

BINARY AWAKENING



Chapter 15: Interview
Esteban Gallardo

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Christine leaned slightly forward, her notebook resting on the table untouched, her eyes fixed on the woman across from her. Elena's expression was bright, almost luminous, as if the memory she was about to share radiated from within.

"I can't really explain how," Elena began, her voice soft, brimming with sincerity, "but when we got married, something inside me something deep was unlocked. The love I felt for Luca didn't just grow... it multiplied. I've never been so happy in my life."

Christine studied her carefully. There was no trace of deceit, no performance. Elena believed every word she said. That made her dangerous... or perhaps valuable.

"So," Christine said, her tone gentle but probing, "you'd say it was the marriage itself that changed everything?"

Elena hesitated, her brow furrowing as she searched through her thoughts.

"Well... not exactly. But yes, it was during those days. Something shifted."

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"Not exactly?" Christine pressed, the tip of her pen still untouched by ink. "Did something else happen around that time?"

Elena nodded slowly, her gaze drifting toward the window as if the memory was playing just beyond the glass.

"A few days before the wedding, I almost died." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "Can you imagine? I was about to begin the happiest chapter of my life, and then... the universe nearly took it away."

Christine's fingers tensed slightly on the edge of the table.

"What happened?"

"I was crossing the street, not really paying attention. There was this truck it came out of nowhere, speeding like the driver had lost control. I jumped aside just in time. If I had taken one more step..." Elena's voice trembled, but her eyes were distant now, reliving the moment. "And then Luca appeared. He ran to me, held me. His face... it was pure panic and love. I saw something in him that day. A kind of devotion that... unlocked something in me. A new layer of love. Do you know what it feels like to wake up next to the love of your life every morning? Sometimes I just lie there in silence and watch him sleep. He's my angel. My hero. My..."

"What kind of truck?" Christine interrupted. Her voice was calm, but her patience was fraying.

"What?" Elena blinked, momentarily disoriented.

"What kind of accident? And was anyone else there besides Luca?"

Elena blinked again, but the interruption didn't seem to shake her glow. Her smile returned, warm and dreamy.

"Yes... actually. There was a friend of Luca's. What was his name...?" She tapped her finger against her chin. "Egon?... Ethan?... No... Evan. Yes, Evan. He was an old friend of Luca's. A curious type."

Christine leaned in imperceptibly. Her heartbeat quickened.

"Curious how?"

Elena chuckled softly. "He said he had this... lifelong project. To know everyone in the world. Can you imagine? Everyone. I mean, that's just... strange, right? But sweet in a way. I remember thinking: I only need Luca to feel complete. Why would someone need the whole world?"

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Christine didn't respond. Her mind was already racing.

"That day," Elena continued, "the day I nearly died that was the last time we saw Evan. He came by the apartment. We had coffee together. It was... a lovely visit. Warm. There was something deeply comforting about him. He and Luca shared a bond that felt... real. I even felt a little jealous for a moment."

Christine raised an eyebrow. "Jealous?"

Elena smiled again, this time with a hint of self-awareness. "I realized I had nothing to worry about. Whatever they shared, it was old and deep, but it didn't threaten what Luca and I had. If anything, it made me happy to see Luca so at ease, so himself. It was beautiful."

Christine's gaze narrowed subtly.

"And nothing unusual happened during that conversation?"

"No, not at all. It was... peaceful. Fulfilling. Evan was very attentive, very present. He listened more than he spoke. You could tell he genuinely cared about Luca. About both of us, really."

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Christine sat back slightly, folding her hands. "You're very lucky, Elena. What you have with Luca... it's rare. I admit, I'm a little envious."

Elena laughed gently. "You'll find it too. I'm sure of it. Love like this... it changes you."

Christine smiled, but it didn't reach her eyes. "I think I have everything I need for my book. Thank you so much for your time."

"It's been a pleasure," Elena said, standing to shake her hand. "Please let me know when the book comes out. I'd love to read it."

"Oh, of course," said Christine as she stood up and extended her hand, offering a firm handshake as she delivered her response—carefully worded to ensure Elena wouldn't bother her again. "Since this topic is quite important, I'm going to take my time. Maybe I'll release it in a million years—I want to do a perfect job. Sorry, but if you'll excuse me, I have another appointment. It's been a pleasure, Elena. Take care."

Christine turned and exited the café, her coat catching in the breeze as she stepped outside. She didn't look back.

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Pretending to be writing a book about marriage had been the perfect excuse to arrange the meeting. The interview had confirmed what she needed. The spark she felt in Elena it wasn't from Luca. She'd already met Luca, and while he held a faint trace of awakening, it was dim, residual. Elena, however, glowed.

Now, she had a new target.

She was going to find this Evan guy.