

Love Until Death Do Us Part

Chapter 12

Newman has never, like, ever bought condoms. Why would he need 'em when he'd been flying solo for the past five years?

Plus, he was not the type to hang around convenience stores, so how was he supposed to know they stacked that stuff by the checkout counter?

Sure, he knew what family planning gear **looked** like, but the ones he'd seen in hotels for other guests were all super business-like in their packaging.

The box he'd got, though, was decked out with cartoon grapes. Newman thought about chucking the box in the glove compartment for now, but then it hit him- this wasn't his ride.

In the end, he just stuffed the box of condoms into his pocket, figuring he'd ditch it in a trash can later or something.

Athena was in the backseat, already cracking up for a while, and when she saw Newman pocket the box, her mind went wild, "Newman, could it be you **swing** both ways?" Turned out those weren't for him, but **for** some other dude!

The guy turned his head, his eyes and brows screaming murder. Athena quickly stuffed a lollipop she'd just unwrapped into the **guy's** mouth.

"Chill, Newman, have some candy."

Like he was possessed or something, the guy opened up and in went the lollipop.

"You shouldn't be mad, Newman; here's some candy," that was what the silly girl once told him, popping into his head now. The milky strawberry sweetness melted in his mouth, and Newman turned his face away. Why the hell was he thinking about that **girl**?

"All you ladies into sweets or what?" He asked out of the blue.

Athena queried, "Who else is a sweet tooth?"

The lollipop was too sickly sweet, making the guy frown, "I had this fool at home, crazy about candy. She'd stash sweets under her pillow or in her pockets. When she'd take 'em out, all melted and warped in the wrapper, looking gross, and she'd still gobble them up."

His voice, deep and suave, dripping with sarcasm. Athena in the backseat went pale as a ghost.

“Is that really gross?” She murmured.

“Sweets all melted in the wrapper, how’s that not gross?” Newman shot back.

Then he remembered something and sneered, “I had the help throw out the candies she hid under her pillow, and she dug through the trash bags looking for it, getting all stinky

The fool was both stinky and gross, and even after a shower, she still reeked! Newman had to wash her himself, a couple of times. For days, he wouldn’t let her near him.

The milky strawberry lollipop was crunched by her teeth, the sharp edges cutting a small wound on Athena’s tongue.

The taste of the sickly sweet candy mixed with the tang of blood rushed up her nostrils. Her breathing turned heavy and sticky. Athena’s throat tightened, her eyes like a rippling lake.

The silly girl sure loved her sweets, but in the whole Bradshaw villa, no one but Cornelia would buy her candy.

Cornelia, worried about cavities, would only let her have one piece a day. Back then, Newman was just getting over a serious illness, needing medicine to recover.

Every time after taking the medicine, the silly girl would hand him a piece of candy, which he’d promptly tossed into the trash. Those were precious to her, even when thrown out, she’d get them back and stash them. She thought maybe it was ‘cause Newman never had candy, didn’t know the joy of sweets.

Later, she’d sneak into the kitchen and drop a candy into the medicine jar – sometimes milk candy, chocolate, or even durian. Every time Newman took his medicine, something tasted off, but he couldn’t put his finger on it. Once, the girl got caught sneaking a candy into the medicine by the help, who rattled her out to the old lady, who laughed her head off, tears and all. After that, the old lady gave her two orange candies a day – she’d have one, and leave the other for Newman.

She found out if she left the candy on the table, it’d get cleaned up. So she carried them close, hiding them under her pillow at night. That way, no one could snatch the candy she saved for Newman.

Newman saw Athena’s red-rimmed eyes in the rearview mirror. She turned her face away when she caught his gaze, “Bit my

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tongue, hurts like hell,”

As she spoke, tears she couldn't hold back started falling. The hard candy crunched in Athena's mouth.

Swallowing the bitter taste in her throat, she told the driver. That silly girl would be real upset if she knew you talked about her

like that.

It was not a question but a statement. Hearing such words upfront, it really hurt. Athena couldn't see Newman's face, but his voice was ice-cold. That fool is dead. If she's upset, she can haunt me in my dreams!”

Athena let out a bitter laugh, sucking hard on the candy, trying to drown out the bitterness in her throat with sweetness.

Soon, the tears stopped, and the unshed ones in Athena's eyes grew cold. “Newman, you asshole!” She cursed secretly. “What good is haunting you in dreams? I'm gonna make your life hell right here, right now! Disgusted by my body? Just you wait!”

Athena tapped on the tablet mounted on the back of the driver's seat. She flicked through the options on the screen and instructed her servant, “After you drop me off at **work**, go do the grocery shopping. I've listed everything I need in the tablet. Download a house keeping app, sign up, and plug in my phone number. **You'll** see the grocery list for today”

Grocery shopping?! Seconds ago, the concept couldn't have been further from Newman!

Athena went on, “After shopping, head back to Mystic Ridge Villa. Clean up Sunny Haven in the west district. If it's not spotless, I'll have you kneeling and scrubbing the floors! At 6 PM, my son and I will dine at Mystic Ridge Villa. You prep the meal in the central kitchen, and the help will bring it to my place.”

Newman gripped the steering wheel tight, fighting the urge to ram the car into the cab ahead! He thought about the contract he'd signed, essentially selling his soul, his eye twitching. The frustration of being bossed around by Athena bubbled up, but he squashed it down with sheer willpower.

Munching on the candy, he muttered under his breath, “Fine! Grocery shopping! Cleaning the villa, scrubbing the floors!”

Athena was getting way too comfortable bossing him around!