

Love beyond the mask (Whitney) Chapter 11-15

Stiffly, she backed out of the wardrobe, casting a wary glance at the door—thankfully, no one was there.

It took a while before the man emerged, his casual attire starkly contrasting with his usual suits—more youthful and rakish.

Whitney's eyes darted around nervously as the man approached, studying her crimson face.

His gaze playful, he teased *without* hesitation, "It's natural, isn't it? How else did you get pregnant?"

Speechless, Whitney could *not* fathom why he would even mention it. She fled, feigning ignorance.

Watching her retreat, the man's handsome lips curved into a smile.

In the hallway, Whitney cooled down until her stomach growled audibly.

The man stepped *out*, hearing it, and his expression darkened. "Have you not eaten all day?"

Is this how you treat my child?" He glared at her belly solemnly.

Embarrassed, Whitney glanced at her watch—it was already four in the afternoon.

She hung her head, "Sorry, I forgot..."

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Chapter 13

With furrowed brows, he ordered, "Go eat first."

Whitney obeyed, following him to the Southern Elegance Club's dining area, with its luxurious pavilions and water features.

The imposing man personally ensured she was served a pregnancy-friendly meal, the manager nodding respectfully at his every instruction.

Whitney, admiring his dizzying profile, wished she could see past the mask that obscured his features.

“Will you be joining me for the meal?”

“I don’t eat off the pregnancy menu.” No sooner had he finished speaking than a suspicious ‘gurgle’ echoed.

Whitney touched her stomach, sure it was not her, and shot a glance at the towering man.

His face tensed slightly.

Whitney could not help but giggle, her lips a rosy hue. “Have you not eaten all day either?”

He shot her a look that warned against mocking him.

Whitney stayed quiet, seated obediently, but nudged the dish towards him.

Eventually, he took a seat opposite her.

Dishes arrived one by one. Since they were not well acquainted, Whitney stole glances at his elegant dining

manners.

Suddenly, some vegetables—beans, corn—landed on her plate.

Whitney frowned, “I don’t like these.”

“The baby does,” he stated sternly.

Whitney’s lips twitched. A barely one-month-old embryo fancied vegetables?

Fine, she was just a tool.

As she ate, disheartened, a woman approached their table and snapped a photo of Whitney and the man dining.

Followed by a sneer. “Well, Whitney, you’ve got the guts to dine here?”

Whitney looked up, her gaze icy. It was Roselyn, Monica's confidant, birds of a feather.

Roselyn's hateful eyes fixed on Whitney. They had been college classmates, but Whitney, always the standout, snagged the scholarships, the socialite title, and the wealthy young man Roselyn secretly pined for, leaving Roselyn humiliated after a public rejection.

Roselyn had harbored that grudge, biding her time for Whitney's downfall.

She plopped down beside them, snickering, "Heard you were passed around by kidnappers and now keeping some thug. Is this him?"

Her gaze swept over the man, initially taken aback by his intimidating presence, but then she noticed his leather jacket. No one would dare dress so casually in the high-end Southern Elegance Club unless they were a thug.

"Hiding behind a mask. Must be hideous, huh?"

Whitney almost spat out her water, glancing fearfully at the man who had stopped eating and put down his fork.

Worried she had angered him, Whitney spoke up, "Roselyn, you can leave now."

"It's you who should leave, a washed-up pauper with her thug boyfriend trying to dine and dash. Hey, how about I live stream you getting thrown out?" Roselyn's taunts grew as she fiddled with her phone.

Whitney's Facebook pinged.

Opening the app, she was horrified to see Roselyn had posted the photo in their college group with a scoffing caption,

[Come see the former campus queen with her thug boyfriend, caught in the act. She's dining and dashing at Southern Elegance Club. Stay tuned for the live stream of her getting kicked out.]

The group exploded. Whitney had been a goddess on campus, secretly admired by numerous high society young men. Now, they recoiled as if they had swallowed flies.

[How'd she end up like this, with a thug?]

[I felt sorry for her after the kidnapping news, but she's clearly promiscuous.]

[Hey, why waste time with a thug? Spend a night with me.]

[Roselyn, find out her price, will you?]

[I heard she's pregnant. What's she even worth? I'd say ten grand is generous.]

Soon enough, Whitney became the group's laughingstock.

Her expression was indifferent, something that Roselyn just could not stomach. She pinched her face mockingly and said, "What's with the act, darling? In the group chat, they're treating you like you're auctioning yourself off at a bar!"

Suddenly, the man opposite frowned and looked over, causing an inexplicable drop in the atmosphere.

Thinking the masked man was eyeing her, Roselyn felt a surge of superiority. She strolled over with a sultry gaze and taunted, "Do you have any idea what his meal costs? Whitney is flat broke; she can't afford you!"

With that, she boldly pinched the man's chin, "You've got a decent build. Consider this meal on me, and come with me. Whitney is hardly your match anymore."

Roselyn wanted to snatch Whitney's so-called 'thug boyfriend, to trample her underfoot and show her up in the alumni group.

"Oh, charity for me?" The man finally spoke, his voice chilling and deep.

Whitney's heart skipped a beat. Although she did not know L's true identity, she knew he was loaded.

Seeing that he seemed intrigued, Roselyn immediately flashed a black card, her eyes mocking Whitney. "This is Monica's black card. *Simon* got it for her at the Southern Elegance Club. Whitney, I remember you used to come here for business, too. How come *Simon* never got you one?"

Whitney's eyes narrowed slightly at the sight of the black card.

It was more than just not getting her a card; in the past, to save money, Simon would often show clients a good time while leaving her to go hungry.

So, he had gotten Monica a black card for this place long ago.

The chill on Whitney's face made the man's gaze sharpen, and he scoffed at Roselyn, "You're using a black card to buy me dinner?"

Whitney snapped back to reality, wondering what game L was playing.

He did not seem like the type to indulge in frivolity.

Whitney rose with a chill in her voice, "Let's go, Sir. Ignore the barking mutt."

"She involved me, so now she'll have to howl in misery."

Roselyn did not grasp the man's meaning, only noticing how his thin lips curled into an irresistible charm, saying, "What are you spacing out for? Order, come on."

"Fine, order whatever you want!" Roselyn tossed down her black card.

The man elegantly summoned the manager, who shivered under his gaze, dutifully saying, "Please place your

order, Sir."

"Bring me all of your menus," the man said.

Roselyn figured there was only a menu or two at most.

But the manager presented twenty menus, each listing 20 dishes!

The man's voice was cool as he said, "Serve everything."

"What in the world are you doing?" Roselyn gasped.

"Didn't you want to treat me to a meal?"

Once the words were out, with the alumni chat live—streaming, Roselyn steeled herself, “Alright then, the credit limit on Monica’s black card is quite substantial!”

After serving four hundred dishes, the total came to three million dollars.

Roselyn’s lips trembled with fear. The man’s lips curved, “Go settle the bill, and I’ll follow you.”

Roselyn just wanted to sleep with him, and the prize was seemingly within grasp. Thus, she eagerly went to

pay.

But at the front desk, the black card suddenly did not work!

The manager stated flatly, “I’m sorry, but this card has been canceled. It’s not sufficient for a Southern Elegance Club membership. Please pay in cash, or it’s considered dining and dashing, and we will notify the police. You’re committing a crime.”

Roselyn was dumbstruck; how could the card be void?

“Check again, please. This black card was issued by the Perlman family’s second son, Simon!”

The manager sneered, dismissing Simon as insignificant.

He called over security, who escorted Roselyn right back to Whitney’s table.

The manager laid it out for her, “You’ve offended my guest. Apologize on your knees, or it’s off to the police

station!”

Roselyn looked at Whitney, unable to believe that Whitney and the thug were the manager’s guests. Her eyes blazed, her face ashen with rage.

But she did not have the funds. She had only relied on Monica’s card to trample over Whitney.

“Will you kneel or not?” The manager urged, watching his esteemed guest’s expression.

Roselyn could only swallow her pride and kneel.

The man lifted his gaze lazily, his face cold, and said to Whitney, “Give me your phone.”

Whitney was stunned by this turn of events but figured it was his play. She handed over her phone.

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The man opened her Facebook, snapped a photo of kneeling Roselyn, and shared it in the buzzing alumni chat. Everyone was waiting for the follow-up on Whitney’s supposed dine-and-dash.

Suddenly, they saw Roselyn kneeling at Whitney’s table, with Whitney half in the frame.

Whitney had posted the photo!

The chat went eerily quiet.

Whitney glanced at the man, who must have heard her phone ringing incessantly.

His brows were deep-set, his look detached and proud. Roselyn must be blind to mistake him for a t hug.

Whitney raised an eyebrow, then typed a message. [Having someone kneel while you dine adds a touch of excitement, doesn’t it?]

She had been silent until now, even when the chat was at its liveliest.

Now, her comment was met with a strange silence.

Then, the man glanced at Roselyn. “Where’s your apology?”

Her hands shaking, Roselyn opened the Facebook group and saw her humiliating image. Not wanting to go to the police station, she typed with shivering hands, [Whitney, I’m sorry.]

As soon as she sent the message, the chat went completely silent, the collective gasp almost audible.

Within seconds, one of the young men who had been bidding for Whitney's attention stepped forward. [Whitney, I'm sorry about earlier.]

Though they did not understand the situation, Whitney seemed to have some powerful backing, given how Roselyn ended up.

Better not to offend her.

Several others followed suit, apologizing to Whitney in a neat line.

Whitney put down her phone, silently admiring the tall, handsome man rising from the table, suddenly finding

his terse manner rather attractive.

Whitney's furtive glances did not go unnoticed by the man, who also had the security do something.

They broke Roselyn's right hand, the one that had touched his chin.

A woman's scream echoed, and Whitney heard the man's indifferent voice, "You see, I'm a thug. I can't pay you, and it's best you don't call the cops either."

Roselyn's gaze was venomous but also inexplicably fearful of the thug. It was not until they had left that she wailed in pain, "Whitney, don't think this is over. Monica won't let you get away with this!"

Whitney was not worried about her tattling to Monica; she was whisked away by the man into his car. After a moment, she smiled and said, "Thanks for standing up for me just now."

"Well, *you* are my 'wife' after all." The man's deep, magnetic voice made the word 'wife' sound unfamiliar yet oddly sensual.

Whitney knew he was jesting, her ears warming at the thought.

But then his gaze turned chilly, "Sitting with you, I was mistaken for a thug."

Whitney caught the blame in his voice.

But at least it proved Tiana was wrong; he was not some gang leader. Who was he, then, to command the manager of the Southern Elegance Club?

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Chapter 14

The next day, at the hospital.

Roselyn's face was ashen as she had her arm set, her voice filled with resentment. "Monica, the whole group chat thing has spread. I'm the laughingstock now. Whitney slapping me is like slapping you. You have to avenge this for me!"

Monica's face clouded over. "What happened with the black card?"

"It just stopped working. But it can't be related to that thug; he admitted he was a thug himself."

Monica felt a twinge of satisfaction. Ha, as if Whitney could snag a wealthy man.

The owner of the Southern Elegance Club must have stopped the black card. Only, she did not know how she had offended him.

Annoyed, Monica was interrupted by a call from Simon.

"Monica, are you at the hospital? My mother wants to see her grandchild. Why don't you let her accompany you for an ultrasound?"

His voice held anticipation, but Monica stiffened noticeably.

She tugged

at her lips, feigning a girlish pout. "What's the rush, darling? The baby's not even three months along. You can't tell anything now! Let's just wait until I'm a bit further along, alright?"

"But..."

"Ugh! Simon, I... I think I'm gonna be sick again..."

“Alright, go on then. I’ll come and check on you once I’m done here.”

Monica quickly dismissed him, ending the call, and let out a long sigh of relief.

Roselyn looked over with concern. “Monica, the baby...”

To persuade Simon to kidnap Whitney, Monica resorted to fabricating a pregnancy.

The further along she faked it, the harder it became to conceal. She had considered actually getting pregnant during this time, but she had already lost two pregnancies that belonged to others.

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Damn it!

Her eyes flickered with a sudden thought, and she sneered at Roselyn. “You said you wanted me to get back at her for you? Then find *out* where Whitney is.”

Framing Whitney would be the perfect move. Simon cherished the idea of a child so much that he would go after that woman with a vengeance.

And Monica would no longer have to worry about Whitney being alive to threaten her.

Roselyn understood instantly and smiled, heading off to take care of it.

At the hotel.

Whitney slipped out of the guest room— she was there to get a handle on one of Skye Gem Ltd’s minor shareholders. The guy was greedy and lustful, making him easy to manipulate. If she wanted to take down Monica in the upcoming jewelry contest, she needed an insider, and Whitney had her eye on him.

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“Tsk, the old guy’s still got it, playing with two at a time.” Tiana’s voice came through disdainfully in the earpiece.

Whitney sat in the lounge, about to remove the tiny camera hidden in her blouse, when Tiana mentioned the signal was poor and told her to wait a moment.

So, Whitney picked up a glass of water to take a sip.

Then, the sound of high heels clicked from behind.

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