

Crescent de Luna

Chapter 1

“Miss Sanders, you’re still not pregnant.” The glint of hope in her eyes faded away instantly. Biting down on her lips, Estelle Sanders mumbled, “Alright...” With a pitiful look on his face, the doctor passed her the examination report. “Miss Sanders, how about...giving up? You’re overstretching your body and it can’t stand another distress. Even if you were to get pregnant, we can’t say for sure that you’ll be able to reach the full-term pregnancy...” Biting her lips, Estelle was silent as her body turned stone cold. The doctor was concerned about her. He called out to Estelle, “Miss Sanders, are you feeling all right?” “I’m fine and I’m listening.” Her voice sounded shaky and it seemed that blood had drained her lips, turning it pale-white. Looking at her, the doctor let out a deep sigh, “You know, if you go through with the chemotherapy now, it might increase the chances of extending your life.” “That’s not necessary. I must get pregnant,” As she stood up, she insisted, “Doctor, please give me a shot of the injection to stimulate ovulation. I want to give it another try.” The doctor rejected. “You’ve been taking this injection for the past half a year. This is a stimulant and it’ll increase the rate of production of the cancer cells!” “...It’s okay, just prescribe it.” “Miss Sanders, is this really necessary?” “Please, I’m begging you.” “Sigh...” Feeling helpless, the doctor passed a slip to her. “Take a left turn on the second floor and get your injection there. The stimulant works best 24 hours after the injection. Hence, make sure you seize the opportunity.” “Thank you.” Estelle expressed her gratitude to the doctor after receiving the slip. It was nine o’clock at night, aside from Estelle, the mansion was empty with no one else around. Estelle was used to loneliness and emptiness. She did not have the luxury of spending her time

mulling over these feelings as her life was on a clock. She did not even have the time to take a breather. She had to seize every opportunity in a day. Dialing the familiar string of numbers on her phone. She waited. Beep ——— No one picked up the call. Not giving in, she dialed the number again. She was going to continue calling until he picked up her call. Right before the call got cut off automatically, Skyler finally picked up. His voice was filled with annoyance and impatience. “Estelle Sanders, what do you plan on doing? What’s the use of dragging this out?” Dragging? ‘Yeah, for the past four years, I’ve been making attempts to protect this marriage. Yet, it still came to an end,’ thought Estelle, while mocking herself bitterly. “Didn’t you want a divorce?” she asked. “I’ll sign the papers.” Skyler hesitated. “Are you really willing to go through the divorce?” “Yes, but with a condition - come and stay the night with me.” Skyler sneered in disdain. “Estelle Sanders, is this what you have in store?” “Whatever you think, Skyler. I’m only giving you one last chance. If you don’t come over and stay the night, you can forget about me signing the papers and you marrying Camilia. So, suit yourself.” Before Skyler could say anything, she hung up the call. She knew how Skyler made his decisions. He was willing to do anything for Camilla. Hence she was sure that Skyler would have gone over that night. The skies were clear that night and the moon was perfectly round, shaped like a big plate. It was a night full of stars that shined brightly beside the moon. Estelle...her name carried the meaning of ‘the stars’. ‘Skyler, if the day comes when I’m not around anymore, will you perhaps think of me when you look up at the skies full of stars?’ thought Estelle. ‘We used to have a child together. He’s really sweet, well-behaved, and he looks just like you. But he’s lying in the ICU now, with tubes stuck into him and he’s waiting for me to save his life. I must get pregnant with our second child so I can use the blood from the umbilical cord to save him. Yet, I’m running out of time...’ Estelle pondered. Beep—— It was the sound of the doors unlocking with the fingerprint

sensor. Was Skyler home? Estelle quickly touched up her lipstick in the mirror in an attempt to look slightly better. “Skyler...” She walked up to him. The next second, a tremendous force pushed against her, causing her to crash heavily on the bed.

Chapter 2

When it came to her, Skyler was filled with resentments. He showed no pity for her and did not utter a word to Estelle. Tears streamed down Estelle’s eyes, but she remained silent. Choking on her sniffles, Estelle started coughing strenuously. She lied on the bed for quite a while as she did not have the strength to sit up. She was in tremendous pain. With an icy cold voice, Skyler uttered, “Sign the papers.” “...” She sat up shakily and asked, “You’ve been drinking?” “It’s none of your business!” “Your stomach’s not in a good shape, try to cut down on the alcohol.” “How could I possibly touch you if I’m sober?” A force of strong blood smell rushed up to her throat, and the sticky fluid leaked from the corners of her lips. Estelle frowned while she wiped her mouth clean with the bedsheet under her. Her heart turned stone cold. She kept a calm and gentle voice. “You came home really fast, there isn’t much traffic is there?” Skyler had already tidied himself up. He lit up a cigarette, sat in the dark, and replied nonchalantly, “It’s for the divorce, of course, I’d be quick.” “Are you that desperate?” She sat with her back facing him and her voice sounded frail. She started to cough again because of the smoke. “Didn’t you already figure that I’m indeed eager for the divorce?” Skyler deliberately puffed out the smoke from the cigarettes toward Estelle. Weirdly, he felt a rush of satisfaction seeing how Estelle coughed strenuously until her body trembled. “I’ve fulfilled your request. We will go through the divorce the first thing in the morning.” “Not yet, Skyler. What I asked of you is for you to stay the night with me. For the whole night.” With a smirk on his face, Skyler put out the cigarette. “Estelle Sanders, you’re shameless.” When exactly did she fall in love with Skyler? Estelle tried to reminisce but she failed to remember in the moment of

confusion. She only remembered the times they grew up together. The Flynn family and Sanders family were good friends. Estelle and Skyler were childhood sweethearts and everyone in the family waited for them to get married when they got older. Those days, Skyler treated her with great care. Estelle had a low blood sugar level back then, and Skyler always carried around her favorite star-shaped candies. He gave them to her when she felt unwell. When they started school, Skyler threw away all the love letters she received and he sulked to imply that those boys were incomparable to how good he was. When her birthday came, he filled up a big glass bottle with paper stars that he folded and gifted her. Those times, she deliberately made unreasonable requests as she knew how Skyler adored and pampered her. “These paper stars are fake, I want real stars.” Skyler always pinched her nose adoringly and reply, “I’ll go get them for you.” “I’m just joking. The stars are in the sky, how could you possibly get them?” “As long as you want it, I’ll be able to get them for you.” “You’re a liar.” “Estelle, I’ll get the stars for you when you marry me.” Estelle wondered if people tend to reminisce the good old memories when they were on the verge of dying. She followed the traces of bloodstain on the bedsheet with her hands. She thought to herself that life was ironic as if heaven was jealous of her and had to destroy everything good in her life.

Chapter 3

The magical love story between Skyler and her ended in just five years. Five years ago on the day before their wedding dinner, Skyler’s parents passed away in a terrible car accident and the culprit of the accident was alleged to be Estelle’s father. Not long after the accident, Estelle’s mother and uncle acquired the Flynn family’s businesses. Just like that, H city’s two infamous families were forced to merge brutally and cruelly. Estelle’s uncle became the person who held the power by inheriting both the Flynn’s and Sander’s family inheritance. The ending was unexpected. Though, by the

looks of the incident, it was as if it was a big ploy and conspiracy the Sanders family had against the Flynn family. The incident ended with the Sander family's victory. Everything took place in a flash and when Estelle was just able to comprehend the situation, Skyler made up his mind to break up with her. He smashed all of the glass bottles filled with the paper stars in front of her. Scattered all over the floor were the paper stars, and Skyler stomped on them mercilessly, squashing and tearing the paper stars in pieces. With his fingers pointed at her and his eyes burning with rage, he seethed angrily, "Estelle Sanders, get out of here! I don't want to ever see you again!" At that time, Skyler was only twenty-three when he lost his parents, his company. He lost everything and Estelle who was twenty, found out that she was pregnant with his baby. She was worried that Skyler would not accept the child as he resented her. Hence, she traveled overseas to give birth. She was hoping to clear the air up with Skyler once he calmed down. She was kept in the dark about everything that happened and she did not know why things turned out this way. However, tragic things kept occurring. She got into an accident when giving birth and the baby was diagnosed with a chronic illness and had to stay in the ICU. Estelle was panic-stricken hence she scurried back to the country in hopes to get help from Skyler. Instead, she saw another girl snuggled up in his arms. That girl was Camilla Gionni. They said that it was Camilla who was by his side during his darkest and lowest moments in life and that he saw Camilla as a beam of sunlight in his life. He treated her with great care. They also said that with Camilla's support and encouragement, he made a comeback and within two years he had expanded his business to a level that was comparable to Sander's family. Plus, they said that Camilla and Skyler were making preparations for their wedding... Except that Skyler and Estelle already received their marriage certificate but they never got to hold their wedding ceremony. Hence, Skyler was legally married and Estelle was still his legal wife. Thus, Camilla was not able to

rightfully marry Skyler. The past four years of being his wife, she bit down the bullet and overcame the times when Skyler forced her to sign the divorce papers. She used to think that because Skyler and she were indeed in love, she could have wait until the day the truth was unveiled for Skyler to come back to her. She did wait for him for a good four years. However, not only did Skyler not go back to her, she was diagnosed with lung cancer instead. She felt a sharp pain in her chest while reminiscing. The emotions must have affected her, till she started coughing tremendously again. The smell of blood was stronger this time and she spat out droplets of blood, staining the white bedsheets. “What happened to you?” Skyler asked when he saw her shivering. Her heart softened and tears were falling from her eyes. “Skyler, there...there’s something that I need to tell you. Honestly, my body’s unwell and I’m diagnosed with...” Without waiting for her to finish her sentence, Skyler smirked coldly and said, “Don’t go telling me that you’re dying from sickness. I’ll only celebrate. If you die, we don’t even have to go through a divorce. Camilla and I could get married whenever we want to.” “...” Estelle bit down her tongue. The words that she meant to tell him were now stuck in her throat, suffocating her heart. “Is there anything else that you want to say?” He asked What else was there left to say? “Nothing else.” She shook her head. Skyler seemed to have noticed something on the bedsheet. She hurriedly covered up the bright red stain with her body and pretended that nothing happened. Skyler walked over and moved her crudely to one side. He saw the red color stain on the bedsheet and asked, “What is this? Is this...blood?” Biting down on her lips, Estelle held her fist tightly to bear the sharp pain. Skyler glanced at her in disdain. Pointing at the traces of blood, he asked, “Why? Did you undergo hymenoplasty just for tonight?”

Chapter 4

Lifting the corners of her lips, Estelle let out a burst of mocking laughter. The moonlight cast a long shadow of herself on the floor. To begin with, she was already skinny to her bones. Nowadays, because of the torment of cancer, it was as if the color of her shadows faded a bit more than before. Skyler asked her, "Where were you this morning?" She looked up to meet his eyes. "Are you worried about me?" "Don't take this the wrong way. I had Zayne meet up with you to go over the terms for our divorce and he said that you weren't around." "I see. I went to the hospital." "Why were you at the hospital?" "I went for the hymenoplasty surgery. Why are you asking when you already figured it out." Skyler put forth. "Estelle Sanders, I realize that I've never really gotten to know you...If you want to inherit the Flynn family, you could've after our marriage. Did you have to go to the lengths of harming my parents? Are you relieved now that they're dead? They adored you so much that they treated you as their daughter. I would've given you everything that you wanted if you have asked. I was the only child to my parents and they too would've given you everything. But why...why did you go through the lengths of putting up a show just to take over the Flynn family?" "If I told you that I know nothing about the accident, Skyler, would you believe me?" He shook his head. "Do you possibly think that I'll believe you? My parents are dead and I have nothing left. When I hit the rock bottom, I drowned myself in alcohol and I nearly gave my life away because of alcohol poisoning. Where was the Sanders family then? They were all caught up in claiming and acquiring businesses of the Flynn family. And you were nowhere to be seen and found...so how could I possibly believe you? "Skyler..." Skyler continued. "If it wasn't for Camilla who stayed by my side, supporting me and keeping me company through the dark moments in my life, I could've lost the battle and given up like you and your family wanted." "... "Despite it all, I've overcome the hurdles and I won't allow myself to fall into the same trap." 'The same trap...He must be referring to me.' thought Estelle

with a bitter smile. He would have never believed her again and would never...love her again. She licked her chapped lips and asked, "Skyler, tell me more about this Camilla." He had a slightly gentle expression on his face. "She is...very wise, kind, gentle, and she knows me well." "She must love you a lot too, right?" "Of course." Estelle nodded her head. "That's good then." 'As long as she loves you, then it's all good. It's good that you have someone who loves you by your side when I'm not around anymore. I can rest my worries for you then. At least I'm sure that you'll be able to live well in the future. I can leave this world with no regrets. I'll find somewhere where you can't see me and die quietly without causing you any trouble.' Estelle thought to herself. The clock on the wall sounded twelve times. It was already twelve in midnight. She put on a smile and looked toward him. "I promise you that after tonight, I will sign the divorce papers." Looking at her with furrowed brows, Skyler stood still as if he hesitated about how much he could trust her words. Standing up, Estelle walked toward him and leaned against him. She kissed his lips. "Skyler, just think of it as...gifting me one last dream. Let's just say that I'm begging you..."

Chapter 5

The next morning, Estelle woke up by the glare of the sun. She felt a wave of sharp pain all over her body, but her heart was empty like a body without a soul. Skyler did not kiss her once. It was as if he simply completed a task without any emotion and affection. Feelings of dismal gushed her heart. The side of the bed where he laid was already absent of his warmth and there was no sight of him around the mansion. Skyler had already left. It took all her might just to get out of bed. While holding in the pain, Estelle tidied up the mess on the bed. Skyler left his tie on the bedroom floor. He must have been in a rush to leave. She picked up the tie and folded it neatly. She put the tie in her purse and kept it together with a photo of her baby. "Little one, wait for me a bit more all right? I'm trying my best and I'll do whatever it takes to save

you. Give mommy a bit more time okay?" She sniffled while gently stroking the little face on the photo. Tears fell from the corners of her eyes and dropped on the photo she was holding. Wiping away the tears on the photo, her eyes were filled with gentleness. "This world seems to hate mommy a lot. It wants to take away everything that I have, it wants to take away you from me too. But it's okay, mommy still has you and you're everything to me. As long as you're well and alive, mommy can go through all the hurt and injustices." There was a file of documents left on the desk. Skyler must have left it there. With care, she kept the photo back in her purse and took a look at the documents. As expected, it was the divorce paper. Estelle roughly scanned through the document. The terms included in the divorce paper were similar to those previous ones that Skyler had brought over and there were no unusual terms added. Aside from one specific term which caught her attention. At the end of the divorce agreement, it was stated that Estelle should promise to leave H city and should never return. 'He must not want to see me again,' thought Estelle. 'Rest assured Skyler, you won't see me around anymore. Not just in H city because sometime later, Estelle won't exist anymore in this world,' Estelle thought to herself. Smiling, Estelle finally put down her signature on the divorce papers. As usual, she visited the hospital for a checkup the next day after the injection. The doctor noticed the bruises on her neck and he asked in concern, "Do you need me to call the police, Miss Sanders?" Shaking her head, Estelle fumbled with the collar of her shirt in an attempt to cover the bruises. "It is okay. Doctor, when can I know if I'm pregnant?" "The earliest is in seven days. Miss Sanders, if there's no news about the pregnancy after seven days, please do go through the chemotherapy then. If not it'll be too late." The doctor advised. Furrowing her brow, Estelle let out a deep sigh. "If I don't go through the chemotherapy, how much time do I have left?" "The least is half a year. Though if you undergo the chemotherapy in time, you could have at least 3 to

5 more years..." "I don't want to go through chemotherapy. I must get pregnant. Doctor, is it possible to extend my time to at least nine months? I'm willing to go through any procedure and I can pay for the fees." Estelle pleaded. "By the looks of this situation, there's nothing else that we can do. The pain that you'll go through in the last stage of cancer is usually unbearable. Most of the patients gave up the will to fight because they can't bear the pain. If you wish to drag this out, you'll have to bite the bullet." Feeling relieved, Estelle replied, "All right, I understand." "It's an unbearable pain that most can't take. It's as if you're shot with a bullet right through your heart," added the doctor. "I can bear the pain. I'll be able to do it." She nodded and assured herself. The doctor could not help and said, "Miss Sanders, amongst the patients that I have known, you're the harshest on yourself." Lifting the corners of her mouth, Estelle flashed a big smile. "No, I'm not cruel enough. If I'm crueler, I wouldn't be where I am today."

Chapter 6

The sun was shining bright when she walked out of the hospital. She lifted her head to look at the sun. The sun was always shining warmly and it shined in all its glory. The light from the sun was blazing yet warm, and it made people feel warm and fuzzy. Unlike the stars. The stars could only shine their dim and weak light in the cold and dark night sky. Once the sun came up, the stars instantly lost their brightness, leaving no traces of them. Skyler confessed that Camilla was like a sun in his life. She, though, could only remain like those useless stars. Her phone rang, and it showed Skyler's caller ID. He was calling first? With her hands slightly trembling, Estelle nearly dropped her phone. "Hello, Skyler?" "Have you signed the papers?" Skyler threw her that question with no greetings. She choked. "... "Estelle Sanders, you better not be up to one of your tricks." "I'm not playing any tricks. I've already signed the papers. I have always kept my promises." Skyler replied quickly, "I'll have Zayne

get the papers from you.” “I can’t let you have the divorce papers yet. I’m sorry Skyler.” Skyler was deeply annoyed. With a cold and sharp voice, Skyler snapped and demanded. “Estelle Sanders, what do you think you’re doing!” “I...” “Using such lowly tactics just to lure me back. Why? Are you that desperate for a male company? If so, I can hire someone for you. Don’t come on to me, it disgusts me!” Why was it that despite his voice sounding so familiar, she was not able to recognize him? Before she turned twenty, Skyler never spoke to her in that manner. He was always gentle and always adored her. He used to be worried about hurting her by just holding her hands. Unlike the present Skyler, his words were like sharp knives that stabbed into her heart. Skyler could not take it anymore. “I don’t want to waste another second listening to your nonsense.” “The stars last night were exceptionally pretty...” “Estelle Sanders, stop testing my patience!” “...I’ll give you the divorce papers. I’ve already mailed it, and you’ll receive it after seven days.” Skyler’s breath got heavier and across the phone. She felt his anger surging. “You’re going back on your words! Estelle Sanders, have you ever been truthful to me? Five years ago, you got me wrapped around your fingers with your lies! Now, you’re doing the same!” She was not angry. Instead, she replied with a gentle voice, “I’m not lying to you. I’ve never lied to you.” “If you still have any conscience left in you, or if you feel guilty toward my parents, you would’ve agreed for the divorce right away and get out of my sight forever!” She laughed, “I saw the newly added term on the divorce agreement. You want me to never return to H city.” Skyler replied, “Yeah, I don’t want to see you ever again.” “Sure, I’ll promise you that. After seven days, I’ll leave with no traces and I won’t show myself in front of you and Camilla. But Skyler... would you watch the stars with me these few days? Just once on whichever day will do.” Beep—— The call was disconnected. He did not promise her anything. He was not even interested in

what else she had to say. It was not unexpected. She was already used to his rejections the past four years. Even the feeling of heartbreak was numb to her.

Chapter 7

“Twinkle twinkle little stars...” A clear and bright child voice was heard from aside. A little boy who seemed to be around the age of five to six years old sat obediently by the corner of the hospital entrance. The kid held his chubby face in his hands while humming the song away. Estelle walked toward the boy and crouched down in front of him. “Little kid, why are you here alone? Where’s your mommy?” The little boy though was not afraid of strangers and replied calmly, “My mommy works as a cleaner in the hospital. I’m waiting for her to get off work.” “Why aren’t you waiting inside then?” With a sad face, the boy sulked, “Cleaning’s a tiring job and mommy doesn’t want me to see her working hard. How about you madam? Are you working in the hospital too?” Estelle’s heart swelled up with gentleness. She replied gently, “No, I don’t work here. I’m here because I’m sick.” “It cost a lot to fall sick! If I’m well and healthy, mommy doesn’t need to work this hard being a cleaner...” The boy sniffled softly with his eyes turning red. Estelle could not find the right words to comfort him. She took out all the cash from her purse and gave it to the little boy. “Little one, give this money to your mommy.” The amount of cash added up to almost a few thousand dollars. The little boy was taken aback. “Really madam? Are you giving it all to me?” Estelle nodded with a smile. “Yes.” “But mommy said that we shouldn’t take what isn’t ours.” Estelle hesitated and then proposed. “Why don’t you sing a song for me? You can sing the one you hummed to just now - Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”. The little boy nodded. “...Twinkle twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are, Up above the world so high...” The boy sang sincerely with his back straightened while struggling to hold on to the money in his arms. It was as if he was grasping on to all hope. On the way back, it was as if she could still hear the cute

singing voice ringing by her ear. What a mysterious thing that money was. It could have saved a person, yet it could take the life of someone too. While her mom and uncle schemed a car accident just to take the life of Uncle Flynn and Aunt Flynn for the sake of money, she used the money to help save the pitiful mother and son.

Reaching the mansion, she saw the silhouette of a person standing by the door. It was a woman. The woman had light makeup and wore a pink dress. She had a head of black long hair and with a sweet voice, she greeted Estelle. “Nice to meet you, Miss Sanders. I’m Camilla Gioni.” Estelle nodded and asked, “Is there anything I can do for you?” Taking out a red wedding invitation from her pouch, Camilla passed the card to Estelle and explained. “Skyler and I are holding our wedding ceremony in seven days, we would like to invite you.” Estelle did not accept the card. Instead, she smiled slightly. “Miss Gioni, aren’t you worried that I’ll cause a ruckus during the ceremony?” Camilla smiled confidently. “I know you wouldn’t, not unless you wish to risk your son’s life.” The smile on Estelle’s face slowly faded. “How did you know...” Even Skyler knew nothing about the condition of their son. How would Camilla have known? “Of course I’d know. My mom helped deliver the baby when you gave birth to him. Such a poor thing that he got infected with sepsis when he was born. He had to stay in the ICU and never stepped out of the hospital since then.” The smile on Camilla’s face became wider. “...It was you all along? My son got sick and it was all because of you...” All this time, she thought that her son got infected with sepsis because of a medical accident. If it was as Camilla confessed, the doctor who was responsible for the delivery of her child was Camilla’s mother, then the infection of sepsis was not caused by an accident but by deliberation. Pushing the card into Estelle’s hands, Camilla smiled scornfully. “Miss Sanders, do fasten the divorce process if you want to save your child. Right, there’s something that you should know...The car accident five years ago was caused by me. I played around with the

brakes system and who knew that I could get rid of three annoying people in one go. It was worthwhile.” Taken aback, Estelle stood frozen. “The car accident was also caused by you...why on earth would you do that? You took away three precious lives!” “Skyler’s parents adored you so much that they accepted you as their daughter-in-law. If they’re still alive, I would’ve no chance to be a part of the Flynn family.” Walking toward Estelle, Camilla reached out and tapped her face, “But all these aren’t important now. You’re dying soon and so is your son. It doesn’t hurt me to tell you all this. Let’s just consider it as me doing a good thing to clear things up for you so that you can leave this world without any regrets.” “Argh——” A pitiful crying sound was heard.

Chapter 8

Estelle wrapped her hands tightly around Camilla’s neck and pushed her against the wall. She stared hard at Camilla as if she wanted to puncture her face with holes. Camilla did not expect Estelle to attack her. She was pressed tightly against the wall and could not move an inch. She taunted angrily, “Estelle Sanders, how dare you lay a finger on me? Skyler would never let you off the hook!” Estelle scorned. “It doesn’t matter what he does as I’m going to die anyway. And before I die, I’ll bring you along so that you can keep me company.” “Stop it! Are you out of your mind?!” “It’s not a big deal to act crazy when one is about to die soon. Camilla, by the law, even if I strangle you to death today, I’ll only be shot to death. Since I’m going to die anyway, being shot to death seems less of a hassle and pain. I should thank you for this opportunity.” Camilla’s eyes showed glimpses of terror as she struggled desperately. “Don’t you want to save your son? If you dare to cause any harm to me, I’ll kill your son too!” “Then you can die along with him!” “Estelle Sanders, what are you doing!” Precisely at that moment, a strong force pulled her hands away from Camilla’s neck and she crashed hard onto the concrete floor. It was Skyler. He came over. Looking

anxious and worried, he pulled Camilla gently into his arms. Skyler then turned and looked over at her, his eyes were filled with rage. “Do you want to die?” “Do I want to die?” thought Estelle. In a staggered manner, Estelle picked herself up from the floor. She was covered with mud and her arms were bruised and scratched with blood dripping down between her fingers. ‘Death was already waiting for me, do I really need to seek death?’ Estelle thought to herself. “Skyler, you have bad taste in women.” ‘You fell in love with someone like Camilla,’ thought Estelle. Carrying Camilla in his arms, Skyler replied sternly, “Yeah, I was blind to love someone like you and I got my punishment for it. I lost my parents and now I nearly lost Camilla.” Leaning compliantly on Skyler’s chest, Camilla showed her a victory hand-sign. Camilla must have planned this situation. She planned for him to see the sight of them having a heated argument, and for Skyler to see the hysterical side of her. That must have been the feeling of when one’s heart dies. There was no more hope left in her. Skyler seethed. “Estelle Sanders, let’s proceed with the divorce now. I don’t want to drag it out anymore.” “No, I’ve made it clear that I’ll only proceed with the divorce in seven days. No more no less.” Estelle rejected outrightly. “You’re sick!” “I am sick. I told you before that I’m ill. You’re the one who didn’t want to believe me.” Taking a deep breath, Estelle’s eyes turned cold and grim. “Skyler, for the next seven days, you must watch the stars with me every night. If you don’t agree to it, I don’t know what horrible things I’m capable of doing to your dear Camilla.” Skyler shook his head. “What if I don’t want to?” “You don’t know what I’m capable of. Can you protect her for the rest of her life? I can always find ways to harm her. Five years ago, I schemed to have your parents killed. Now, I can also do the same to Camilla!” “Estelle Sanders!!!” “It’s just seven days, and aren’t you guys having the wedding ceremony after these seven days? After these seven days, I’ll divorce you and disappear completely. All I need is just seven days.” Skyler stared at her intently with his brows

furrowed tightly together. Letting out a chuckle, Estelle continued, “Don’t worry, I’m not forcing you to sleep with me. Just keep me company when we watch the stars.”

Chapter 9

With his brows furrowed tightly together, Skyler stared at her intently without uttering a word. Estelle knew that he was not willing to comply with her request. How could he when she was the one who caused harm to the woman he cherished and loved the most? Skyler wanted to kill her right there and then. There was no way that he would have accepted her request in stargazing together. Though what he did not know was that, with a weak and frail body like hers, Estelle was in no position to cause harm to Camilla. If it was not for the act that Camilla put on, Estelle would not have been able to harm her, let alone lay a finger on her dress. Speaking of the dress, Estelle glanced over at the dress that Camilla wore. The dress was in a shade of pale pink made from crepe cloth material. It was embroidered with small flowers in a light purple color. It was a beautiful dress. Skyler always liked an outfit with little flowers on them. Estelle used to have a wardrobe full of outfits with patterns like this and they were handpicked by Skyler. The dress that was on Camilla’s body was neat and tidy. It looked as though it were a brand new outfit. Camilla though continued putting on a good show while crying her heart out. Others who did not know what happened would have thought that she broke her bones. Letting out a light chuckle, Estelle asked, “If you don’t mind me asking, may I know what Miss Gion does for a living?” Taken aback by her question, Camilla shuddered and leaned in closer to Skyler. “Skyler...” “Don’t worry my dear. I’m here for you and I won’t let her lay a finger on you.” Skyler pulled Camilla closer in his arms while stroking her hair gently. His voice was as gentle as a feather. “Why do you want to know?” His gentleness faded almost instantly while glancing toward Estelle. “Nothing much. I’m just curious.” smiled Estelle. “This has nothing to do with you, Estelle. You better get rid of the idea of

hurting Camilla.” “Skyler Flynn, I would prefer you to not talk to me with this kind of attitude. I’m telling you that you won’t like it when I go crazy.” “You…” She nearly laughed seeing how Skyler had to tone down his anger for the sake of protecting Camilla. Everyone must have had a soft spot. Her soft spot was her son while Skyler’s was Camilla. ‘It doesn’t matter anymore now. In any case, Skyler already thinks that I’m an evil person. It shouldn’t matter that much for me,’ thought Estelle. Passing by the couple, Estelle entered the house and said, “I’ll be waiting for you on the rooftop at 7 pm.” The master bedroom was on the second floor of the mansion and it had a huge full-length window. Back in her room, she looked down from the window and saw that Skyler and Camilla already left. They were nowhere to be seen. ‘He must have taken her to the hospital. They left quickly, he must’ve been really worried about Camilla,’ Estelle thought to herself. Skyler always treated the person he loved with the utmost care, and he could not bear to see his loved one getting hurt. Estelle used to be the person that Skyler held dear to his heart. Now, she was just a nobody to Skyler. Camilla was the only one in his heart at that point. All these were not important anymore and the story could not be rewritten. There was simply nothing that she could have done to change the situation. All that she could have held onto was the hope that she would have successfully gotten pregnant in hopes to save her son. She pulled out her handphone, adjusted it onto a stand, and started a video recording. Staring at the camera, Estelle put on a gentle smile. “Little one, it’s mommy here. I don’t know if you’ll be able to see this video. But if you do see it, it means that mommy isn’t able to stay beside you anymore. Please don’t be sad as I’m only living in another world that’s different from yours. There are also flowers and trees, mountains and rivers, it’s beautiful and also…quiet here.” She smiled and her eyes were overflowing with gentleness and lovingness. “Mommy won’t be able to see you grow up but please do believe that I love you. I’ve been thinking hard about what to

name you. I didn't have an idea back then but today I've decided that you will be named Elio Sanders. The name Elio carries the meaning of the sun. You should live up to your name by being always bright and cheerful, okay?" "Little one, if you do miss mommy, just look up to the stars in the sky. You'll find me up in the sky among the stars. I'll visit you every night..." Bursting into tears, she could not bring herself to complete the sentence. Swallowing down her cries, Estelle turned off the recording. She did not want her child to see this side of her. She saved the video on a thumb drive and mailed it out.

Chapter 10

Skyler reached the mansion at 7 pm sharp, not even a minute earlier. "You're here." Estelle was seated in front of the vanity mirror. She looked much better after spending a whole three hours applying her makeup just so she would look less frail and pale. "It's all on you, Estelle Sanders." Skyler had a look as he could kill. "What?" Estelle felt a sharp pain in her heart. "Camilla had a miscarriage." "You think she had a miscarriage because I hit her today?" Taken aback, Estelle froze at what he said, but she managed to come around quickly. "Isn't that what happened? You could've directed your anger at me. Why would you cause harm to Camilla when she harmed no one!" questioned Skyler. Shaking her head, Estelle uttered, "Skyler, you don't know what women are capable of." "I don't need to know." Standing up, Estelle turned toward him and put forth. "You ought to know. For a woman, her child is the most important. She'll use all her might to protect her child from any sort of danger, even if it's risking her life." Skyler hissed coldly, "Are you in the position to say anything when you're not a mother yourself?" With a firm look, Estelle snapped. "I have the right to say it! And as for Camilla, if she knew she was pregnant, then she

shouldn't have tried so hard to come over my place and come at me! She made me attack her!" Going into a rage, Skyler reached out and wrapped his hands around her neck. He tightened the hold on her neck. "Estelle Sanders, if anything bad happens to Camilla, I'll kill you." It was getting harder to breathe and she felt the waves of pain from suffocating, yet she provoked, "Oh really." "I meant what I said." "Okay, I get it. Can you let go of me now?" Estelle asked while pointing at the hands that were around her neck. Skyler did not let go but stared at her intently. "What is it that you're after?" Lifting the corners of her lips, Estelle replied, "You might not believe what I'm about to say but all this time, all I want is you." "In your dreams." Skyler threw her carelessly onto the bed. The brute force made her cough sharply and all she heard was Skyler's cold reply. She felt the viscous blood rushing out her throat, but she held it in and swallowed the blood. "Let's go see the stars." Standing up, she walked toward him and held his hand. She pretended as if nothing happened. Skyler quickly pulled his hands away like he was dodging a bullet. "Don't touch me. I only promised to watch the stars with you." Though Skyler's words hurt her, the stars in the night sky were enough to compensate for the hurt she felt. The moon was big and round, like a silver mirror hanging by the sky. Numerous stars were shining silently and calmly right next to the moon. Skyler chimed in. "I've checked the weather forecast and it said that it'll be raining from tomorrow until the end of this month." Estelle nodded and asked, "And?" "There'll be no stars on a rainy day." Estelle did not think so. "The dark clouds would only cover up the stars on rainy days. Hence, the stars won't be gone and they'll always be there. It's just that we can't see them." It was just like her. Though she could not shine as bright as the sun, she was always there. She never left. She was always waiting for Skyler to come back to her. Throughout these few years, Estelle often wondered what if Skyler wanted to get back with her. If not by smiling at her or by showing his concern for her, she would have put everything

down and run to him. Though, what she wished for never happened, not even once. Both his eyes and his heart were occupied by someone else, and there was absolutely no space left for her. Skyler replied, “What I’m trying to say is that after tonight, there’s no need to watch the stars.” “You don’t want to watch the stars with me anymore?” Skyler snickered, “What do you think? Both my parents are dead because of you. If it’s not for Camilla, I would’ve never promised to watch the stars with a monster like you.” The wind was blowing strong on the rooftop. She was sitting near the edge with her legs hanging in the air. Her dress and hair danced wildly in the strong wind. She looked as if she would have fallen off the edge any moment. Skyler walked right up to her back. He reached out his right hands and almost touched her frail back. “You feel like pushing me off the roof, don’t you?” She asked suddenly. It was as if she saw right through him.

Chapter 11

Skyler’s hands froze in midair. “Yeah, you should push me off the roof so that when I’m dead, there won’t be anyone else to stop you and Camilla from living happily ever after,” Estelle mumbled to herself. Skyler put down his arms awkwardly and looked away. “I’m not as evil as you. I won’t be able to kill the people who did nothing but love me. Though I won’t deny the fact that I want you gone from this world, I won’t play dirty.” Looking over, Estelle glanced at him and flashed a sweet smile. “Skyler, I’ll return what’s rightfully yours.” “What?” “It doesn’t matter if you choose to believe or not, but I have never wanted anything from the Flynn family. I too was devastated and was in despair when Uncle Flynn and Aunt Flynn passed away. Don’t you worry, I’ll give you whatever you want,” uttered Estelle. Skyler replied, “You’re not able to give me what I want.” “And what if I could?” “I want to marry Camilla

right away.” Nodding her head, Estelle replied, “In seven days, no, after tonight it’d be six days and you’ll then be able to get what you want.” Skyler added, “What if I want the Sander family to fall in disgrace? And I want you to kneel in front of my parents’ memorial tablet and beg for their forgiveness.” Estelle hesitated for a while and soon nodded. “...okay, I’ll kneel and beg for their forgiveness. After all, they adored me so much and I feel partly responsible for their death too.” She was indeed responsible for his parent’s death. If Skyler and her did not fall in love and if Uncle Flynn and Aunt Flynn did not adore her so much that they considered her as their daughter-in-law, Camilla would not have gone into desperation and had the poor folks killed. She felt a sharp pain in her heart while reminiscing the affectionate folks. “Is there anything else?” she asked. “I want you to jump off this building, can you do that?” Skyler’s voice was muffled by the strong wind. Swinging her legs that were hanging midair, Estelle looked down from the edge. The mansion was five stories tall and she would have died if she were to jump off at that height. Estelle though, replied without hesitation, “If that’s what you want, I’ll do it.” “Do I have to wait another seven days then? What are you scheming again this time? Do you think things will change after watching the stars together for seven days?” Skyler uttered coldly with his arms crossed in front of his chest. Putting her scattered hair behind her ears, Estelle looked up at the night sky full of stars. It was such a beautiful sight, but she was not happy. “I’m well aware that nothing’s going to change.” It was because she could not change the fact that she had to fight to hold on to every minute and every second with the time she had being alive. Skyler’s said with a cold and distant tone, “We’ve watched the stars as you wished. I don’t want to spend another second with you anymore.” He then turned away and left. Still seated at where she was before, Estelle saw his car leaving the mansion. Suddenly, she coughed out a mouthful of blood and it landed on the floor next to her. She coughed out more blood than she did

the last time. The bloodstain was as big as the size of the palm. Before she lost her consciousness, all she could recall was that her doctor was right about how the battle with the cancer was torturous and painful. She gave her all and this was all the pain that she could put up with. Luckily, Skyler left and did not see this sight of her. If not, he would have thought that she was putting up an act again. 'It's better...that he left.' Estelle thought to herself. It was as if she fell into a deep sleep and woke up to a familiar voice. "Stellie, Stellie? Wake up now. Why are you sleeping on the rooftop? Hurry up and wake up!" Who was calling her? Was it Skyler? Has he finally decided to come back to her? Estelle felt as if there was no strength left in her body. She opened her eyes and later realized that it was already morning. The stars were long gone and it was replaced by a slight drizzle. The rain suddenly got heavier and started pouring down. Lying on the roof, she was drenched by the rain. The wind was blowing strongly, causing her to shiver and tremble violently with her teeth gritted tightly together. Just then she felt a gush of warmth coming from her back. Someone covered her body with their outer coat. "...You're here." She finally saw the person but could only slightly lift the corners of her mouth into a smile. Her smile showed hints of longing, bitterness, but mostly grievance.

Chapter 12

The next time she woke up, she was lying on her bed. Next to her bed was a big full-length window and the sky outside looked cloudy and greyish. The rain was hitting hard on the glass window, blurring out the scene outside the window. "Stellie, you're finally awake!" Listening to the familiar voice, Estelle lifted the corners of her lips. "Aunt Frances, why are you here?" Aunt Frances was an old staff to the Flynn family. She always liked growing plants, hence she stayed with the Flynn family as their gardener. With a hot bowl of soup in her hands, Aunt Frances walked toward the bed where Estelle laid. She had a pitiful look on her face. "If it hadn't come, no one

would've known that you fainted! Come and have some of this red dates soup. It's good for blood loss." Struggling to sit up, Estelle received the bowl from her and she drank the hot soup bit by bit. "What exactly is going on with you, Stellie? I saw you covered in blood when I tried to help you get changed. Are you hurt anywhere?" Estelle smiled lightly and shook her head. "I'm not hurt. Aunt Frances, don't you...blame me for what happened?" Aunt Frances was greatly indebted to Aunt Flynn and Uncle Flynn. They kept Aunt Frances around the family to work for them for almost ten years. When the tragedy happened, the Flynn family broke apart and most of the staff and maids had then left the family. Only Aunt Frances stayed behind because she was concerned about Skyler. Letting out a sigh, Aunt Frances had an unsettling expression. "To be frank, I resented you for sir and madam's death. But I've watched you grow up Stellie and I know you better than anyone else. I'm sure that you couldn't have done that." Tears started to swell up in Estelle's eyes. "Aunt Frances, are you willing to believe me?" "My dear child, I've gotten older now and I might not be that clear-minded as I used to be, though there are times that I often wonder. If you and your family had plans to harm the Flynn family, you could've gone back to the Sander family. Why else would you still have stayed by Skyler's side then?" Upon listening to her words, Estelle wanted to cry. "Exactly. Why can't Skyler understand my intentions when you can." "It's not that he doesn't understand. It's just that he doesn't dare to make sense of the situation. These few years, Skyler was blinded by resentment and hatred. Now he's got that Camilla by his side. Your Aunt Frances's older than you both and I have an eye for people like Camilla. She's not as naive as Skyler thinks she is." Aunt Frances comforted her gently while wiping away Estelle's tears with her warm hands. 'Yet, there's no use in all these words anymore,' Estelle thought to herself while smiling bitterly. "Stellie, why were you on the rooftop in the rain by yourself? Did you fight with Skyler?" Shaking her head, Estelle uttered,

“There’s nothing left for us to fight.” At the end of their love, all that was left were misery and exhaustion. What was there left to argue? Should she have told him the truth about what Camilla did? Or the fact that she was gonna die of cancer soon? Between these two options, which one would Skyler believed? Hence, she did not want to argue nor fight anymore. She had no more strength left in her. “Aunt Frances, how long have I been asleep?” “For two days one night. I wanted to send you to the hospital but it was as if you were dreaming. You cried until the pillows were wet and you held on tightly to the pillows, not wanting to let it go...” Two days passed. She only had four days left. Estelle picked up her phone from the bedside table but the phone was out of battery. She fixed the charger and the first thing she checked on her phone was the weather forecast. It was exactly like what Skyler told her, it was to rain for the next four days. “What’s so funny, Stellie?” “It’s funny how God’s on Skyler’s side. God’s making sure that Skyler won’t have to do the things that he’s reluctant to.” Looking confused, Aunt Frances mumbled, “Is your brain fried from the fever? What are you saying?” She leaned over and touched Estelle’s forehead. “Oh my, why is it so hot? How long have you been in the rain? This won’t work, we have to get you to the hospital right away.” Holding her hands, Estelle reassured. “I don’t want to go to the hospital, Aunt Frances.” “Young lady, you shall listen to what I ask of you. When you get better, I’ll get you your favorite star-shaped candies all right?” Aunt Frances comforted her as if she was still a kid. “...All right.” Estelle held back her tears. “Wait here. I’ll call Skyler.” Rather quickly, Aunt Frances managed to place a call and it reached Skyler. Aunt Frances said worriedly, “Skyler, you should come home. Stellie’s having a high fever and I don’t think she can hold up any longer...” There was a long pause at Skyler’s end. He was not responding. “Skyler?” “Get Estelle on the phone.” “Oh, all right!” Aunt Frances was pleased when she heard what Skyler said. She passed the phone to Estelle quickly and encouraged her softly, “Skyler

wants to talk to you. You should explain to him properly. As long as the air's cleared up, you guys could go back to how it was back then. I'll go get you another bowl of soup." Before closing the door behind her, Aunt Frances looked really glad and assured. Estelle knew that Aunt Frances was the one who witnessed the journey that Skyler and she had embarked on. They had their first kiss in Aunt Frances' garden, they were able to sneak out on dates with Aunt Frances' help, and it was Aunt Frances who taught them how to fold the paper stars. To Aunt Frances, Skyler and Estelle were made for each other. "Hello, Skyler..." "Estelle Sanders, you are something! You're now using Aunt Frances's phone to call me after I blocked you on the caller list?"

Chapter 13

Taken aback, Estelle asked, "You...blocked on your caller list?" "I thought I've made myself clear that I want nothing to do with you anymore since there won't be stars for the next few days. After seven days, we'll proceed with the divorce and we'll go our separate ways." She let out a laugh. "Oh Skyler, am I a monster to you? Why are you that terrified of me?" Skyler hissed, "You're worse than a monster." Feeling drowsy, Estelle sniffled and asked, "Skyler, do you think that my heart's made out of steel and that I won't be hurt?" Hence, he could speak to her carelessly and recklessly, stabbing her heart with his words. He replied, "Your heart's colder and harder than stone. How could you possibly feel pain?" "Skyler, you'll regret this." "Yes, I do regret meeting you." Estelle hung up the phone right away. Why should she have bothered to argue with him? She knew better how he would respond. She should not have expected anything from him. After all, she would only be making a fool out of herself. Aunt Frances knocked on the door carefully while peeking into the room. "Stellie, how's the talk with Skyler? He used to adore you so much and if you just explain things, I'm sure he'd..." Without waiting for her to finish her sentence, Estelle called out, "Aunt

Frances.” “Yes?” Wiping off the tears from her face with the back of her hands, Estelle put on a big smile. “I miss having the dumplings you used to make.” Seeing Estelle with a relaxed expression, she thought that Estelle and Skyler finally cleared up the air between the both of them. Aunt Frances sighed in relief and replied, “Of course! I’ll make it for you now. Get some rest and you’ll be able to eat by the time you wake up.” “Thanks, Aunt Frances.” “What’s there to thank me for. Skyler used to like the dumplings too. I’ll prepare more of them so he can have some later when he arrives.” Estelle only smiled and did not say anything further. There was no chance that Skyler would come for her. It was as if she suddenly thought of something, Aunt Frances clapped her hands and said, “Oh right Stellie, I just recalled something that could help with the investigation for the incident. The morning of the incident, an employee from a 4S center visited and said that he was asked to carry out maintenance for Mr. Flynn’s car. The employee was acting suspiciously and I feel that she had something to do with the accident. Later when Skyler comes, I’ll tell him what I just told you and have him carry out a thorough investigation on the 4S center. My gut feeling tells me that something fishy is going on with that center!” Estelle responded right away, “Aunt Frances, did you manage to see the employee’s face?” “I did see her but I don’t remember clearly. I could only recall that it was a fairly young lady and I thought that it’s strange for a lady to carry out maintenance of a car instead of a man...” Estelle then asked hurriedly, “Aunt Frances, do you perhaps know what Camilla does for a living?” “Oh, I’ve heard that she met Skyler at a 4S center...” Before finishing her sentence, Aunt Frances’s expression changed. “Stellie, could it be possible that...” Nodding her head, Estelle answered, “The day before yesterday, Camilla came up to me and admitted what she did. She was the one who manipulated the brakes of the car which caused the tragedy.” “Oh, my lord! We must let Skyler know of this!” Aunt Frances voiced out in shock. Estelle could feel her heart beating

fast again. Though Skyler would not believe her words, she was confident that he would at least listen to what Aunt Frances had to say. As long as he was willing to investigate the incident, she was sure that the truth would have prevailed in the end. Estelle was excited but also felt that she was wronged. Reaching for her phone, she turned on the video recorder. “Little one, I think I’ve found a way to get your father back to us. You must take good care of your health and listen well to Uncle Howard and the nurses. Let’s wait till the day your dad understands what happened back then. I’ll bring him to see you and I’ll try my best to give you a younger brother or sister and then heal you. Aren’t you glad to hear this?” “Mommy’s happy. Before this, I only had seven days to persuade your dad. But if he knows of the truth, then mommy will be able to have more than just mere seven days. I could also increase the chances of getting pregnant. Little one, mommy loves you and your daddy...” Before she could continue, a gush of blood rushed up to her throat and she vomited a mouthful of blood again. Luckily she managed to avoid staining the bedsheet. If not she would have worried Aunt Frances again. Reaching out for a few tissues, Estelle wiped the floor clean and flushed the tissues away. It was as if nothing had taken place at all. The emotional turbulence that she experienced today finally worn her out. Estelle laid down on her bed, wrapping herself tightly under the blanket as if she was trying to warm her body. She was not sure if it was because of the fever that she was shuddering yet she was drenched in a cold sweat. She finally dozed off drowsily. She had a dream. In the dream, Skyler held her gently in his arms and he apologized to her. He told Estelle that he was wrong to have believed Camilla and that he had wrongfully accused her. He wanted to start over with her and wanted to go overseas to visit their child. The dream was too pleasant and surreal. It was too surreal to a point that though she was sleeping, she knew that it was just a dream. Thud—— A loud crashing sound woke her up from her sleep. Estelle struggled to get off the bed. She

called out to Aunt Frances, “Aunt Frances, are you there?” No one responded. Did something happen?

Chapter 14

Estelle’s mind went blank. How could Aunt Frances fall off the roof? How did she... Panicking, she rushed downstairs and even forgot to put on her shoes. Someone else was at the yard now. Crouching down next to Aunt Frances’ body, Camilla reached out to check if she was still breathing. Wearing a grin, she said to Estelle, “You’re too late, she’s dead.” “It’s you, Camilla...” Camilla got up slowly and looked toward her. “I nearly forgot that this old lady’s been with you since you were a child. I’m sure she’d take your side.” “She couldn’t have gotten in your way with this grand scheme of yours, why would you kill her?! She had nothing to do with you!” “Simply because she knows too much and she saw what she shouldn’t have in the first place. Those who know too much should die!” said Camilla while letting out a light chuckle. Estelle shook her head in disbelief and cried out, “You’re nuts!” Camilla did not seem to care and started to laugh uncontrollably. “I was even willing to sacrifice the child that I was carrying, more so she was just an old gardener.” Estelle felt chills ran down her spine. “Skyler, you have to come right now! Aunt Frances’s dead because Estelle pushed her off the roof!” She watched on coldly as Camilla called Skyler up to tell on her. It was as if she almost heard Skyler’s anger fuming through the phone. After his parents passed away, Aunt Frances took care of Skyler. No one could have replaced Aunt Frances in his life, but she was dead now. Aunt Frances died at her mansion and what was worst was that she fell off the rooftop. “Camilla, I think it was a waste of talent for you to work at the 4S center. You could’ve been an amazing actress and the Oscars probably owe you an award.” Shaking the phone in her hands, Camilla teased, “Whatever you say. Now that this old lady’s dead, there won’t be witnesses to the car accident five years ago. I’ll remain as Skyler’s favorite person.” Skyler reached the

mansion rather quickly. The car came to an abrupt stop and Skyler dashed off the car. He looked devastated the moment he saw Aunt Frances's body. Walking toward him, Camilla held his hands and comforted him gently. "Don't look, Skyler. Aunt Frances adored you so much, she wouldn't have wanted you to see her in this state..." "Estelle Sanders!" Skyler bellowed at her. He grabbed Estelle by her collar, and he almost lifted her off the floor with his monstrous strength. "Tell me why you'd do such a thing!" Shutting her eyes tight, she lifted her body that was faltering. "If I told you that it wasn't my doing, will you believe me?" "What do you think?" "If I were you, I wouldn't have believed it too. I'm the only person in this mansion, and it's me who'd be on the rooftop to watch the stars. There's no one else here who could've pushed Aunt Frances off the roof...right?" mocked Estelle. Gritting his teeth with his eyes burning with rage, Skyler stared at her as if he wanted to put bullet holes through her. "Give me a reason Estelle Sanders! First, my parents! Now, Aunt Frances! I want you to take out your heart to see if it's black!" "Skyler, calm down. There must be some unspeakable reason as to why Miss Sanders did what she did..." Camilla feigned innocence and pretended to be worried while she pulled his hands away from Estelle. Camilla added, "Could it be that you haven't been accompanying Miss Sanders to see the stars that she got angry and couldn't control herself. Hence...she did this impulsively. I've reminded you that we should be more forgiving of her since Miss Sanders has been in a mentally unstable state recently." Staring into Estelle's eyes, Skyler asked, "Is it true Estelle Sanders? Just because I didn't watch the stars with you, you're taking revenge on me?" Estelle could not help but smile bitterly. She was deeply impressed by Camilla's acting. Camilla even thought of the killing motive for her. "It's not true. It doesn't matter if you believe it or not. I didn't kill her." Estelle replied. "You do know that I don't trust you at all right." "What do you want to do then?" "I want you to die!" He spat out those words like they were squeezed out from

his gritted teeth. “Estelle Sanders, you think that I wouldn’t be able to kill you?”

Hurriedly, Camilla pulled his hands away from Estelle. “Skyler, don’t be rash. I can understand how Miss Sanders’s feeling. She must love you a lot, she wants to see you and watch the stars with you. But you didn’t want to see her. Hence, she got you here with this...would you first let go of her?” “Camilla, you should leave first. You just lost your child! You should go home and rest. I’ll come home after I settle things with her.” “I won’t leave, Skyler. I’ll follow you wherever you go.” “Be good and listen to me...” He spoke in such a gentle tone and used such loving words. Men always had two faces. The way they treat those they love and those they hate are poles apart. “Do you want to kill me, Skyler?” Estelle asked helplessly. “I’ve called the cops. I don’t want to dirty my hands by killing you,” replied Skyler. “The cops should be here by now then? Let me go now, I’ve heardm hungry.” Estelle shook off his hands. Frowning his brows tightly, Skyler stared intently at her.

Chapter 15

In the end, she did not manage to taste the dumplings that Aunt Frances prepared for her. Seated in an interrogation room of the police station, the blinding white lights were shined directly at her. Estelle felt a wave of remorse as she mulled over the fact that she would not have been able to taste Aunt Frances’s dumpling anymore. Now that Aunt Frances was dead and she was also dying, she felt as if life was a joke. God had to take away her one last hope. “Miss Sanders, now that we have both the witness and physical evidence against you, is there anything that you’d like to clarify?”

Lifting her head, Estelle asked, “Is Camilla the witness?” The cop nodded his head. “Camilla claims that she was there to witness it when you pushed Aunt Frances off the roof.” Estelle nodded her head. It was exactly what she expected, “What about the physical evidence?” “The shoe prints left on the rooftop. We only managed to collect the shoe prints of Aunt Frances, Miss Camila, and your shoe prints on the rooftop.

Besides, both Miss and Aunt Frances don't know each other. There's no reason to speculate that they had any conflicts between them. Hence, leaving only you with the motive to kill." Hanging her head low, Estelle queried, "Sir, if I admit to all the charges, what would I be sentenced with?" "You will be charged with intentional homicide and you be sentenced to the death penalty." "Will I be executed through a shooting?" "You'll be executed by lethal injection." "Will it be painful?" "It won't hurt. The execution these days are more humane now. You'll be executed in your sleep and you won't experience pain." As if she was satisfied with the answer, Estelle nodded her head and expressed, "As long as it's not painful. Perhaps this will be better." "With that being said, are you admitting to all the charges? If so, sign here." Estelle queried, "Can we wait three more days?" The cop was confused. "Why three days?" "Because I could be...pregnant. And I'll find out if I'm pregnant in the next three days." The cop was right about how the law is treating the suspects more humanely. She spent three days in the police station. On the third day, with the supervision of two female officers, she visited the hospital for a final checkup. When the doctor saw that Estelle accompanied by two female officers, he was puzzled. "Miss Sanders, are you...in any sort of trouble?" Putting on a smile, Estelle replied, "I'm fine. There's nothing more important than me getting pregnant." The doctor was perplexed by the situation but he still handed her the checkup list. Her hands were trembling as she waited for the results of the checkup. The female officer seemed to take pity on her and handed her a glass of warm water. "Drink some, you haven't been eating for the past three days." Estelle smiled and thanked her. "I can't drink." "Why?" "...It'll hurt." Estelle pointed to her chest. "It hurts a lot here. Every time that I drink, it hurts to the extent that I want to end my life right there and then. But I can't." The female officer furrowed her brows and asked, "You have stomach problems?" "She's in the last stage of lung cancer," the doctor replied while handing

over the checklist to Estelle. “Miss Sanders, I don’t know if this is something to congratulate you with, but you’re pregnant.” Feeling surprised yet in disbelief, Estelle lifted her head and asked, “Am I...pregnant?” “Yes, you’re indeed pregnant. But this also means that if you’re determined to keep this child, you’ll need to start to count down the days that you’ll have left. Also, you won’t be able to go through with the chemotherapy anymore.” She took the checkup list from the doctor and went through the document carefully. There was a slight glow on her face. She softened when she saw the word pregnant on the result document for her checkup. She smiled in joy and said to the female officers beside her, “Look here, I’ll die anyway after I give birth to this child. You guys could even save on the lethal injection.” Feeling complicated, the female officers explained, “Miss Sanders, according to the law, pregnant ladies are granted with medical parole. If you have any new evidence that can prove your innocence, you should collect those evidence in the meantime as it’ll help with reducing your sentence...” “It’s all right. Nothing else is more important than having this child now.” She kept the document carefully, treating it like a precious thing. Being able to have this child was all that she could ever ask for. “Madam, are you sick again?” Estelle saw the little boy that she met the other day at the hospital, and he looked happy. “Madam, my mommy said that I should thank you after accepting your money. I’ve been waiting for you at the entrance of the hospital for a few days but have not seen you around.” Crouching down to meet his eyes, Estelle stroked his head gently and said softly, “This is my last time here to see the doctors. After today, I won’t be coming here anymore.” “Oh, are you getting better now madam?” Kids are always optimistic. She did not bear to dim his optimism hence she hesitated and said, “...You can say that I'm getting better. ” The little boy hummed happily while holding her hands tightly. “Madam, let me sing you a song to congratulate you on getting better.” “Sure!” The little boy was delighted. He held his chest up high and sang his

heart out, "...Twinkle twinkle little stars, How I wonder what you are..." The little boy looked disappointed when he finished the song. "Madam, why are you crying? Was my singing bad?" Wiping away the tears from her face, Estelle flashed him a big smile. "You sang amazingly. It's just that I feel sad that I won't be able to see you anymore." "I'll always remember you. You're a good person. A very, very kind person." Before he could finish his sentence, Estelle's phone rang. It was a string of unfamiliar numbers. She picked up the call. "Hello?" "Good day to you Miss Sanders. I'm Zayne, the lawyer that Mr. Skyler had entrusted to be responsible for the divorce matters. Mr. Skyler received the divorce papers that you mailed him. Please come to the Civil Administration Office so that we can proceed with the divorce procedure."

Chapter 16

Estelle felt a lump in her throat when she heard what he said. "Miss Sanders, are you there?" "I am," she took a deep breath and continued asking, "Will Skyler be there...for the divorce procedure?" "Director Flynn won't be there. He's asked me to take charge of this matter." "Have him attend the meeting. I have something to tell him." Zayne chuckled awkwardly, "Miss Sanders, you're putting me in a tight spot. I'm sure you already know that Director Flynn doesn't want to see you." Of course, she knew. It was just that... "Well, then could you please let him know that...I'm pregnant with his child." "Sorry?!" "I said, I'm pregnant and I want to meet him." Zayne hesitated and let out a weak sigh. His tone carried a hint of empathy as he explained, "Miss Sanders, Director Flynn won't be able to come for the meeting. Miss Camilla just had a miscarriage and she's traumatized by Aunt Frances' death. Hence, he planned for a holiday overseas for Miss Camilla to get some fresh air. They might already be on the plane now." "...How long will they be gone? When will they be back?" "Miss Camilla wants to travel the world. If it's a short trip, they should be gone for at least half a year. If it's a longer trip, it'll probably take more than a year."

“...” “Before he left for the trip, he gave me the power of attorney document which he appointed me to be his proxy in dealing with the divorce procedure. He also entrusted someone to take care of the company matters. He wants to focus on Miss Camilla as she’s the most important person in his life.” “...” “Miss Sanders, are you okay?”

Closing her eyes, Estelle felt like a walking corpse. She was numb to the heartache she felt. Skyler always found a way to rip her heart into pieces. Taking a deep breath, she replied, “I heard you.” “Okay. I’ll be waiting for you at the entrance of the Civil Administration building.” “I won’t be going.” “Miss Sanders, please don’t put me in a tight spot. I’m just doing what Director Flynn asked of me.” “Fret not. You’ll be able to fulfill what you’ve been asked of.” Touching her face, Estelle chuckled. She then added, “In the end, it doesn’t matter if he’s divorced or widowed, he’ll still be able to marry Camilla. I promised him that I’ll give him anything that he wants.” The phone signal was bad and Zayne did not hear her. “Miss Sanders, you were saying?” “It’s nothing. I’m feeling a little tired. I’ll hang up now.” The female officer who overheard their conversation looked troubled. “Miss Sanders, since you’re not feeling well, we can arrange for the medical parole another time. Let’s send you home first. Where’s your home?” Estelle looked happy. She looked calm and peaceful as she stroked her belly with her hands. “My home? I’ve already lost my home.” A year later. After flying for more than ten hours, the plane from Provence finally landed at the airport of H City. After a year of rest and recuperation, Camilla felt much better. She looked toward the man seated beside her and leaned on him. “What’s the matter? You’ve been quiet throughout the flight and you look distracted.” Shaking his head, Skyler replied, “It’s nothing. For some reason, I feel anxious today.” “Maybe because we’re back in our hometown. Skyler, you made a promise that we’ll get married when we’re back in H city.” “....Right.” Reaching out for his phone, he dialed a number. He then said to her, “I’ll go get you a bottle of water and call Zayne in the meantime. I’ll have

him bring over the divorce papers.” Camilla planted a kiss on his cheeks. “Okay.” Skyler’s call did not reach Zayne but he got another incoming call. “Hello?” answered Skyler. “Good day to you. May I know if this is Mr. Skyler?” “Yes.” “We finally reached you. Could you please hurry to the hospital? Your child needs to go into surgery right now and we need your approval.” A child? Since when did he have a child? “I’m sorry, you must be mistaken. I don’t have a child.” “It’s not a mistake. Your wife made arrangements for stem cell transplant surgery for both of your children. However, we can’t get hold of her. We could only reach out to you but your phone was turned off. Could you please rush to the hospital?” “Two of my kids? And what was that about a stem transplant surgery?” Skyler thought to himself as he was puzzled. Another call came through and it was Zayne. He answered the call quickly. “Zayne, what have you been up to? Didn’t I ask you to settle the divorce matters? Why is the hospital calling me about children...” “Director Flynn...you should probably come to the hospital,” Zayne said with a deep and muffled voice. “...What in the world is happening?” “Things are a little complicated, I can’t explain it through the phone, and...” Zayne continued. “Miss Sanders just...”

Chapter 17

“Just what...?” When he said those words, he felt a gush of sharp pain in his chest. He tightened his brows while he clutched onto his chest. He continued, “What’s wrong with her?” “Miss Sanders, she...” “Argh——” His thoughts got interrupted by a call of help. “Skyler, help me...” Not far to where he was, Camilla was awkwardly on the floor as she held on to her ankle in pain. A little boy stood next to her while she looked on helplessly. He had an old football in his hands. “Director Flynn...?” Zayne called out impatiently as he did not get a reply from Skyler. Skyler did not hear a word Zayne said just now. He regained his composure and replied, “I’m here but Camilla’s hurt. I need to check on her. Please help me settle the matter in the hospital

first.” “But Director Flynn, Miss Sanders, she...” “She still insists on dragging out the divorce procedure right?” “No, it’s not that. Listen, Director Flynn, Miss Sanders doesn’t have much time to live. She’s in the ER!” “Skyler, I’m in pain...” Camilla wailed louder. “I’ll go check on Camilla. Estelle must be up to one of her tricks again. She tricked me so many times and I’m not falling for it anymore. Bye.” Skyler hung up the call right away. After he hung up, he took big strides toward Camilla. He crouched down by her and checked on her injury. Her ankle was bruised and slightly scratched. He asked gently, “Are you okay? What happened?” Feeling sorry, Camilla bit her lips and asked, “...I’m all right. Skyler, did I interrupt your work? What did Zayne say?” “It’s nothing. You don’t have to worry. I’ll take you to the hospital.” Skyler lifted her and noticed the little boy still standing in place. His eyes were teary and he reached out to tug on Skyler’s shirt. “I’m sorry, sir.” Skyler’s face turned slightly dark as he could not bring himself to scold the little kid. “Don’t kick the ball around at places with many people, you might hurt someone.” “I understand, sir. I’m sorry.” “It’s alright now” “Are you planning on bringing ma’am to see the doctor? It’s costly to see the doctor. Here, I have some money, you can take it...” As he said that, the little boy reached into his pockets and pulled out several banknotes. It was five and one-dollar bills but it was arranged neatly in a stack. He showed the bills to Skyler and continued, “Sir, this is all that I can give you.” Skyler noticed a wound dressing on the back of the kid’s hand. He thought that he must have just gotten an injection. The injection wound seemed extremely large on his small hands. “Where’s your mommy?” Skyler asked. “My mommy works as a cleaner in the hospital. She spent all her savings for me to see the doctor. There was a kind-hearted lady who gave me a lot of money, but it still wasn’t enough to cover the hospital bills. I only have all this much left...Sir, I didn’t do it on purpose. I was holding my ball firmly but it was ma’am who knocked into me. I did not...” Tugging gently on his collar, Camilla said

softly, “Skyler, I feel sorry for the little boy. I’m all right, let’s just let this slide.” Skyler chuckled lightly and said, “Okay. Let’s go to the hospital.” After half an hour, Camilla was checked thoroughly by a doctor. The doctor informed Skyler, “There’s nothing to worry about. The skin’s scraped and there’s slight damage to the soft tissue. She’ll get better after a few days of rest.” “Okay. Thank you, doctor.”

Chapter 18

“Don’t mention it. Are you guys newlyweds? You’re so lucky to have a husband like him. Others don’t usually come to the hospital for such a small injury. Your husband’s worried sick and even made sure we took an X-ray of your ankle.” Feeling embarrassed, Camilla leaned onto Skyler’s embrace. “Indeed, my husband adores me a lot.” “You’re lucky. We have a patient who’s around the same age as you and she’s at her last stage of lung cancer. What a poor lady! She even just given birth to a child and almost lost her life in the process. She didn’t even get a chance to see her husband!” As if she realized something, Camilla queried carefully, “Is she okay now, doctor?” “Sigh, we managed to save her this time. But if you think about it, she’s at her last stage of cancer and she just gave birth. Her body must be really weak and I doubt she has much time left. Such a pity!” Smiling, Skyler tapped her nose lightly. “Why are you worried about others when you’re the one injured?” Putting her arms around his neck, Camilla replied, “Sigh, you know I have a soft spot for people like this. Whenever I hear of other people’s misfortune, I feel sorry and sad for them.” As she completed her sentence, Skyler’s phone rang again. Camilla reached for his phone and rejected the call. She said sulkily, “You promised that we’re going to officiate our wedding today. But with my leg like this, I don’t think we can do that anymore. Though, you should still keep me company and deal with the company matters tomorrow.” Skyler naturally agreed to her request. “Let’s get you home then.” “Okay.” Skyler carried Camilla to the car and seated her in the passenger seat. Going

through Skyler's phone, Camilla noticed that the call she rejected was from Zayne. 'Zayne must've wanted to ask Skyler to visit Estelle and her two kids.' thought Camilla. She sneered and deleted the call from the call log. 'Sorry, the person you're calling can't be reached at the moment, please try again later...' Zayne desperately tried calling Skyler but the call just did not get through. Zayne was getting anxious. The surgery for the kids was put on hold as the operation needed to be approved by a family member. He would not have been able to bear the consequences of the kids not making it if the surgery got delayed. "Uhm..." The patient who laid on the bed made a faint sound and weakly moved her fingers. "Miss Sanders, you're finally awake!" Zayne walked over hurriedly. Estelle's face looked pale as if her blood was sucked right out of her. Her body was attached with tubes and she was on a respirator as her breathing was weak. "The kids..." "Don't worry, the kids are safe for now. Miss Sanders, listen, the doctor's preparing for a stem cell transplant surgery for both of your children. We need the signature of approval from a family member. Will you be able to hold a pen?" Nodding her head weakly, Estelle raised her hands. Zayne placed a pen in her hands while he crouched down to place the agreement document in front of her. "You can sign here." Estelle was weak and frail but with the help of Zayne, she managed to put down her signature. By the time she was at her last stroke, the pen slipped off her hands. There was no strength left in her to hold a pen. "Sky...Skyler..." "Director Flynn said that Miss Camilla's injured. After that, I couldn't reach him through the phone anymore." Puff—— A mouthful of blood stained the respirator.

Chapter 19

"Mommy...Mommy..." Who was calling her? Estelle woke up to the calling and all she could see were only white walls around her. As she struggled to look around, she realized that she was at the hospital. "Miss Sanders, you're finally awake! You were unconscious for almost four days now. If you didn't wake up, I'm afraid they

would've..." The nurse explained as she let out a sigh of relief. Struggling to sit up, Estelle asked, "Where are my children? My children, they..." "Don't worry. The surgery was successful and both of your kids are safe." "I want to see them..." "Oh no, you really shouldn't, miss. You just had surgery yourself and you've got quite a wound. You shouldn't be walking around just yet..." A surgery? Only then was she aware of the thick bandage wrapped around her chest and stomach. As she consciously realized it, she felt a pressing pain. The nurse explained, "You suddenly passed out and we nearly lost you. The doctor performed a localized excision to your lungs and removed a quarter of the mutated lung cells. You ought to keep in mind to avoid intense movements and activities." "The cancer cells are removed? Does it mean that...I have time to live?" The nurse looked torn. "No one can say for sure. We would have to monitor if cancer will relapse in the future. Though, if you're willing to undergo chemotherapy sessions regularly after this, you might be able to extend your time." "How much longer can I live?" Feeling torn, the nurse replied, "We can't say, but we'll try our best." The nurse felt bad for Estelle as 'trying our best' was the most said word in the hospital. However, Estelle did not feel disappointed. She was supposed to be long gone from this world, yet she was given more time to live. It was as if God had taken pity on her. She felt content. Knock knock — There was a knock on the door. The nurse opened the door and asked, "Are you a family member of Miss Sanders?" The person standing outside the door was dressed in a white shirt and blue slacks. His hair was neatly groomed and he wore a pair of gold-framed glasses. He looked decent and well-polished. "Yes, I am." "All right then, I'll leave you both. Press the bell if you need anything." The nurse left the room and shut the door. Looking at him, Estelle lifted the corners of her mouth. "What brings you all the way here?" Colten Howard had a gentle voice like the person he was. Whether it was the way he treated people or how he handled situations, he was always well-

mannered. People felt at ease around him. Colten replied, “You did a great job in keeping the news about your illness from me.” Feeling slightly embarrassed, Estelle explained, “Cancer’s no good news. There was no reason to broadcast it.” “So you wanted to just die after giving birth and not see me again? Estelle, even if you once rejected my love for you, we’re still friends, right?” “Director Howard...” Colten let out a sigh and took a seat next to her on the bed. With a worried look, he proposed. “Estelle, bring the kids and come back to the US with me.” “I...I can’t leave now.” Letting out a bitter laugh, Colten asked, “Why? Haven’t you given up on Skyler? What is it that he has that I don’t? Why do you dislike me so much?” Estelle felt a bit wretched upon hearing his words. The year after the Flynn family’s tragedy, when Skyler decided to go his separate ways with her, it was Colten who stayed by her side when her world was falling apart. He stayed by her side even when he knew her heart belonged to someone else and that she was carrying another man’s child.

Chapter 20

Colten continued. “I’m not forcing you into anything. If you want to give him another chance, I’ll respect that. I do sincerely hope that you’ll find the happiness you long for. But Estelle, I also want you to remember that you’re not alone. No matter what happens, know I’ll always have you back.” When her first child was infected with sepsis, she had no choice but to leave the US and return to her hometown. She tolerated all the insults, shame, and pain from Skyler, all in hopes for the three of them to reunite as a family. Furthermore, her baby was at a hospital in the US under the care of Colten at that time. Estelle could not understand him. “But why?” “What do you mean why?” “Why me? A man like you should be able to find a much prettier and younger woman compared to me. Someone who’ll love you with all her heart and carry you a child who isn’t sick.” Estelle explained. He looked as if he was brooding over her words, Colten then explained, “... It might be fate then.” “But the thing with

fate...is that it's hard to grasp hold of what it means. When it dawns upon you, you can't say for sure if it's a good-fated or an ill-fated relationship." Colten was all the same well-mannered. "It's okay. You can take the time to think about my proposal." Estelle continued. "I have cancer. It's like a ticking time bomb. One minute I'm okay, the next, I could be dead." "Then you can at least live in peace. I'll take care of your children." Getting up from his seat, Colten comforted her while he gently stroked her hair. He sighed, "Estelle, don't strain yourself too much. You're only in your twenties, you're young. You don't have to pretend to be strong and composed. It's okay to cry when you're sad and it's okay to admit you're afraid." Looking up to meet his eyes, Estelle said, "It's been so long since someone saw me as a young lady." "The first time I met you, you were a young lady who was alone, lost and strolling aimlessly down the streets in the rain. If it wasn't for me, you'd have walked into the river." She recalled the events of her life when she was only twenty and thought how time flew by quickly. Six years had passed. Time was a file grinding on her wounds in her heart, again and again, making her damaged heart even more disfigured. Back then she allowed herself to be a wreck. However, she now lost the right to be that way. It was because she was a mother of two kids. She was no longer alone and had to provide her warmth and love for her children. "Director Howard, the kids..." "Don't worry. I was in the operation room just now and the surgery was successful. You should get some rest, and I'll keep the children company." Feeling grateful, Estelle thanked him. "Thank you, Director Howard..." "Estelle, do you know how many times you've thanked me the past few years?" Estelle shook her head. "Taking into account the one you said just now, it will be a total of 5276 times. We've known each other for six years, 2192 days. On average, you thanked me 2.5 times every day. Do you know what this means?" "...What does it mean?" "It means that I'm still a stranger to you." "No, it's not that...I'm just.." "If you saw me differently, you wouldn't have to thank

me. Say, did you constantly thank Skyler for everything?” Estelle was lost for words. Indeed, she did not constantly thank Skyler. When she and Skyler were on good terms, she always demanded things. She knew he would have given her anything she wanted. She felt a pressing pain in her heart as she thought about those memories. She smiled helplessly. “When it comes to debating, how could I compete with the associate from the best law firm in the US.” Lifting his lips into a smile, Colten said, “It’s good enough that you’re finally smiling. You’re beautiful when you smile, you should smile more.” “Director Howard...” “All right, I’ll stop teasing you. I’ll go check up on the kids.” “Okay.” Colten stood up and opened the door. He walked into someone by the door.

Chapter 21

Skyler took a quick scan of Colten then turned to Estelle and mocked, “Estelle, you’re something, aren’t you? That’s quick of you to find someone to replace me.” Estelle tried to explain. “You’re mistaken...” Cutting her off, Skyler added. “Am I though? Zayne begged me to visit you right away and said that you’re dying. But you seem perfectly fine to me, seeing how you still have the will to flirt with someone else.” Estelle’s face hardened. “You’re being unreasonable, Skyler.” “I’m not here to reason with you.” “Then why are you here?” “Zayne said that you’re dying. I’m here to see if that’s the case, or if you’re just up to one of your tricks again just to get me to come to you.” Estelle suddenly felt exhausted. “I’m...you know what, forget it. See it the way you want.” She had enough of explaining herself all the time. She lived her days explaining herself for the past five years and she decided that it was enough. Every day, she tried to explain that she had nothing to do