

100 Days 721

Chapter 721 The Truth Behind Deception

When Spade mentioned Black Rose's name, Alexander finally recognized the woman standing next to Hanabi. He failed to notice her presence since his attention was focused on Hanabi.

After that, he cast a glance at Spade, giving him a questioning gaze. 'What is the meaning of this?'

Spade just smiled at him sheepishly, feeling apologetic. He deliberately kept this intentional meet-up from Alexander.

"I'll explain to you later. Just smile, Alex. Don't scare them away," Spade softly mumbled, begging Alexander to behave and act friendly.

Meanwhile, Hanabi and Cherry exchanged meaningful glances with one another. Both of them had the same thought in mind. 'Wait? Is he the Dragon Lord?' The two ladies shifted their gaze back to Alexander who still had an indifferent look on his face.

The two ladies were also surprised about how Spade was treating Alexander. If he was the Dragon Lord, then how come Spade had the guts to command him like this?

"Who is the real Boss here?" Cherry whispered to Hanabi.

"I'm not sure." She plainly responded, her gaze not leaving Alexander's figure.

"You! Come with me. We need to talk!" Hanabi didn't waste any more time as she reached out, grabbing Alexander's hand. She pulled him up from his seat.

Hanabi didn't give him a chance to complain and object. She dragged him out of the restaurant, leaving Cherry and Spade.

"Where are you bringing me? And how did you know my friend?" Alexander asked her as they continued walking. "Stop talking. We need to find a better place with no strangers around." Hanabi's hand was gripping his right wrist as she led him to the parking area.

Alexander pursed his lips in annoyance. But instead of freeing his hand from her, he just continued following her until they reached Hanabi's car.

"How long will you let them deceive you and take advantage of you? Will you permit them to manipulate your organization for their vendettas? Are you that gullible?" Hanabi started to mock him, her words sharp and incisive. She intended to make him realize that Monica and Vincent had made a fool out of him.

It did not take long for Hanabi's provocation to sink in. Alexander clutched the papers tightly.

'Everything about us is just a lie... Her kindness and her sweetness... all of them are just part of her ploy. No wonder... she acted that way when I first saw her as Helena Carlsen. She seemed to know me and familiar with me.'

Alexander slammed his eyes shut and gritted his teeth. He could already imagine that Monica was laughing at him.

'Why? Why do I have to feel miserable again? I was hurt when I found out she was Nathan's girlfriend. I mourned her 'death', vowing to avenge her. She just played me... Vincent and Monica exploited my weakness just because they wanted to bring down Nathan Sparks.' Alexander finally realized his mistake. He trusted the wrong people.

"I'm going to kill them," Alexander mumbled through his gritted teeth.

He was about to get out of the car when Hanabi suddenly stopped him, grabbing his hand once more.

"Where do you think you are going?" Hanabi asked him in disbelief. "Confronting them head-on is a bad move. Think twice before you act. Are you going to march in their backyard and announce to them that you already know how they deceive you? Do you think they will care? No!" Hanabi started lecturing him.

"Keep your cool and strategize. The most satisfying revenge you can enact should come as a complete surprise! Turn the tables on the manipulators! They betrayed you, so it's only fair to do the same to them!" She tightened her grip around his arm, not allowing him to leave.

"So what do you suggest?" Alexander raised an eyebrow. "Are you going to exploit my weakness too? Using my anger as a weapon against them?" He smirked sarcastically, his words laced with skepticism and irritation. "You are all just the same."

This time Hanabi was rendered speechless. She could see the raging fury in his eyes. Apart from anger, she also sensed his sadness and pain.

The atmosphere was engulfed by heavy tension. The silence overtook them. No one spoke for a few seconds. Soon, Hanabi released Alexander's hand as she averted her gaze to the road.

"I'm sorry." Hanabi suddenly apologized, surprising Alexander. "Why are you apologizing?" Alexander inquired, a glint of amusement shimmering in his eyes.

"Because you were correct. I, too, intended to use you, channeling your anger towards them to cease your interference with the Syphiruz Mafia," she confessed, acknowledging her intentions with a mix of sincerity and admission.

"But now, I changed my mind. You can do anything you want. You are free to go." Hanabi didn't want to be insensitive toward Alexander. Though she didn't pity him, she knew the feeling of being betrayed by their loved ones.

Chapter 722 A Clever Move!

[At Hiroshi's Villa...]

Mr. Hiroshi felt relieved when Jane obediently followed Kazuki. But Kazuki informed him that Jane went to see Nathan to say goodbye. "Are you done packing some stuff for our travel tomorrow?" Mr. Hiroshi asked his daughter, assessing her. Jane was smiling at him tenderly so he assumed that Nathan didn't say a thing to her.

"Pa, I don't have to pack. Besides, we will go back here the day after tomorrow, am I right?" Jane sat beside her father.

Mr. Hiroshi just smiled faintly, hesitant to say yes. If only she would agree, then he would like her to stay in Country J, preventing her from seeing Nathan frequently. 'I wonder if she can learn to love Tatsumi... giving him a chance. He is a good man. A very devoted man.' Mr. Hiroshi pondered to himself.

"By the way, Pa... I have something to confess." Jane took his hand as she cast a meaningful look at him.

"Sure, what is it, my dear?" Mr. Hiroshi stared at her intently, bracing himself for what she was about to say. "Pa... the truth is... I have another identity... a secret identity." Jane confessed to him. Despite knowing that her father was already aware of her role as a professional assassin, she felt compelled to directly disclose it to prevent any potential misconceptions. However, she made the conscious decision to omit any mention of Nathan and the Syphiruz Mafia.

"Pa... the truth is... I have another identity... a secret identity." Jane confessed to him. Despite knowing that her father was already aware of her role as a professional assassin, she felt compelled to directly disclose it to prevent any potential misconceptions. However, she made the conscious decision to omit any mention of Nathan and the Syphiruz Mafia.

"Pa... I'm a professional assassin. Phantomflake is my alias." She disclosed.

Mr. Hiroshi was caught off guard by her sudden confession. Though he was waiting for this moment, he hadn't expected her to divulge her secret to him today.

He frowned in suspicion. He wondered if meeting Nathan triggered her to reveal her secret identity.

"I know you are shocked upon hearing this. Do you hold any resentment toward who I used to be?" Jane asked softly.

"Of course not!" Mr. Hiroshi promptly responded, holding her shoulders. "You are my daughter. I will never hate you. You have to blame me for what happened in the past, not yourself."

Mr. Hiroshi was at a loss for words as he watched Jane in amusement and disbelief.

"Is this part of your revenge?" He finally found his voice to speak up.

Jane just smiled playfully as she nodded her head.

The old man was rendered speechless once again.

However, little did he know, Jane had just indirectly told him that she couldn't afford to be separated from Nathan in the next twenty-four days. This was the ultimatum given by Bam-Bam.

In doing so, she created the impression that her revenge was aimed at Nathan. However, her true motive was entirely different – to win over Nathan's affections, stealing his heart away and imprisoning him with her love.

Internally, Mr. Hiroshi began to hesitate. Doubts started to emerge about his decision to keep them apart. He questioned whether his actions were hindering Jane's plan for revenge against Nathan.

What a clever woman! She just made her father waver from his prior resolve.

"Pa, one last thing! Can you arrange a meeting with the leader of the Red Dragon Mafia and their ally, the King Stallion Mafia? I will represent our clan to attend this meeting. I plan on negotiating with them." Jane grabbed this opportunity to maximize the influence of their clan to build a connection with those two mafia organizations who were trying to bring Syphiruz Mafia down.

"Okay, dear. I can arrange that. Where do you want to meet them? In Country J or here?" Mr. Hiroshi consulted her.

"We can do that in Country J." Jane chose the foreign country because she was worried that Nathan would be upset once he found out she met those two leaders. She would like also to test whether Vincent would show up in person or he would just send his representative.

'I'm trying to lure my real target.' Jane thought to herself.

"Consider it done, my princess." Mr. Hiroshi reassured her.

"Pa, thanks again for accepting me and my dark sides wholeheartedly. I am a bit tired today. I'll just go to my room and rest. Can you warn everyone not to disturb me?" Jane yawned, pretending to be sleepy. She just moved to her next plan— Sneaking out of the house to meet Nathan.

"Sure. I'll make sure no one will disrupt your beauty rest, my princess. Go upstairs now."

"Thanks, Pa! You are the best!" She said cheerfully, trying to conceal her excitement. 'Yes. I'm going on an official date with Nathan!'

Chapter 723 Her Favorite Coffee

Jane successfully sneaked out of Hiroshi's Villa to meet Nathan. Disguised herself as a guard, she drove away from the mansion to go to their meeting place. Nathan was the one in charge of today's itinerary. She wondered what his plan was for their date.

She stopped by the gas station to change her clothes and freshen up in the comfort room. Though she rarely put extra effort into her appearance, she simply wanted to doll up today for her date with Nathan.

Dressed in relaxed attire comprising white T-shirts adorned with understated black prints and paired with high-waisted pants, she exuded an effortless chic. Her long hair was casually pulled back into sleek ponytails, and she lightly applied minimal makeup before preparing to meet her man. As she exited the restroom, she emanated a simple yet captivating aura of loveliness- Simply Pretty! The gasoline attendants and male customers couldn't help but glance back at her due to her beauty. She was totally a head-turner. Jane wasn't aware of her alluring charms that could attract men's attention.

She was about to enter her car when someone grabbed her by the waist. "Where do you think you are going, Beautiful?"

If she hadn't recognized that voice, she would have twisted his arm and thrown him to the ground. She gazed up only to meet a pair of blue eyes. It was Nathan.

Jane was beyond shock when she saw him. He had a different vibe today. Just like her, he was a striking figure in casual attire, exuding an air of charisma. Nathan's sported well-fitted pants and a stylish shirt, tailored perfectly to accentuate his physique.

His shirt, casually unbuttoned at the collar, revealed a hint of his neckline, adding a touch of effortless appeal. His casual yet refined attire emphasized his rugged handsomeness, with each confident stride echoing his innate allure.

Jane subconsciously licked her lips as she savored his gorgeousness. 'Damn. He is very handsome today. Very tempting...' she bit her lower lip at that thought.

Meanwhile, Nathan also did the same. He also feasted on her appearance as if she was a delicious delicacy he couldn't wait to taste. He even got annoyed when he saw other men throwing lustful gazes at Jane.

He immediately marked his territory when he grabbed her by the waist, declaring to those men that she was his! He used his body to shield her away from unwanted gazes. Her sharp glare seemed to tell the others to back off. "This woman is already taken. She's mine!"

"Why are you here? I thought we were going to meet at the riverside?" Jane finally spoke up, breaking the silence.

"I can't wait to see you so I tracked down your location and followed you here." Nathan showed her his phone screen with a GPS signal. "Just leave your car here. I'll ask somebody to pick it up."

Jane let out a soft giggle before nodding her head in agreement. Soon, Nathan took her hand, intertwining their fingers as he led her to his car.

"Where is our first stop?" Jane asked him after settling down inside his car.

With a grin, Nathan ignited the car engine. "Take a guess," he mumbled, teasingly.

Jane shook her head in amusement, clueless about the answer. "Come on, spill the beans. Don't leave me hanging in suspense," she urged, playfully nudging him to reveal their first destination.

"A few years ago, when we were talking in the chat... you said you want to go to this place with me. The old but famous restaurant that is very well known here in Towerville City." Nathan couldn't help but smile as he reminisced his promise to her. "I promise to bring you here once we meet in person."

But Jane crumpled her face as she remembered something. "Wait. Don't tell me... you already brought Monica to that place, thinking I was her."

The smile on Nathan's lips disappeared instantly when he heard that. Jane was right. He brought Monica to that place before.

"Sigh. Yes. I did. Let's change our destination then." Nathan was feeling down recalling his mistake. He felt like he broke her promise with her because he brought another woman to that place, instead of her. It didn't feel special anymore.

"Hmm. It's alright. I've visited that place a long time ago. Several years after we lost our communication... I went to see that place several times, hoping to get a clue about your whereabouts. Of course, I failed. I don't have your picture," Jane revealed to him. Nathan was momentarily stunned when those words reached his ears, causing his heart to beat erratically. The woman seated beside him was undoubtedly his first love-the same woman he had nearly lost due to someone's malicious scheme.

But being by her side now, he made a solemn vow to bring joy into her life and make amends for all the pain and heartaches he had inflicted upon her in the past.

"For me to decide where we should go first, let me ask you first. Are you hungry or not? Do you want to eat heavy meals or just drink some coffee?" Nathan was aware that Jane loved to drink coffee... different varieties and flavors of coffee. But she loved 'dark roast coffee' the most.

During their virtual communications, Nathan was influenced by Jane to love coffee. Besides, they stayed up all night just playing online games so they needed it to boost their energy.

"Hmm... Let's go and grab some coffee. I'm still full. I don't want to eat heavy meals."

"Alright! Towerville Central Mall has the best-selling dark roast coffee." Nathan responded as he drove the car.

"Oh, you still remember it? That's my favorite." Jane's eyes sparkled in delight at the mention of her favorite coffee.

"Of course. I will never forget that because it's your favorite." He replied huskily, winking at her.

Jane gently nibbled her lower lip, a faint blush gracing her cheeks. 'What a smooth-talker! I'm quite amazed. Nate possesses this natural talent to charm a woman,' she thought to herself, admiring his ability to evoke such feelings in her.

It did not take long for them to reach their destination. As they entered the Yen's Cafe, they surprisingly bumped into someone they knew.

"Sis Jane!"

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"Cherry?"

Both women were surprised to see each other at the entrance. However, the most surprised one was none other than Spade. He stood frozen in his spot while darting his gaze back and forth between Jane and Nathan.

'Oh Shit! Should I run?' Spade thought to himself as he recognized Nathan Sparks as the Supreme Leader of Syphiruz Mafia while Jane as Phantomflake, the Leader of Phantom Assassin Guild.

Spade reflexively stepped back and was about to turn around and leave. But Cherry was very quick to grab his hand, pulling him to her side.

"Hi, Sis... and Nate! This is Spade. My hacker's friend. I believe you know him!" Cherry tried her best to hold her laughter.

She immediately noticed how scared and tensed Spade was when he bumped into Nathan and Jane. The words 'Running Away' were written all over his face. So before he could flee, she immediately captured his hand thus stopping him from leaving.

'Oh... Black Rose... Are you trying to get me killed today?'

Chapter 724 Join Us

"H-Hi..." Spade stammered as he greeted Jane and Nathan awkwardly. He had no choice. He couldn't leave because Cherry was gripping his elbow tightly. Now he regretted asking Cherry to go there. The restaurant was crowded so he asked her to go to the nearest Cafe since Hanabi and Alexander already left them.

Meanwhile, Nathan cast Spade a sharp deathly glare the moment he recognized him. 'He is one of the guys who took Jane before when she was still in a coma. A member of the Red Dragon Mafia!

"Why is he here with her?" Nathan queried aloud, seemingly disregarding Spade's presence. "He's affiliated with the opposing side, isn't he?" he continued, causing Spade to break out in a nervous sweat.

Jane and Cherry exchanged meaningful glances with one another before they burst out into a peal of laughter. "Yes, indeed."

'Damn?! Is this a set-up? Why do I feel like I am trapped here?' Spade didn't know what to do as he felt like prey being cornered by two big predators.

"Relax, Spade. We are not going to hurt you in public. Nice meeting you," Jane said teasingly as she extended her right hand for a handshake.

Feeling anxious, Spade reached out to accept Jane's hand however, before he could touch her, another strong hand grabbed his hand. Nathan prevented Spade from touching Jane's palm. His cold demeanor remained intact.

Spade emitted a faint groan when Nathan clasped his hand tightly. 'Ouch. Is he attempting to crush my fingers?' he wondered, feeling the pressure. Hastily, he pulled his hand away from Nathan's firm grip, trying to alleviate the discomfort.

"Let's go and grab some coffee inside," Jane said, pulling Nathan's hand as she gently dragged him toward the Cafe's counter.

"Are you mad?" Jane asked him in a low voice.

"Yes. My mood has been ruined upon seeing that guy." Nathan still held a grudge against Spade. They managed to take away Jane before because Spade broke their security system.

"Take it easy, Nate. Remember... our enemy today might become our strongest ally." Jane winked at him, trying to calm him down.

Nathan could only sigh in defeat. Jane managed to wash away his annoyance with just one charming smile from her.

"Are we joining them?" Nathan had a deep frown on his forehead when he raised that question.

"Yes, for the meantime. Besides, I want to check something on Spade. Did you know? He is your avid fan. Why don't you introduce yourself as Sizzling August? He might wag his tail once he learns your identity. Recruit him." Jane giggled at her own remarks.

Nathan scowled at that thought. "I don't need him. You and Black Rose are already on my side. And I'm more skillful than him."

"Hmm. Spade plays an important role in the Red Dragon Mafia. Why don't you try snatching their assets away?" Jane urged Nathan.

"But we are on a date. Just focus on me, not anyone else. You are leaving tomorrow." Nathan complained. He wanted to be alone with Jane.

"Just ten minutes of talking. Then I'm all yours." Jane pleaded with a gentle smile on her face.

"Okay. 10 minutes sharp. You can't extend, even just a second," Nathan strictly said.

"Aye, Boss!" Jane agreed, reassuring him.

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After taking their orders, the four of them settled down on one table. The atmosphere was a little bit awkward since Spade and Nathan were very silent. Spade tried his best to avoid meeting Nathan's gaze.

"So Spade... do you want to join us?" Jane broke the silence first.

"Huh? P-Pardon?" Spade asked her, confusion resurfacing in his eyes.

"Actually, I want to recruit you. I've heard you are very fond of Black Rose and Sizzling August. Why don't you team up with us?" Jane started to convince Spade.

Nathan and Cherry just stayed quiet, letting Jane do all the talk for the entire ten minutes. After that, Nathan would snatch her away from them.

Spade didn't know how he should react to her sudden offer. He smiled awkwardly and asked, "What do you mean by that? What team?"

"Work for us." Jane offered again with a determined look on her face.

Spade scratched his face anxiously before responding to her. "Is Sizzling August working under the Syphiruz Mafia?"

"No. He is not working under them," Jane paused for a moment.

Both Nathan and Cherry glanced at her skeptically at the same time. Was she trying to trick Spade again? Would she resort to lying just to convince Spade to join them?

"Because he is the leader of the Syphiruz Mafia," Jane added in the end. "He gives the command."

Nathan: "..."

Cherry: "..."

Spade: "Cough! Cough!"

Spade choked on his drink when he heard her last remarks. He gave Jane an 'are-you-kidding-me' look.

"W-What did you say?" Spade stammered once again as he shifted his gaze from Jane to Nathan.

Jane shrugged her shoulders and pointed her forefinger at Nathan. "The man sitting with us today is the real Sizzling August. To spell it out, Nathan is Sizzling August."

"Eh? What?! I thought Sizzling August was a woman?!" Spade blurted out exasperatedly. He couldn't believe this.

"Nate, why don't you prove to him that you are Sizzling August?" Jane softly encouraged Nathan, asking for a little bit of his cooperation.

Without further ado, Nathan gave Spade some secret codes that he only knew just to prove his identity.

Spade was flabbergasted by this shocking revelation. Who would have thought that his idol was the leader of their opposing organization? He had been dying to meet him in person. He had a strong respect for Sizzling August.

"So Spade? Are you interested in joining our team?" Jane asked him again.

Her voice snapped him out of his deep stupor. He gazed at her hesitantly and shook his head. "I can't."

"Though I am fond of both Black Rose and Sizzling August... My answer is no. I will never betray my brothers." Spade was referring to Alexander and Jack.

"Go. You can kill me now." Spade closed his eyes. His loyalty remained to Alexander. No one could change his mind.

Nathan and Cherry cast a glance at Jane. He pointed his finger to his wristwatch, reminding Jane of the time.

"Sigh. I'm not asking you to betray your brothers. I'm just offering

you a collaboration to work with us. With my team... not the

Syphiruz Mafia. When I said my team... it's composed of Sizzling August, Black Rose, and me." Jane had a different plan for Spade. She saw his great potential. She didn't want the King Stallion Mafia to benefit from Spade's skills. As much as possible, they should cut down the connection of King Stallion with their possible allies.

"Eh? Are you serious?" Spade's expression suddenly changed when he heard that. His curiosity was piqued. "What kind of project?"

"An Operation to bring down the King," Jane meaningfully said. She was referring to the King Stallion Mafia.

"Times-up!" Nathan could no longer wait as he interjected. "Let's go!" He stood up and held Jane's hand.

"You can tell your answer to Black Rose later. We have to go now." Jane said goodbye to them.

They hadn't left the table yet when someone spoke from behind. "Nate!!!"

The four of them turned to the source of that voice only to see two familiar figures- Stephen and Aiden.

Chapter 725 Just Friends

It was truly unexpected for Aiden and Stephen to run into Nathan. They thought he was busy with work. Who would have thought they would see him not wearing his usual black suit and tuxedo in this place?

At first, the two were arguing about whether the guy just looked like Nathan. But they confirmed it when they saw Jane standing next to him.

Why are they together? That was the first question that came to Stephen's mind when he saw them.

Meanwhile, Aiden dragged Stephen toward the table and called Nathan's name to catch his attention.

"Nate!"

Four people turned in his direction. Aiden was even more surprised to see Cherry sitting at the table with another guy.

'Who is that guy?' Aiden asked himself inwardly, giving Spade a sharp glare.

Spade became aware of Aiden's hostile glare directed at him. 'Why am I sensing such negative vibes? If murderous glances could inflict harm, I'd be twice deceased by now. Once from Nathan and the other from this new guy,' he mused, feeling the intense and unwelcoming atmosphere surrounding him.

Aiden shifted his gaze to Cherry. "What's the occasion? Why are the four of you gathered here?" he could no longer hold his curiosity so he asked them directly.

Nathan, on the other hand, had conflicting thoughts in mind as he glanced at Stephen. He was worried about what his best friend would feel once he found out he was already dating Jane. Stephen confessed to him that he had feelings for Jane.

He had the urge to let go of Jane's hand so that Stephen would not notice. However, it was already too late. Stephen had seen their entangled hands. His expression changed for a few seconds. But Stephen didn't dare to show those emotions. He kept his composure as he greeted Nathan and Jane.

"I didn't expect to see you both here. Are you leaving already?" Stephen asked Nathan but his eyes were on Jane.

"Yes. We are about to leave." Nathan simply replied.

"Is this a double date?" Aiden failed to hold his tongue once more. He just opened a topic Nathan didn't want to talk about right now. Jane didn't feel the need to hide this from them so she just responded with a "Yes. We are on a date. How about the two of you?" Jane just wanted to lighten the mood so she teased Stephen and Aiden.

However, her answer added more tension and awkwardness to the atmosphere surrounding them.

"You rejected me several times... and now... you are dating this guy!" Aiden's heart was suddenly filled with jealousy. His tone had a hint of accusation. "I get it now. You just simply don't like me."

Cherry and Spade were both taken aback by Aiden's last remarks.

'Uh-oh!. I shouldn't have said that. I think someone is being jealous here! Jane thought to herself as she bit her lower lip. She darted her gaze back and forth between Aiden and Cherry. She could sense that Cherry suddenly felt awkward and uncomfortable because of Aiden's statement.

He was just misunderstanding this. Cherry and Spade were just having a friendly date, not a romantic date. But Jane didn't want to defend Cherry. She should explain this to Aiden herself. Being nosy was not a cup of her tea so Jane would just let her friend handle this situation.

Without waiting for Cherry's response, Aiden walked out of the Cafe. His ego was hurt... not just his ego... because his heart was also in pain. Furthermore, he felt so defeated today. Many women wanted to date him but the woman he liked didn't want to. Aiden thought the world was so unfair.

"What's your plan with him?" Jane murmured to Cherry, gesturing subtly toward Aiden, who was striding out of the Cafe.

"I... I..." Cherry faltered, at a loss for words, her gaze fixed on Aiden's departing figure.

"Is he someone you're interested in?" Spade abruptly interjected, directing his question at Cherry.

Ignoring Spade's query, Cherry let out a heavy sigh, torn between the impulse to follow Aiden and remaining seated. She hesitated, unable to bring herself to chase after him.

"I don't think I should follow him. We're just friends," Cherry muttered, averting her gaze.
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Meanwhile, Nathan felt compelled to address the situation with Stephen.

"Do you mind if we have a quick chat? I need to speak to Stephen." Nathan turned to Jane. Their initial plan to leave had been disrupted by the unexpected arrival of Stephen and Aiden.

'I owe him an explanation, Nathan resolved, meeting Stephen's gaze with determination.

"Sure, take your time," Jane permitted him.

Stephen followed Nathan outside the Cafe, seeking a secluded spot away from Jane to converse.

"Steph... I'm sorry for not telling you sooner-" Nathan began, but

Stephen cut him off abruptly.

"Have you moved on from Abigail?" Stephen inquired with a stern expression on his face.

Nathan paused for a moment, analyzing his feelings. "Yes. I've moved on."

"Are you dating Jane... for real? No ulterior motive?" Stephen threw him another question. He was like a father interrogating his daughter's suitor or boyfriend.

"Yes. We decided to start afresh. We are done fixing and clearing the misunderstandings between us. And we are both attracted to each other. I know you have feelings for her... but I can't stop mine." Nathan confessed to him. "I'm sorry, Stephen. I didn't want to hurt your feelings or betray you. But I can't stay away from her."

"Do you love her?" Stephen just kept asking Nathan.

"Y-Yes. I think so," he stammered in response.

Stephen furrowed his brows at his answer. "Then why the hesitation? Why can't you be straightforward? Be brave, Nate. Have conviction! If you truly love her, don't apologize to me. Demonstrate your feelings and intentions."

"You know what... I'm the coward here... I can't even confess my feelings to her..." Stephen added with a bitter smile, admitting his own hesitation.

"Don't misunderstand... I am not hesitating. It's just that... I still feel unworthy of loving her. All the wrongdoings I've done to her are still a heavy burden in my heart. But I know... those things should not hinder me from being with her. I'm going to make amends for all my mistakes and I assure you... I'll take good care of her. I'll protect her."

Stephen felt relieved to hear those words from Nathan. He could sense his sincerity. "I'm good with that as long as you can make her happy and protect her. I don't want to see her cry... and miserable."

I've seen her at her worst. I don't want her to suffer anymore. She deserves to be happy with the man she loves." Stephen already conceded. Her one-sided love would always remain a secret. He didn't have to confess anymore as he didn't want to ruin his friendship with Jane.

"I'll just be happy to be her friend... for life. I'll support both of you." Stephen meant every word. He held Nathan's shoulder, gently patting him.

"Thank you, Steph. I owe you a lot. I'm glad that you were by her side when she needed a friend. Because of you... she was able to continue her life despite her ugly past. You became her support system when her world was crumbling. I'm jealous of you... because of that."

Chapter 726 Movie Date

"What did you and Stephen talk about earlier?" Jane asked Nathan inside the car. The two continued their date after parting ways with their friends.

"It's something personal. I can't share it with you," Nathan said teasingly.

"Alright. I won't force you. Besides, I have a high respect for Stephen. He is your best friend and also a good friend of mine." Jane could only smile at her remarks.

"Indeed. He is a good person. We are so lucky to have him." Nathan's burden had been lifted off his chest after talking to Stephen. He didn't have to worry about Stephen. He accepted everything and he was even supportive of them.

"Where should we head next?" Jane's eagerness to have an uninterrupted date with Nathan was palpable. Their time together had been cut short by their friends' interruption earlier, and now she was determined to seize the chance to enjoy every moment alone with him.

"How about a movie date in a Cinema Theater? Normal couples do this." Nathan suggested.

"I would love to. For now, we are just an ordinary couple!" Jane responded cheerfully. She couldn't hide her excitement.

The two chose a romantic movie entitled "His Mistress Is His Ex-Wife". It was a story of a rejected wife, betrayed by her husband. But with a new identity, she returned to take everything back and get vengeance against her scheming husband and his accomplices.

Author's note [This is a teaser for my upcoming book. Wait for it, my dear readers. Another Revenge Sequel.] (Author winking)

Jane and Nathan entered the dimly lit cinema lobby, the faint scent of popcorn lingering in the air. As they scanned the seating options, Nathan suggested, "How about that secluded corner over there?" He motioned toward an area at the back of the theater, away from the bustling crowd.

Jane's eyes brightened with agreement. "That sounds perfect."

They navigated through the rows of seats until they reached the secluded corner. The area was less crowded, offering them a cozy and private space to enjoy the movie. Nathan held out his hand, allowing Jane to take the seat closest to the wall. He settled in next to her, feeling the warmth of her presence beside him.

As the lights dimmed and the film began, Jane leaned closer to Nathan, their hands intertwining with each other. The movie's soundtrack enveloped them, creating a cinematic world exclusively for the two of them. In the darkness, they shared intimate glances and whispered comments. "What do you think about the guy?"

"I hate him." Nathan coldly responded.

"Why?" Jane asked again, letting out a soft giggle. "Because he is so dumb and foolish. He hurts the woman he likes for revenge. And it is too late when he realizes that she is important to her. She's gone." Nathan truthfully gave his opinion. They were still in the first part of the movie.

Jane was about to say a word but Nathan's additional remarks made her stop. "I can relate with him."

After saying those words, Nathan turned to her, gazing at her intently. His eyes mirrored his feelings—guilt, regret, hope, and something more. "But I want him to have a second chance with her... for him to do the right thing and correct his mistakes."

"If I were him, I would do anything just to get her forgiveness... and have a fresh start with her."

Jane was at a loss for words. She was touched by Nathan's words as if he was referring to her. It seemed that Nathan was no longer talking about the movie but their story that was somehow similar to them.

Their eyes locked for several seconds, conveying similar emotions from within their hearts. At that certain moment, the romantic ambiance of the film combined with the cozy intimacy of the secluded corner sparked the intimate connection between them.

Feeling the magnetic pull between them, Nathan's heart raced with the desire to lean closer. "I wanna kiss you here, right now," he softly mumbled, his gaze fell on her tempting red lips. Jane didn't have to say a word. The burning desire in her eyes already conveyed her response to him. As the silent understanding passed between them, the time seemed to slow down. Nathan leaned in slightly, closing the gap between them while Jane's heart was pounding with anticipation. 'So is this how a normal couple feels like when sitting in a dimly lit cinema like this?'

As Nathan's breath grazed her cheek, she felt a surge of warmth engulfing her. Without words, they shared a fleeting, tender glance, their proximity drawing them closer. In the soft ambiance of the theater, amidst the flickering light from the screen, their lips met in a gentle, tentative kiss. Nathan held her chin as he deepened the kiss, his tongue exploring the inside of her mouth. She tasted wonderful. 'She has become my addiction... her lips... her scent... her body... and her warmth. I want all of her.'

Jane returned his kiss with equal intensity. She just found herself grabbing on his shirt as he tugged her closer to him, her own tongue playing with his in a synchronize movement. He licked her... sucking her and tasting her. He feasted on her lips as if there were no tomorrow.

The two of them were panting the moment they broke their long passionate kiss, their eyes never left each other's face. "I... can no longer hold myself..." Nathan mumbled. In one swift move, Nathan rose from his seat, grabbing Jane's hand.

Jane just giggled, obediently following him. Nathan guided her out of the cinema, pulling her toward the parking lot.

"We haven't finished the movie yet," Jane said helplessly.

"Forget about the movie. I can't focus on kissing you there. I want to have some privacy with you," Nathan complained. He just wanted to protect Jane from people's malicious gazes.

"Hmm, Fine, Boss. Understood!"

They arrived at their car, and as Nathan courteously opened the door to the front passenger seat, Jane unexpectedly headed for the backseat. Confusion flickered across Nathan's face as he was about to question her choice when suddenly, Jane pulled him towards her.

With a resounding thud, the car door closed, enveloping them in a secluded sanctuary. Before Nathan could gather his thoughts, Jane's hands gently cupped his face, pulling him into a passionate kiss. Their lips melded together in an unexpected but fervent embrace, shutting out the world around them.

"This... is my reward... for you," Jane whispered sensually in between their kisses.

With Nathan reclining against the passenger seat, Jane maneuvered herself onto his lap, settling in as she deepened their passionate exchange. Her lips fervently met his, igniting an intense connection that seemed to transcend time. As their kisses intensified, she traced her fingers gently along his jawline, savoring each moment of their intimacy.

Straddling him, she pressed her body against his, relishing the warmth of their closeness. Their breaths mingled in the confined space of the car, enveloping them in a cocoon of desire and longing. Lost in the fervor of the moment, they surrendered to the intense emotions, reveling in the privacy and seclusion that allowed them to explore their affections away from prying eyes.

Chapter 727 Godfather's Invitation

[At Alexander's Condo Unit...]

"Is everything alright? You have been quiet since yesterday. Are you still mad at me for setting you up with that girl?" Spade approached Alexander who was sitting quietly on the balcony.

He put his palms together and faced Alexander. "Forgive me already, Alex. I didn't mean to offend you. It's just that I had a deal with Sizzling August and Black Rose."

Alexander's expression turned colder after being reminded of yesterday's incident. He had been bothered by Hanabi's revelation about Monica's new identity.

"That woman with Black Rose is a member of the Sawada Clan. Didn't you recognize her?" Alexander asked Spade in disbelief.

"Huh? She looks familiar. Who is she?" Spade wasn't paying attention to the other woman since he was focused on Cherry.

"Hanabi."

Spade's eyes widened at the mention of that name. Hanabi was the infamous commander of the Sawada Clan. She was well known in Country J's underground world.

"Oh my god! For real! So they are indeed working together. I also met Sizzling August. It turned out he was the Supreme leader of Syphiruz. I thought we already destroyed the alliance between the Syphiruz and the Sawada Clan. How come they are still working together?" "Hey, what's happening here?" Jack joined the conversation upon hearing Spade's last words. He had just returned with drinks for the three of them. "I heard you guys had a date yesterday. Fill me in on the details." Jack placed the beers on the table and settled into an empty chair.

"Let me tell you, yesterday was wild! I ran into Phantomflake and the Supreme Leader. Hanabi from the Sawada Clan dragged Alexander out of the Cafe. I'm dying to know what they talked about. But Alex won't spill anything," Spade complained to Jack, hoping to enlist his help in getting Alexander to open up.

Jack simply glanced at Alexander, meeting his gaze. "So Bro, tell us. Did something significant happen? You have been in a bad mood since yesterday. What is bothering you?"

After being pestered by his subordinates who were also his friends, Alexander finally gave in. "Hanabi informed me that Monica is alive."

Spade: "What?!"

Jack: "Huh? How could that be possible?"

"They employed a Stand-in who ended up dying on her behalf. Moreover, she took on Helena's identity, likely through plastic surgery. And she's actually in a relationship with Vincent, not Nathan. They managed to deceive him too," Spade elaborated, shedding light on the complicated deception.

"How cruel and despicable," Spade mumbled in disbelief.

Jack's face twisted in dismay upon hearing this revelation. "So, you're saying the King Stallion Mafia manipulated us to sow discord between our Dragon Lord and the Supreme Leader? They played us for fools!" he exclaimed, feeling a surge of anger and frustration at being used by their adversaries.

"What is your plan now, Alex? Are you going to break the alliance with the King Stallion Mafia?" Spade asked him curiously.

"No. I can't do that. We have rules. No one can easily break our alliance unless both parties will agree. You know that. We signed a special agreement with them. We will bear the consequences once we betray the alliance." Alexander reminded them.

"Sigh. So what are we going to do now?" Spade heaved a deep sigh.

"This is no longer my war. We should go back to Country J. We don't have business in this country anymore. Just let them kill each other." Alexander was referring to King Stallion Mafia and Syphiruz Mafia.

Jack felt disappointed when he heard Alexander's decision. Someone flashed in his mind—Kathleen. If they would go back, then he wouldn't see her often. He wanted to win her heart and get her affection. Jack was now torn between his duty and his personal desire.

"Alex... May I—" Jack wanted to ask him permission to let him stay there for a few months. However, he stopped midway as he hesitated. He didn't want to be selfish. His priority was still the Red Dragon Mafia and Alexander.

"What is it?" Alexander urged him to continue.

But Jack shook his head as he smiled. "Oh. It's nothing. So when are we going back?"

"Tomorrow," Alexander firmly said.

Jack: "Okay. Got it."

Spade: "Well noted, Boss!"

Both men hesitated to depart from Country M, each with their own motives for staying. However, they found themselves compelled to follow Alexander, their esteemed leader. It was evident that Alexander required the support of his friends during this time, even if he didn't openly express it. There was an unspoken understanding that Monica's influence had deeply affected Alexander, and his comrades sensed his internal turmoil.

It did not take long when silence overtook them. Sipping their respective beers, their minds ventured into different realms of thought, each lost in their own contemplations.

Ring! Ring!

Alexander's ringtone broke the silence when he received a phone call coming from Kazuki, the godfather's right-hand man. Spade and Jack just stared in his direction silently. Alexander motioned for them not to speak as he pressed the answer button.

"Mr. Kazuki, it's been a while. I've been eagerly awaiting your call," he quipped, his tone tinged with a hint of amusement. He had been waiting for the Sawada Clan to contact him, hoping they would finally accept his proposition to form an alliance.

"The godfather wants to invite you tonight. We will have a special gathering in one of our branch headquarters. Will you be able to join us? We are traveling this morning going back to Country J." Kazuki relayed Mr. Hiroshi's message to Alexander.

Alexander's eyes lit up when he heard that. His mood suddenly improved because of this. It seemed that the Godfather was now willing to acknowledge his organization.

"Absolutely! I wouldn't miss it. An invitation from the Godfather is a rare honor," Alexander replied promptly, his eagerness evident as he accepted the invitation without any hesitation.

"It's good to hear that. However, there's one more request. Can you fulfill it?" Kazuki presented this additional condition indirectly, implying that Alexander's presence depended on meeting this requirement if he genuinely wished to attend.

"What request?" Alexander's curiosity was piqued.

"Could you also bring the Leader of the King Stallion Mafia with you? Our godfather is aware of your alliance with him. He wishes to learn more about your new ally, or else he might consider whether to maintain our relationship with you or sever ties." The statement carried an undertone of a warning, but Alexander comprehended its significance. The Sawada Clan was meticulous in forging alliances, wanting to ensure reliability and trustworthiness in those they associated with.

"Okay. I'll try to invite him. I'll let you know if he can come." Alexander's mood changed once again at the mention of Vincent and the King Stallion Mafia. For the sake of attending this special gathering, he must convince Vincent to join him. He wasn't certain if Vincent would agree.

After talking to Kazuki, Alexander immediately called Vincent, setting aside his negative feelings toward this guy.

"Why the sudden call, Dragon Lord?" Vincent asked, a hint of curiosity lacing his tone as he picked up the phone.

"Are you free today? If yes, do you want to join me and meet the Godfather in Country J? He wants to invite both of us to their special gathering," Alexander consulted Vincent.

To his surprise, Vincent didn't think twice as he said, "Yes. I'm going there."

He hadn't anticipated Vincent's immediate agreement without any inquiries. This decision piqued Alexander's curiosity. Why the swift compliance?

Unbeknownst to Alexander, Vincent's rapid agreement stemmed from a desire to meet Mr. Hiroshi in person and make a lasting impression. And the reason behind this was none other than Jane. Vincent aimed to make a favorable impression on Jane's father, Mr. Hiroshi.

"Alright. We can fly together using my private plane." Alexander suggested. "Will you bring your woman with you?" he subconsciously asked. He wanted to know if Monica was coming with him so that he could prepare himself.

"No. I won't." Vincent promptly responded. When his business was related to Jane, Vincent wouldn't let Monica join him. As much as possible, he didn't want those two women to cross paths with each other. Alexander felt relieved when he heard Vincent's reply. "Okay. Much better. See you later then?"

"Sure. Thank you for letting me know." Vincent smiled from the other line.

"I have no choice. The godfather specifically mentioned you." Alexander informed him.

"Oh. That's interesting. I can't wait to meet him."

Chapter 728 Agreement Between the Two Old Men

Maximilian Carlsen was slowly recovering. However, he didn't have the will to continue living after finding out his real daughter was gone. He was no longer talking to anyone. He didn't have an appetite to eat. He won't allow anyone to see him, including Monica.

I've been so foolish. I failed to protect my daughter. Whom should I blame for this?' He asked himself.

He had to admit that he had no power to fight Vincent and Monica. He was just a pawn in their games. "I should have just died. I can't continue living like this." Maximilian was venting out his frustration. He was lost in his thoughts when someone knocked outside the door. He didn't say a word. He just stared at the closed door blankly. After a few seconds, the door slid open and an unexpected visitor entered his room.

"Chairman Xu? Why are you here?" Maximilian wasn't expecting Old Man Xu's arrival.

"I'm visiting an old foe who is sick." Old Man Xu replied with a straight face.

Maximilian looked down, avoiding Old Man Xu's gaze. "Are you happy now? I am miserable right now. I lost everything... my most precious daughter is dead because of your son... Nathan."

"I've heard it. But why are you blaming my son for her death?" Old Man Xu wanted to defend Nathan.

"Because of him, my daughter made a crazy deal with that wicked witch. She was even willing to give up everything including her real identity just to be with him. Her love for your son had caused her demise."

Old Man Xu's forehead creased with concern. "My son is not to be held responsible for this. His charm and good looks are innate qualities. Blaming him for your daughter's decisions is unjust. It was her own volition. My son didn't force her."

"In any case, I am not here to argue with you. My purpose is to inquire about Vincent and Monica. What do you know about their plans? Are you aware that Vincent is my biological son? What happened to his mother?" Old Man Xu would like to know everything. Fortunately, Maximilian was very cooperative with him.

"Indeed, I am well aware that Vincent is your son. His target is you and your family... specifically your son, Nathan. You gave everything to Nathan while you denied Vincent's existence. The resentment he harbors runs profound, fueled by the disparity in treatment between him and his half-brother. His quest for retribution extends beyond personal grievances- it's a pursuit for justice on behalf of his deceased mother." Maximilian started to reveal what he knew.

"How did she die?" He asked curiously.

"She is terminally ill. But she didn't die of natural causes. She committed suicide after meeting you. That's what I heard from Vincent's uncle."

Old Man Xu was taken aback when he heard that. He didn't wish for her to die. The gravity of the situation weighed heavily on him, and a newfound comprehension dawned within him regarding the roots of Vincent's seething grudge.

"How are they going to do their revenge?" Old Man Xu asked him again.

Maximilian let out a sarcastic laugh. "Their revenge has started a long time ago. Vincent wants your son to experience being alone and lonely... abandoned by his loved ones. He is hell-bent on taking away everything from your son. He is obsessed with Nathan."

Old Man Xu fell silent, his fists clenched tightly. The conflict between his two sons had arisen due to his own mistake, and he felt the weight of responsibility for the discord within his family.

Despite his sincere desire to make amends and reconcile with Vincent, the words from Maximilian painted a daunting picture. It seemed that winning Vincent's forgiveness would be a challenging task.

"One last question... this is with regards to my grandson, Ethan. Is Monica his biological mother... or is your daughter, Helena?" Maximilian's expression changed at the mention of Ethan's name. He didn't have any idea who was Ethan's biological mother. But when Old Man Xu mentioned Helena might be Ethan's biological mother, his eyes gleamed with hope. What if... this young child was his grandson... and the child of his deceased daughter? NO(V)ELN(E)XT.C(O)M

"Judging by your expression, it seems you're just as in the dark as I am. Well, there's one way to get to the bottom of this. I'm considering a DNA test. Can you assist me with this? I'll need DNA samples from Monica, including your daughter's."

"Sure, I'm curious about this too. I'll lend a hand," volunteered Maximilian, expressing his willingness to assist Old Man Xu.

"Excellent. I appreciate that. I'll be eagerly awaiting the results," Old Man Xu responded, extending his right hand to solidify their agreement with a handshake. Maximilian accepted the gesture, sealing their deal.

"Remember, you must keep this from Vincent and Monica." Old Man Xu reminded him.

"I know what to do." Maximilian finally got his motivation back. This was the least he could do for Helena.

Upon finalizing the arrangement, Old Man Xu discreetly slipped away from Maximilian's ward, ensuring that his departure went unnoticed. However, his visit didn't escape Helena's radar. She had eyes and ears in the hospital, monitoring Maximilian Carlsen.

"What?! Nathan's father visited him! What did they talk about?" Monica asked her underling. She couldn't trust Maximilian especially now that he learned about Helena's death. She was very cautious of the old man.

What if he discloses something to that old man?!' Monica had a nagging feeling about this.

"If he dares betray Vincent and me... I'll kill him myself," Monica swore to herself as she marched into Maximilian's ward.

She barged inside the room, without knocking. But Maximilian just ignored her presence. He pretended to be asleep.

"Mr. Carlsen, did someone visit you today?" Monica inquired, her tone lacking politeness. She even shook his body to rouse him from his so-called 'slumber.

Maximilian turned in her direction as he opened his eyes. He must act naturally in order not to raise any suspicion. He had an important task to do.

"Yes. Someone visited me. It's Chairman Xu." he replied honestly. If he lied, Monica would suspect him more.

"Why? What did he tell you?" Monica began interrogating him.

"He just asked me about Vincent and his mother."

Monica squinted her eyes. She couldn't tell if Maximilian was lying or not. But he was so composed.

"So how did you respond to his query?" She probed.

"Are you worried I disclosed something to him?" Maximilian asked her back, raising his eyebrow. He didn't like the way she was treating him. "Don't worry. I hate him and his son more than I hate you." he tried his best to sound convincing. "My daughter died because of Nathan Sparks."

Monica just smirked when she heard that. "I'm glad you know. If you have to blame someone for Helena's death... it should be Nathan Sparks and Phantomflake. But don't worry. Vincent and I will help you avenge Helena's death."

Maximilian chose to keep quiet. Luckily, Monica's questioning was interrupted by Vincent's phone call. Monica excused herself as she answered his call.

"Hello, Babe. Where are you? Are you not coming here today? I'm a little bit bored. I need to see you. Please... come here," Monica tried to sound pitiful as she begged him.

"I'm sorry, Babe. I have an urgent thing to do. I'm flying to Country J with the Dragon Lord. I just called to let you know. I'm leaving now." Vincent informed her.

Monica's eyes widened in disbelief. She was truly disappointed. She wasn't informed ahead. "I want to come with you!" She stubbornly said.

"No. you have to stay, Babe. Please take good care of Mia on my behalf. I'll compensate you once I'm back," Vincent consoled her.

"Sigh! Fine! I'm upset. But you must pacify me once you return," Monica childishly demanded.

"Yes. I promise," Vincent reassured her.

"When are you coming back?" Monica asked him again.

"I'm not sure. Maybe the day after tomorrow. It depends. I'll let you know." Vincent didn't want to disclose any further details regarding his travel.

After the call concluded, Monica's expression soured. She sensed that something was amiss with Vincent lately.

"Why do I get the feeling that he's hiding something from me?" she mused to herself.

She was trying to figure out something when her underling approached her. "Madam, the overseas parcel has arrived!"

Monica's face brightened up after hearing that. "Yes! My lethal weapon is finally here!"

Chapter 729 Getting Drunk So Early

[At Aiden's Place...]

Aiden was sulking in his room the whole morning. He didn't have the motivation to work after what transpired yesterday. 'Is this what they called love sickness?' Aiden muttered to himself.

Feeling a little bit bored doing nothing, Aiden contacted Stephen. He needed a drinking buddy today. He hadn't moved on yet from Cherry's rejection. Then he saw her dating another man. That was so unfair.

"Hey Steph, hope I'm not interrupting anything. If you've got some free time, how about swinging by my place? I'm thinking we could use a bit of unwinding, you know? Let's crack open a few bottles and enjoy our day," Aiden warmly extended an invitation to his best friend.

He was supposed to go bar-hopping last night but he was still not in the mood. In the end, Aiden just stayed at home, doing a movie marathon.

Meanwhile, Stephen didn't reject Aiden's invitation. Just like Aiden, he needed something to escape from his loneliness. He was still in the middle of moving on, accepting the fact that he couldn't be the man for Jane.

"I'll go there. I think I need some booze today," Stephen replied.

"Oh great! I'll wait for you!" Aiden immediately got off his bed and went to his bar counter, preparing for their drinks.

After a few minutes, Stephen arrived, ringing the doorbell.

"Right timing, Bro. Come. Let's drink." Aiden handed him the canned beer as they both settled down in his living room.

"To be completely honest, the reason I asked you to come here today is because, well, I've been giving it some serious thought... I think I need some counseling." Aiden started the conversation.

Stephen paused for a moment, casting Aiden with a strange look. "Are you serious?"

Aiden pouted his lips while nodding his head. "I just lost my confidence as a man," he declared exasperatedly.

"What are you talking about?" Stephen didn't know whether to laugh or not. "Sigh! Don't give me such a look. I'm serious. What should I do? Cherry just simply doesn't like me. How can I forget her?" Aiden complained, looking so pitiful. "Do you think this is my karma for being a Casanova?"

Stephen responded with a gentle, reassuring chuckle, his hand coming to rest on Aiden's shoulder in a comforting gesture. "Hey now, don't tell me you're throwing in the towel already? This is the first time

I've seen you being problematic because of a woman. I think Cherry makes a significant impact in your life."

"Do you think she is the one for you?" Stephen asked Aiden with a teasing smile on his lips.

"Bro! I'm asking you how to forget her. Yet you are asking me if she's the one for me. Do you want me to be heartbroken for so long?" Aiden glared at Stephen.

"Even if she doesn't share the same feelings for me, I won't attempt to erase her from my thoughts or my heart. She's too precious to be forgotten," he openly expressed, his sentiments directed towards Jane. His words held a depth of emotion, revealing the sincerity of his feelings for Jane.

Aiden's ceaseless chatter came to an abrupt halt as Stephen's words reached his ears. Glancing over at his friend, Aiden discerned a subtle sadness in Stephen's eyes. It became evident that, on this particular day, Aiden was not the sole bearer of a broken heart.

Observing the melancholy in Stephen's expression, Aiden decided to address the unspoken turmoil. "Is it Jane and Nathan that have left you feeling heartbroken? Do you genuinely have feelings for her?" Aiden posed the question directly, seeking to unravel the complexities of his friend's emotions.

A faint smile played on Stephen's lips as he took a thoughtful sip of his beer. His response was measured and sincere, reflecting the depth of his sentiments. "It's painful, but I'm genuinely happy for her. I've witnessed the positive changes and significant improvements in Jane's relationship with Nathan. All I want is for her to find happiness, even if I'm not the reason for it."

Aiden couldn't help but sigh, expressing a mixture of understanding and defeat. "You're quite the martyr, Bro," he remarked, acknowledging the selflessness embedded in Stephen's sentiments.

"But you also deserve to be happy," Aiden added. "You have been a good friend to both of us. I also wish that you find your happiness, Stephen." This time Aiden was the one who patted Stephen's back.

"You don't have to worry about my happiness. This is part of growing up." Stephen raised his canned beer for a toast.

The two continued drinking for five hours until they got drunk. They just wanted to unwind. They were in a messy state when Kathleen showed up. It turned out, Aiden texted her in his drunken state. He told her about Stephen being heartbroken. When Kathleen saw the message, she immediately headed to Aiden's place.

"Oh my. Both of you are such a mess!" Kathleen gasped in surprise.

Empty beer bottles and crumpled snack wrappers littered the room. Aiden, with an unsteady grin on his face, attempted to stand up and hug his cousin who had just arrived.

"Kath! W-welcome! I've been waiting for you," Aiden slurred with tipsy enthusiasm, his words slightly muddled and punctuated by a hiccup.

Stephen, equally disheveled, leaned back on the couch, chuckling uncontrollably. "Aiden is drunk."

Kathleen narrowed her eyes at both men. "Both of you are drunk." She had the urge to reprimand the two. She didn't expect that she would see their messy and drunken state upon her arrival.

"Don't get near me. I'll punch you!" Kathleen warned Aiden when he tried to embrace her. Meeting Kathleen's deathly glare, Aiden reflexively stepped back.

"Bro, my cousin is scary!" Aiden stumbled when he ran in Stephen's direction, seeking protection. Both friends erupted into laughter while Kathleen shook her head helplessly.

"I'm bringing you home." Kathleen declared as she approached Stephen who was sitting on the couch.

Aiden giggled once more. "Yes. Send him home. Take good care of him, Kath. If you can do it, heal his broken heart! Hahaha!"

Stephen, with a mischievous glint in his eyes, grabbed the couch pillow and threw it toward Aiden.

Thud!

He hit Aiden's face, sending him sprawling on the floor. "Ouch! That's so harsh. Bro!" He complained.

Kathleen could only massage her temples. She felt like she had to babysit two drunken adults. She took care of Aiden first. Kathleen guided her cousin to his bedroom. "Naughty guy, you should sleep!"

"I don't want to sleep. I want to drink more. I'm not yet drunk!" Aiden stubbornly said, childishly turning left and right on his bed.

Kathleen smacked his forehead and said, "Behave! Otherwise, I'll tell Uncle you skipped work today just to get drunk. You will be grounded for a month."

With her threat, Aiden stopped whining and tried to behave. After tucking Aiden on his bed, Kathleen returned to the living room. Stephen remained seated on the couch, his laughter subsiding into a goofy smile.

"Alright, it's time for some water," Kathleen declared, watching Stephen helplessly. She disappeared into the kitchen and returned with a glass of water, placing them in front of intoxicated Stephen.

"Drink this to sober up a little. I'll send you home in a while." She handed over the glass of water before sitting next to Stephen.

As he sipped on the water, Kathleen couldn't help but shake her head in amusement. "You guys really know how to party... I mean, getting this drunk so early. It's not even nighttime yet," she teased, earning a sheepish grin from Stephen.

Intent on cleaning up the messy living room, Kathleen moved toward the scattered bottles and discarded snack wrappers. Just as she was about to immerse herself in the task, Stephen's hand suddenly closed around hers. Startled, she turned to look at him, her heart quickening its pace against her chest. 'Why? Why is Stephen looking at me so intently? What is he going to do?'

Caught in the unexpected moment, Kathleen's mind raced with a cascade of thoughts. The air seemed charged with a subtle tension, leaving her wondering about the nature of Stephen's sudden focus. 'Is he going to kiss me?' she pondered, her imagination running wild with the possibilities.

Before she knew it, Stephen pulled her into a warm hug.

Kathleen: "..."

Badum! Badum! Badum!

Her heartbeat raced even faster.

His Mistress is His Ex-Wife

Chapter 730 I Wish You Were Here

Badum! Badum! Badum!

Kathleen's heart was running wild against her chest, her face blushing. She didn't expect that Stephen would suddenly hug her.

'Why? Why is he hugging me?' Her eyes filled with hope, thinking she had a chance to get noticed by Stephen. If he was heartbroken, then she might be able to fill the emptiness in his heart.

"Steph? Are you okay?" Kathleen finally found her voice.

"Kath... I'm sorry," Stephen apologized to her out of the blue.

She was puzzled as to why Stephen was apologizing to her. "For what?"

"For not reciprocating your feelings. I know how it feels to have an unrequited love. You can stop now... Kath. You deserve to have someone who will love you back."

Kathleen found herself rendered speechless, her thoughts spiraling in a whirlwind of confusion. She hadn't anticipated this. How did Stephen uncover her emotions? She had never confessed her feelings for him. Was it too obvious, or had Aiden's loose lips inadvertently laid bare her secret affections for Stephen?

'I'm gonna beat my stupid cousin!' Kathleen complained inwardly.

"How? How did you find out?" She mustered her courage up to raise this question.

Stephen broke the hug and fixed his gaze on her. "I've known all along, but I tried my best to ignore it. I didn't want you to get hurt."

"Is there truly nothing you feel for me? Won't you consider giving us a chance?" She swallowed her pride as she asked him directly. She wanted to hear it from Stephen.

Stephen reached out, his hand touching her face. "I can't... there is one woman occupying my heart. I can't give you false hope, Kath. And I won't ask you to wait for me."

Kathleen's hope was shattered instantly by Stephen's words. But she could understand that Stephen was just being honest with her. She couldn't blame him.

"Okay. Enough already. My fragile heart might not be able to handle your next words. Come. I'll send you home." Kathleen wanted to end this conversation, assisting Stephen to stand up.

Stephen sobered up a little as they reached his clinic. He asked her to drop him off there instead of taking him home.

"Don't tell me you are still going to work?" Kathleen asked him as he alighted from her car.

"My clinic is my silent sanctuary. I want to spend a few hours here before going home." There was a faint smile on Stephen's face as he said those words.

Stephen was about to enter his clinic when Kathleen stopped him. She had to admit that she was hurt after knowing Stephen's feelings.

"Steph... thank you for being honest with me. I'll do my best to move on," Kathleen softly mumbled. Then she moved closer to him, hugging Stephen tightly. She just needed to feel his embrace before parting ways with him.

Stephen didn't push her away. He even wrapped his arms around her body, trying to comfort her. He just felt sorry for her since he couldn't reciprocate her feelings. Just like Jane, he couldn't teach his heart to love someone else.

Meanwhile, someone was watching the two from a distance. Jack had been following Kathleen in secret, waiting for the opportunity to approach her and say goodbye. He was flying to Country J today. Before leaving, Jack wanted to see her. But who would have thought that he would see her hugging another man?

'Is that the man she likes?' Jack mused to himself, clenching his fists. He felt like he was betrayed by her.

'I am so foolish to believe that she will give me a chance. In the end, she will still choose him... the man she likes.' He smiled bitterly at that realization.

After witnessing that scene, Jack changed his mind. With a heavy heart, he turned around to leave. He decided not to show up in front of Kathleen, thus he missed the chance to say goodbye to her.

[At Country J: Sawada Clan Headquarters...]

Meanwhile, Jane, Mr. Hiroshi, Hanabi, and Kazuki arrived at Sawada Clan Main Headquarters. They were welcomed by five branch leaders. The other branch leaders were busy in the preparation of the banquet. It would be held in the headquarters of the third branch leader.

Mr. Hiroshi proudly introduced Jane to their seven branch leaders. "This is my daughter, Jane... she's a legendary assassin known as Phantomflake."

The five branch leaders were amazed when they heard that. Phantomflake's name rang a bell. They were aware of her reputation. "Lady Jane, we are so happy to finally meet you! We've been searching for you." The eldest among the branch leaders spoke up first, greeting Jane.

"Thank you, Elder Jin. I'm so glad to be back here," Jane responded politely. Her father told her that during her childhood days, he often brought her to the main headquarters without her mother's knowledge. Elder Jin was one of her babysitters before.

"The other members are so excited to meet you in person. I'm Madam Akane," The second branch butted in. She was a middle-aged woman. No one would think that this fifty-year-old woman was a branch leader of Sawada Clan. "You have a strong resemblance with your mother." Madam Akane added. She was very close to Jane's mother when she was still alive.

The branch leaders were very enthusiastic as they conversed with Jane. The young girl who had gone missing before had become a full-grown beautiful woman. They were all intrigued by Jane's presence. She had this strong and charismatic aura that drew them to her.

Amidst the lively conversation, Jane's phone suddenly vibrated. When she checked her phone, her eyes sparkled in delight. She just received a message coming from Nathan.

Nathan: [Have you arrived at Country J safely?]

Jane smiled upon reading his message. 'I miss him already. Sigh.'

Jane: [Yes. What are you doing?]

Her attention was shifted to her phone or rather to the guy whom she missed.

Nathan: [Working. Can you update me on your location every now and then?]

Nathan would like to surprise Jane. He didn't mention that he was at Country J's airport right now. Jane:
[Sure. I will. But I will be busy tonight because of the banquet. Sigh... I wish you were here.]

Nathan's lips curled up at her last message. 'Your wish is granted. I'll come to see you later.'

His Mistress is His Ex-Wife