybe Chris just wanted something new.”

Monica wasn’t wrong in the slightest. When I was with Christopher, even Lyle thought I was just selling myself off as a mistress. Crystal simply chose to ignore my existence.

“But when you two were rescued from that island, I saw the two of you lying on that beach. Even though you were both on the brink of death, you were clutching each other’s hands like a lifeline. It was as if even the end of the world wouldn’t separate you. That was when I realized that you, Yvonne, are a threat. If I didn’t get rid of you, Chris and I would never be together.”

“That’s why you poisoned me and made me think I was dying? Was it also the reason why you started acting all goody-two-shoes in front of me and made me think that I should leave Christopher for his own good?” I couldn’t help but cut her off.

“What do you think?” Monica asked, scoffing again. “You’re the most gullible person I’ve ever met. You didn’t have a single opinion in your head and just followed whatever I said. If

Sabrina hadn't said anything, you would have backed off since you started losing your eyesight."

"Then why did you have to poison Christopher? Do you even love him?" If Monica wasn't all weak from blood loss in the hospital bed in front of me, I would have slapped her a few times for Christopher's sake.

"Don't get all high and mighty with me, Yvonne. I have never loved Christopher any less than what you think you feel for him. My love for him is so strong, I'm willing to forego my dignity for him. If not, you wouldn't even have had a chance."

Monica pointed at Christopher and continued. "How could I possibly let him see you? The moment he wakes up and sees you, he'll get back together with you no matter how much you changed. Do you know how well I know him? Someone as responsible as him would never let go of his own principles simply because of some accidental factors.

"That's why—" she paused before continuing, "I asked the doctor to drug him. Well, it was nothing serious—practically just some sleeping pills. As long as he woke up after you left, he would think that you died. It won't be long before he becomes mine again."

"Have you never thought about the fact that I would have figured something out when I didn't die eventually from my so-called illness? If I return, Chris still won't get together with you," I said coldly.

"Of course not. If Chris thought you're dead, then the Lane family would get him to marry the woman who can take care of him and console him. Who could be a better candidate than me? Even if you were to come back one and half years later, I would already be Chris' wife by now and nothing could be changed then," Monica hissed. Her glare was filled with envy and hatred.

"Sadly, Darius ruined everything. If he hadn't told Chris your address, he wouldn't have found you and we would have gotten married too."

"You're really a terrible person." I stared at her, marveling at how she had everything calculated down to a tee since so long ago. How cunning could she possibly be?

"Me, terrible?" Monica chuckled. "Nothing is more terrible than watching the man you love slowly slip out of your grasp. I hate the fact that I didn't come up with a better plan to go against you."

"I'm sorry, Julia, but I've never regretted the thing I've done. The only person I felt bad for is you," Monica said to Julia.

Julia just took a deep breath before standing up and walking out. Her face remained expressionless but her posture betrayed her disappointment.

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"You'll forgive me, right?" Monica called after Julia at the lack of a reply.

Julia didn't look back and settled her gaze on the floor. She replied mildly, "Either way, I do owe you something. I can't deny that. Rest well, alright? We'll talk about everything else later."

I could sense Julia's sorrow. After bending over backward to treat Monica wholeheartedly, she found out that Monica had been plotting against the people closest to her the whole time. Anybody would be rattled by that. When I left the hospital, I could still hear Monica wailing and sobbing behind me.

This time, there was no one to comfort her.

"Chris, you should go home to check on Julia later." I felt slightly wary. Christopher had told Julia the truth in order to stop her from protecting Monica, but the truth hurt. As always, the ones who cared the most got hurt the most badly. I felt that Christopher should go home and have a proper chat with his mother.

"Are you coming with me?" Christopher asked.

"I don't think I should." If I went along with Christopher at a time like this, it would just seem like I wanted to join in the drama. Julia needed time to calm down and she definitely didn't want to see my face around her. "We have plenty of chances to go together in the future, so you should go alone for now. By the way, I'm not leaving any dinner for you."

I shoved him into his car and helped him start the engine. "Bye! You know distance makes the heart fonder, right? If I stare at your face for too long, I might start to get tired of it," I joked.

Monica's issues seemed to be settled for now, but the rumors floating around on the internet continued to emerge. Since the National Youth Art Exhibition and Contest was such a huge event, all the participants' information had been dug up.

As the ultimate 'third party', I received a ton of hateful messages on Twitter. They didn't just attack me, they attacked my art as well and scoffed that any high school student could draw better than I did.

That was how cruel cyberbullying could be. The people behind the screens didn't care about the truth. All they wanted was to follow the crowd, and the crowd happened to hate me.

I jolted awake in shock in the middle of the night. After sitting up, I couldn't stop panting. It felt like the hairs on my arms were standing on end and I couldn't shake that creepy feeling.

Despite how I felt, I couldn't remember what I had dreamed about. It felt like I was standing in an endless, dark space with no one around me. I was rotting on my own, destined to be alone forever.

Every time I had a nightmare, it was a premonition for something bad happening. I blinked and wondered if something was about to happen before I realized that the space beside me was empty. With a glance outside, I realized that the living room light was on.

Why isn't Christopher asleep?

I wiped off the cold sweat on my forehead and put on my clothes before walking out. Christopher was typing away on his computer faster than I had ever seen him work, and he was murmuring as he typed.

The Lane family business may have been busy, but I didn't think it warranted working overtime until three in the morning. I silently padded over to Christopher. Once I got near enough, I noticed that he was arguing with someone under a forum post.

The title of the post was glaringly insulting: 'The Woman Determined To Be A Mistress.'

Was it talking about me?

I leaned even closer. The post had been written by an anonymous user and was basically slandering my every move. Even worse, nothing they were talking about was true. The post talked about how I had always liked seducing my seniors in high school and got an abortion when I was just fifteen. It also mentioned that I had a different boyfriend every month in my junior and senior years and that by the time I was in college, I had three boyfriends at the same time. I also had 'special relations' with some CEOs throughout the years, apparently.

Then, the post talked about how I started attacking those around me and set my sights on Crystal, my cousin's lover. Based on the post, I snatched him away from her but got bored of him in less than two years and switched targets to Monica's love, Christopher. In order to win him over, I slept with him countless times and finally won his heart after six months. After kicking Lyle to the curb, I was finally about to marry Christopher and become the wife of a CEO. The post made sure to call me the pinnacle of embarrassment for women everywhere, too.

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It may have been a post slandering me, but the contents were so funny I couldn't take it seriously. However, the comments below the post were even worse.

river1911: "How is she still alive? It's amazing that those guys haven't already killed her."

xx_love_xx: "As a woman, she is lower than pond scum. How shameful."

m00nlights0nata: "I know her. She's just a whore who loves to seduce taken men. Be careful!"

"Are these idiots blind? Eve is the most well-behaved woman I have ever known. How could she have time to hook up with other guys? You're done for," Christopher murmured as he typed furiously.

christopherlane: "Who has she seduced? Do you have any proof? Did you know that your brain isn't made for making up stories? Just wait for your own boyfriend to dump you. If you make up any more rumors, you're screwed."

m00nlights0nata: "Don't get all high and mighty because you're using Christopher Lane's name as a username. Come and fight me if you're so mad. Yvonne deserves to get hated on. Why are you protecting her? I bet you're Yvonne herself. You might as well go hang yourself for all the sh*t you've done."

christopherlane: "Did she kill your family or burn down your house? Has she stolen your man? No wonder you're single with a mouth like a septic tank."

Christopher read the replies out loud as he typed them. He would jump from comment to comment, retaliating against them as if he were an 18-year-old keyboard warrior.

As I watched, I couldn't help but giggle. Christopher turned around and was about to say something when his computer ding-ed.

m00nlights0nata: "I'm pretty enough to find a man who will take me as his wife, not as a mistress. Once a wh*re, you remain a wh*e. Ms. Tanner, you just wait for Christopher Lane to get rid of you."

Christopher slammed a hand on the desk and yelled, "I'm going to get someone to hack into this user's laptop and expose all of her private information!"

"Chris, that's just some kid's talk. Don't worry about it," I said as I tugged his sleeve gently. I couldn't help but chuckle at the sight of his anxious expression. I couldn't believe he could be this cute.

"I don't care. If I don't get revenge on this person, I might as well get struck by lightning." Christopher speedily dialed a number and hissed, "In one hour, I want you to hack whoever wrote this post and the accounts of all the replies under it. Expose all their private information and post it on every single website available."

"Mr. Lane, it's three-thirty in the morning!" the person on the other end protested sleepily.

"So what? You can have tomorrow off if you settle this right now. If not, you're fired." Christopher hung up his phone and slammed it on the table.

I squeezed in next to him on the sofa and leaned on his shoulder. He was glaring at the computer screen like a child throwing a hissy fit, and I poked his cheek while giggling. "You should be sleeping now. Why did you wake up to do something so pointless?"

"This isn't pointless. How could I allow anyone to spread those sorts of stories about my wife? I had to do something," Christopher said dully.

"They can say whatever they want, but we know the truth. What does it matter if they spread rumors like these? You're wise enough to know that the truth and is what matters. Why stoop to their level when you can just laugh at them for being dumb?" I chuckled and snuggled into him even more. I knew he had been in a bad mood since the moment he came home, so Julia must have said something."

"That's a pretty far-fetched consolation," Christopher said with a straight face. He buried his head into my chest. "Why don't you tell them off instead?"

I didn't know what to say to that. As expected, Christopher still cared about what Monica did and Julia's attitude toward us. He might not say it, but they were people he cared about after all.

"Okay, then, wise boy. How do you want to go about everything?" I asked mildly.

Christopher narrowed his eyes and they glinted coldly with his stare. "I want to blow this up to the point that everyone hears about it."

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Blow it up? I thought, slightly disappointed. Is this still not a big enough issue? What exactly is he up to? I watched him narrow his eyes as they gleamed cunningly. I knew he was up to no good.

The cocky mirth he had was enough to tell me that whatever he was going to do was serious. I might as well wait for him to pull out the big guns. After all, I wasn't wise myself. Sometimes, I'd even call myself rather silly.

The next day, I was painting when I heard some urgent knocks on the door. When I opened it, Nathan was in front of me. Despite my surprise, I asked calmly, "What's up, Dad?"

Nathan craned his neck to look into the room behind me and asked, "Is Mr. Lane in there?"

I frowned and shook my head. "He's at the office. If you need to discuss something with him, you'd better go there."

"What do you mean? Am I not allowed to come and see you?" Nathan scoffed coldly and squeezed right past me into the living room. When he caught sight of the easel propped up, his eyes shined and he said, "Crystal said you were painting again, but I thought she was kidding. Are you really doing that? You should know where your own talent lies. Stop embarrassing the Tanners."

I rolled my eyes and said impatiently, "I got kicked out of the Tanner family ages ago, didn't I? I'm sure it has nothing to do with any of you. Are you going to lecture me again? You can probably save it."

"You selfish fool. If it wasn't for Crystal, I wouldn't bother coming here to see you." Nathan's expression was steely as he glared at me. "We're organizing a family dinner tomorrow. Invite Mr. Lane over so I can discuss something with him."

"Is that necessary?" Christopher had already decided to go with me, but Nathan didn't need to come over to tell me especially. The more I thought about it, the more it felt like something fishy. What is Crystal up to?

"Just go when I ask you to! I don't care who you think you are now. You were brought up by the Tanners, so you shouldn't forget your roots," he spat before leaving.

"Unbelievable!" I slammed the door. Sure, I may have grown up in the Tanner family, but no one treated me like I was one of them. Even their pets were more privileged than I was.

Someone knocked on the door again. Thinking it was Nathan, I yelled, "What else do you want? You came all the way here to force me to go, so it's not like I can turn you down! If not, you'll probably get Scarlett to emphasize how disrespectful I am at some other banquet, right?"

"Eve, it's me. Open up!" Sabrina called.

The moment I realized it was Sabrina, I rushed to open the door. Out of breath, she started to rant. "That b*tch Crystal openly bashed you online! She's probably waiting to use you as a stepping stone. She's purposely getting famous off this whole art fiasco!"

“What’s going on?” I asked, extremely confused.

“Take a look for yourself!” Sabrina dragged me to the computer and searched up a social media webpage.

Crystal’s interview appeared. As the special guest of the National Youth Art Exhibition, Remington, Spencer and she got the chance to exhibit their own artwork. Afterward, there was a charity auction for those paintings. Crystal had painted a bunch of flowers and was answering interview questions from journalists.

When they brought my name up, Crystal stiffened and her eyes went red. She looked down pitifully and wiped away some tears before saying, “Y-Yvonne is a very strong-willed woman. As long as she wants something, she must have it. Still, please don’t misunderstand her. She may have ripped Lyle and I apart, but she couldn’t help herself. I don’t know what happened between her and Mr. Lane, so I can’t speak about that. Mr. Lane is one of Lyle’s business partners, and Yvonne met him during a banquet. I don’t know when they started having a thing, and all I can do is apologize for what they did to Monica. Please stop blaming Yvonne. I’ll apologize in her place.”

She was clearly blowing things out of proportion! Clearly, she was on Monica’s side and rubbing my name even further into the dirt. I could already imagine how popular she would be after this interview blew up and how hated I would become.

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I hadn’t told Christopher about that interview, and he didn’t ask either. However, I knew he must know about it somehow. He was adamant on blowing the whole story up, after all.

There were more and more articles popping up about me. It was as if some people were determined to pin every crime on me.

The Tanner family banquet was held at a hotel. Rather than a family dinner, it was more like the discussion of Lyle and Crystal’s wedding date. It was completely pointless to invite me.

I caught sight of Sharon at the hotel entrance. She was holding onto Lyle's arm for support and walking out of the car slowly, but the moment she saw me she started waving. "Eve! Come help me."

"Grandma, how have you been?" I asked, slightly taken aback. I was surprised as Sharon had been rather vocal about her distaste for Crystal and I knew that better than anyone. It shocked me to see her attending a family dinner to discuss the matters of Crystal and Lyle's wedding. Had she finally bent to Lyle's will?

"Pretty good for a bag of old bones like me," she said with a sigh.

I realized how much older she looked. Her hair had once been salt-and-pepper, but now it was fully white. "You're a strong lady, Grandma. I bet you will live a very long life."

"Still as good with your words as ever," Sharon said as she glanced at Christopher, who was standing next to me. Her eyes shone and she said, "I missed hearing you call me Grandma. You have to take care of yourself, okay?"

"You need to stay fit too." Sharon's tone sounded a bit off, but I thought she was just reminiscing about the old days and didn't pay it much mind.

"Mom, go in with Yvonne first, okay? I'll go get Crystal. She's pregnant now, so we need to be even more cautious."

Wendy scoffed and glared at me in disdain. She let go of Sharon's hand and said, "I don't know what you're doing here, but don't you dare try to do anything that will break Lyle and Crystal apart again. If anything happens to Crystal, I will destroy you, no matter who you think you've got on your side."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Smith. If my dad hadn't invited me, I wouldn't dream of being here."

"Watch your mouth. How much more shameless can you be? You have divorced my son, but you still have your teeth sunk in him, don't you? Do you think you're some princess? My son isn't someone you can climb all over, you-"

"Mrs. Smith, what have Eve possibly done to you?" Christopher said as he clutched my hand tighter.

"You need to watch the women you fall for, Mr. Lane. In the end, you'll only hurt yourself." Wendy had always been brash. Even though Christopher's glare could bore a hole through her, she didn't back down and still said whatever she wanted to. "I'm her former mother-in-law, so I'd know better. As a filial son, you should think about Julia's feelings."

"I'd argue that my mom's opinion is much more valuable than yours, and my choice is certainly better than Lyle's. Not everyone has luck imitating someone else," Christopher said mildly.

"Enough. Shouldn't you go and bring your beloved daughter-in-law? Stop embarrassing all of us," Sharon said firmly with a knock of her walking stick.

Wendy clearly wanted to say more, but at the sight of Christopher's glare, she finally retreated. She still knew how powerful the Lane family was. With an unhappy stomp of her foot, she walked off as she continued to curse at me under her breath.

Soon enough, Nathan arrived. It was a pretty weird sight—Nathan walking with Crystal as her uncle and me walking with Sharon even though I was Nathan's daughter. It would make more sense to switch Crystal and my surnames at this point.

Lyle's expression darkened at the sight of me and Christopher standing together and he rushed over with shining eyes. "Eve, what are you doing here? Do you still care about me?"

I fell silent. Truth be told, I had already prepared myself when I saw him. By the time he walked over, I had already exchanged places with Christopher. Looking up, I replied, "Of course! You're about to become my cousin-in-law. Obviously, I would care about you! I already got your wedding invitation. Just wait for my gift, okay? Congratulations!"

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Lyle heard what I said and glanced at Christopher, who was standing next to me. The spark in his eyes disappeared before he sneered, "I had no idea that you cared so much about me. Please be sure to attend my wedding. I look forward to getting a wedding gift from you."

I frowned. Why does it seem like he's out to annoy me?

"Don't worry, Mr. Smith. Eve and I will definitely attend your wedding. We won't disappoint you," Christopher said with a smile as he hooked his arm around me, and there was a hint of malice in his eyes.

"Let's go in, Lyle. I've been standing too long, and the baby is kicking me inside," Crystal whined. When no one was looking at her, she glared at me, and there was a strange smile on her face.

The dinner was more like torture for me. Not only did I have to endure Crystal and Yvette's stupid comments, but I also had to endure Wendy and Nathan's patronizing ways. And yet, Lyle's eyes seemed to burn a hole in me.

Fortunately, Christopher was with me, and we carried on with our meals as we spoke softly to each other. After a while, Nathan turned to Christopher and said, "Christopher, I heard that your company won a tender recently and that you're looking for a company to cooperate with. Instead of looking elsewhere, how about cooperating with the Tanner family?"

I plonked down my cutlery. This is the thing that Nathan wanted to tell Christopher? I knew about the tender. Christopher had put in huge effort to win it over. He even had to spend several days entertaining the parties involved and had gotten himself drunk every day in that period of time. According to him, this tender was between the Lane family and their rival, the Walker family. He mentioned that the matter had to be treated with much caution. Otherwise, a minor slip would end up in a disastrous situation.

"You must be joking, Mr. Tanner. You can give my assistant a call and discuss this. If he thinks it's okay, then I have no problem with that at all," Christopher said straightforwardly.

"How modest of you, Christopher. You're in charge of the company; of course, you call the shots. I've drawn up the contract. How about we split fifty-fifty? Eve, show Christopher the contract," Nathan said as he handed me the contract.

If I were to take the contract from him, it would mean that I agreed to that. I shut my eyes in disgust and quelled the disappointment in me. In the end, I'll always be disappointed in anything that Nathan does. Unfortunately, I can't change the fact that he's my father.

"Fifty-fifty?" I mused with self-mockery. I'm not a fool. There has to be a catch in Nathan's proposal. I took the contract from him, and just when Nathan beamed satisfactorily, I picked up the contract and tore it in half.

"What are you doing, Yvonne?" Nathan was stupefied.

"Nothing. It's just that I don't want to be treated like a fool. Do you think of me as a fool, Dad? Or is Christopher a fool to you? Perhaps you think that you're the only smart one around here. Have you forgotten what happened after Mom left? You never even treated me as your own daughter, so why would I help you with such a thing? Fifty-fifty? Do you have any idea that Christopher spent more than two billion to win over this project? You think he had it easy?"

I was infuriated to the point of seeing red, and I couldn't contain the rage within me. Most of the time, I would try to avoid having to deal with my father. Even when I had to deal with him, I would hold myself back whenever there was a conflict. But today, I couldn't hold back anymore.

"I'm your father. It's the least you could do for the Tanner family. Don't forget that you're part of the Tanner family too," Nathan roared.

"I know I'm from the Tanner family. That's why it makes me wonder why you don't treat me as your daughter. Instead, you treat your niece like your own daughter. Take a look at the ones sitting next to you. They are your illegitimate daughter and your niece," I said angrily before I bellowed, "If possible, I don't wish to be part of the Tanner family!"

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Chapter 420

"What rubbish are you talking about, Yvonne?" Nathan slammed his hand on the table and stood up. His anger finally boiled over at me for not relenting.

"I have my limits too, and I won't be treated like a doormat anymore."

I pointed at Crystal and Yvette before I bellowed, "Look at these two. One took my father away from me, and the other drove my mother away. Sometimes I do wonder why I'm a Tanner. If I were an orphan who was picked up from the streets, I wouldn't be so heartbroken over the things you've done to me. I don't think I can carry on eating anymore, Dad. I'll be there at the wedding on time. Bye."

“Don’t be like this, Yvonne. Dad only wants the Tanner family’s business to flourish. There’s no need for you to be angry. We’ll amend the contract if you’re not happy with the conditions listed. Besides, Christopher hasn’t had a say in this yet.”

When I reached the door, Yvette and Crystal hurried over to me and tried their best to dissuade me.

“Just cut the crap. Let’s go, Chris!” I called out to Christopher.

“Don’t be too cocky, Mr. Tanner. There are some things that you shouldn’t interfere with,” Christopher said with a cold smile as he crossed his arms in front of him.

“You can’t possibly have a wedding with Eve if her side of the family doesn’t turn up. How about you sign the contract in exchange for a perfect wedding? That way, you won’t be at any loss,” Nathan said with a glint in his eyes and a cunning smile on his face.

“And what if I don’t agree?” Christopher shot him a glare and asked with a cold smile.

“Eve’s reputation is at stake, and she needs someone to clear her name. In times like this, her family is her pillar of strength and support, don’t you think?” Nathan countered as he ignored Christopher’s sharp gaze.

Christopher stood rooted at his spot, and his eyes fell on the woman in the corridor. There was a brief glint in his eyes before it disappeared quickly.

I took big strides towards the stairs as I couldn’t bear to stay here a minute longer. Didn’t we agree to talk about Lyle and Crystal’s wedding ceremony? So why are we talking about business? Moreover, a business worth two billion can’t be taken lightly.

“Wait a minute, Eve,” Sharon called out as she walked towards me with the help of her cane. “I can’t stand the ruckus here. I’m coming with you.”

“Slow down, Grandma!” I hurried over and supported Sharon. Just as we were about to head downstairs, Crystal suddenly came forward and grabbed my arm. “You can’t leave yet, Yvonne. I have something to tell you.”

I was taken aback, and I instinctively pushed her to the side. Consequently, Crystal lost her balance and began to sway at the top of the stairs. In horror, I quickly reached out to pull her hand to stop her from stumbling down the stairs.

But just as I stretched out my hand, someone from behind me gave me a shove. As a result, I stumbled forward, and my stretched-out hand pushed against Crystal's shoulder. Crystal let out a piercing scream and went tumbling down the stairs.

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. My mind went blank, and I watched in horror as Crystal tumbled down the flight of stairs. And when she landed at the bottom of the stairs, a pool of blood had formed between her legs. Within a few seconds, her long pastel yellow dress was blood-soaked.

A high-pitched scream pierced the air. I was so shocked that I remained motionless as I stared blankly at Crystal, who was convulsing at the bottom of the stairs. By the time I turned around to look behind me, the person who had been standing behind me was gone.

"Crystal!" Lyle shouted frantically. At the sight of Crystal's devastating state, he whirled around and slapped me hard across the face. "How could you be so vicious towards a pregnant woman, Yvonne? Have you no heart?" he roared.

My face was stinging from the slap, and there was a numbness in my heart. I looked past Lyle and stared at Sharon, who was standing behind him. I was hoping that she would say something, but to my disappointment, she just stood there and said nothing.

Why was I pushed?