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From the rearview mirror, Luca glanced at Emmeline and spoke, "Ms. Louise, I know it was you all along, even the setup earlier was orchestrated by me and Mr. Adrien. We meant well, but we didn't expect Mr. Abel's reaction to be so extreme."

Emmeline replied, "So you also recognized me. Adrien must have told you."

Luca nodded, "Yes, Mr. Adrien had good intentions this time, otherwise, I wouldn't have collaborated with him."

"I understand," Emmeline said, looking down with a hint of sadness.

"You can't blame Mr. Abel though," Luca said. "Worryfree of The Ademar Clan is no joke. Mr. Abel remembers everything about you, but he just doesn't feel any emotional connection. He can't help it."

"I don't blame him," Emmeline choked up. "I know Waylon saved Abel back then. If I hadn't survived, Abel would be in the best state he could ever be in."

"But the situation is complicated now," Luca furrowed his brow. "How are you two going to coexist in the future?"

"I heard from Waylon that the only way to make the cold symptoms return is through heavy exposure," Emmeline said hoarsely.

"Heavy exposure?" Luca glanced at Emmeline again through the rearview mirror. "Ms. Louise, with someone like you, making Mr. Abel succumb wouldn't be difficult. No man can resist a woman like you."

"I'll stay by his side like this for a while," Emmeline said, her eyes downcast. "I believe that his feelings for Emmett are actually his feelings for me. He just accepted Emmett instead of Emmeline."

"I agree," Luca said. "Otherwise, Mr. Abel would really be a pervert."

Soon, they arrived at the Nightfall Cafe. Luca watched as Emmeline pushed open the glass door and went in before stepping on the accelerator and leaving.

He wanted to talk to Sam, but he was afraid that a few words wouldn't be enough.

Luca decided to hold off on talking for now.

"Ms. Louise?" Sam turned around from the counter. "No wonder Mr. Abel called and asked me to prepare lunch for you. Is it really you?"

Emmeline nodded. "Yes."

"But Ms. Louise," Sam looked outside. "Why did you suddenly come back alone? What about Mr. Abel?"

And where was Luca, who was supposed to be by Mr. Abel's side?

Emmeline pouted. "I was hurt by that heartless and fickle Abel, so I came back on my own."

"Hurt?" Sam looked concerned.

Sam forgot about Luca and hurried over, grabbing Emmeline's arm to check, "Where are you hurt? Let me see! I'm going to go find Mr. Abel and give him a piece of my mind!"

"Here," Emmeline pointed to her heart, "It's an internal injury."

"Emotional injury?" Sam widened her dark eyes, "That's not Mr. Abel's fault, blame Mr. Waylon!"

"What can I do then?" Emmeline sniffled, "Should I cook Waylon and feed him to Abel? Will that cure Worryfree?"

"No," Sam shook her head sadly, "Mr. Waylon said there's no cure for Worryfree. Eating him won't help."

"So what should I do?" Emmeline shrugged helplessly, tears welling up in her eyes.

"Let's start with a cup of coffee, extra sweet," Sam said, "There's nothing that a cup of coffee can't fix. If that doesn't work, we'll have two cups."

"Sure," Emmeline sniffled and took a seat in the chair.

After a moment's thought, she pulled out her phone and sent a message to Benjamin, "Come over and have coffee with me, let's grab lunch too."

Benjamin replied immediately, "On my way."

Followed by another message, "Janie is coming too."

Ten minutes later, Benjamin's Bentley pulled into the parking lot.

Janie and Benjamin got out of the car and walked into the café together.

Emmeline lifted her head from the coffee table and looked at Janie.

Janie was stunned by this stunning "handsome young man."

Her eyes widened and she couldn't help but let out a gasp.

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"What's up?" Benjamin teased her. "Never seen such a handsome little guy before?"

Janie was excited. "This little guy is way more handsome than you, Benjamin. Sorry, but you don't stand a chance with me anymore!"

"You could always consider moving on," shrugged Benjamin. "Save yourself the heartache of looking at me every day."

"Shut up, you're the one who needs to move on!" Janie finally tore her gaze away from Emmeline.

"I think Benjamin's suggestion is a good one," Emmeline twirled her mustache. "Why don't we have a torrid love affair and leave those heartless men in the dust?"

Janie chuckled. "Sorry, little cutie, you're not my type."

"What kind of guy do you like?" Emmeline asked, batting her eyelashes.

Janie glanced over at Benjamin.

“Oh,” Emmeline said. “So you’re into handsome guys like Benjamin? But what do I lack compared to him?”

“Well, you’re a bit more youthful,” Janie chuckled. “And honestly, you’re way more beautiful than he is.”

“But I’m not any more youthful than Benjamin,” Emmeline pouted. “Look, I even have a mustache now.”

“But you’re different from him,” Janie said. “You have a certain...feminine energy about you.”

“Isn’t Benjamin a perfect example of androgyny though?” Emmeline tilted her head. “I’m just as androgynous as he is, if not more.”

“Ha!” Benjamin laughed.

He knew Emmeline’s cross-dressing template had always been modeled after himself.

“But...” Janie frowned. “No matter how you look at it, Benjamin still has a very masculine vibe. You are just different.”

“What’s wrong with me?” asked Emmeline.

Janie furrowed her brow, speaking carefully. “I hope you won’t get angry when I say this, but...”

“I promise I won’t,” Emmeline raised her hand.

“You...well, you’re a bit effeminate,” Janie said.

Emmeline puffed out her cheeks and then burst into tears. “You’re bullying me, Miss!” she wailed.

Janie was taken aback. Why did this little cutie cry so easily? Wasn’t that more of a woman’s thing?

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it that way,” Janie apologized quickly. “I was just teasing you.”

“I don’t care. I’m still upset,” Emmeline sniffled. “You called me effeminate, and it hurt my feelings. You have to take responsibility for that.”

“Responsibility?” Janie grimaced. “I just said one thing. What kind of responsibility do you want me to take? I already apologized. I can apologize again if that’s what you want. I’m sorry, okay?”

“No, no,” Emmeline pouted and kicked her legs. “Apologizing is not enough. You also have to hug me. Only then will your apology be official.”

“Hug?” Janie was stunned. “Little brother, don’t you know the rules that men and women don’t get too close? Are you out of your mind to ask me to hug you?”

“Not hugging is not an option, your apology lacks sincerity,” Emmeline continued to “cry,”

“Anyway, I’m hurt, I feel bad, sob, I feel so bad...”

Janie was dumbfounded.

Did Benjamin bring her here to cause trouble?

Did she encounter such a jinx?

“Let it go, let it go,” Benjamin said to Janie. “If he wants a hug, just hug him. What’s the big deal?”

“Benjamin!” Janie exclaimed. “Are you crazy? Although this kid is young, he is still a man. Are you encouraging me to hug a stranger? Are you still a man? I never thought you were such a despicable person!”

Janie huffed and turned to leave.

“Ha!” Emmeline laughed.

Hearing the laughter, Janie turned back, looking at “him” suspiciously.

Emmeline stood up and gave her a big hug.

“Janie, I’m back.”

“...?”

Janie was stunned, tears streaming down her face. “Emma, is it really you? You’re back, I’m not dreaming, am I?”

“Of course, you’re not dreaming,” Emmeline lightly pinched her. “Does it hurt?”

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“Ahh, it hurts!” Janie exclaimed as she hugged Emmeline and burst into tears. “Emma, it’s really you, I’m so happy! You’re finally okay!”

“Yes, I’m back, and I won’t be separated from you guys ever again,” Emmeline replied, also feeling overwhelmed with emotions.

“Okay, okay,” Benjamin said, patting the two women’s shoulders. “Let’s sit down and talk. All this hugging and crying is giving me a headache. Women can be so troublesome.”

The two of them finally sat down at the coffee table, holding hands.

Meanwhile, Sam was busy brewing coffee.

“What’s with the disguise?” Janie pointed at Emmeline’s mustache. “I didn’t even recognize you.”

“It’s all because of Abel,” Emmeline’s gaze dimmed. “You know he drank Worryfree.”

“I know,” Janie’s heart sank. “That’s why he didn’t stay on the island to watch over you and came back like this. But Emma, you can’t blame him. During that time, Mr. Abel risked his life for you. Mr. Ademar had no other choice but to resort to such a plan. Otherwise, Mr. Abel would have really died.”

“I know,” Emmeline replied. “I won’t blame anyone. It’s just that fate played a cruel joke on me. I survived, but Abel lost his feelings for me.”

“You two can still work on rebuilding your relationship, you know?” Janie suggested optimistically.

“Sigh,” Emmeline sighed. “I’m not so sure. Abel is a man who is naturally without desire. I really don’t have much confidence.”

“You have to have faith,” Janie held her friend’s cold hand. “These things take time.”

“Forget about me,” Emmeline wiped her tears. “How about you and Ben? What’s going on?”

“Us?” Janie glanced at Benjamin. “Still the same.”

“Ahem!” Benjamin cleared his throat twice.

Emmeline understood what was going on in Benjamin’s mind, as she always did. She decided to drop the topic.

Just then, Benjamin’s phone rang with a ding.

He looked down and saw that it was Ethan calling.

“Emma,” Benjamin said, “should we tell your brother about your situation?”

“Not for now,” Emmeline replied. “You know how my brother is. If he finds out that Abel has lost his feelings for me, he will definitely confront him. And before you know it, the whole world will know about it.”

“That means we’ll keep it from him for a few more days,” Benjamin said. “He keeps asking me how his little sister is doing.”

Emmeline’s nose tingled, and her eyes started to water. She knew her brother loved her more than anything and would never change.

“I already told your brother that you’re recovering well,” Benjamin continued. “So he won’t worry so much.”

“Okay,” Emmeline said. “That’s probably for the best.”

With their coffee finished, Sam announced that lunch was almost ready and they headed upstairs.

Emmeline and Janie also entered the kitchen.

Before long, a sumptuous lunch was served and everyone sat down to eat.

After lunch, Benjamin and Janie returned to Adelmarr Group, while Emmeline went to her bedroom to rest.

She lay on the bed tossing and turning, unable to sleep.

Finally, she decided to go to Ryker Group.

Although Abel was not fond of Emmeline, he treated “Emmett” very well.

Emmeline longed for Abel’s tenderness.

Emmeline got up, freshened up her makeup, grabbed her car keys, and planned to drive herself.

Once at the parking lot, she realized that she had forgotten where she parked her car before the accident.

She wandered around the parking lot, trying to find her car, when suddenly a big hand covered her mouth from behind, and she was dragged into a car.

Emmeline was about to resist when she caught a whiff of a sweet fragrance, and everything went black.

When she woke up, she found herself lying on a large sofa, feeling weak and limp all over.

The scene around her was unfamiliar, and she sat up abruptly.

“Awake?” came a hoarse voice from above her head.

Emmeline jumped in surprise and turned around to see a tall, muscular man standing behind her.

He was dressed in a black suit, had a rugged mustache, and had a sinister look on his face. It was Adam.

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“Adam, you took me here! You’re so despicable! Why did you abduct me?” Emmeline asked angrily.

Adam turned around and pinched Emmeline’s chin, “You have quite a temper. I like that.”

“Get lost!” Emmeline pushed him away.

“If you can become Abel’s buddy? Can’t you become my buddy too? How am I worse compared to him?” Abel sneered.

“You are so much worse than him!” Emmeline said angrily.

“That’s because you haven’t known how good I am yet.” Adam pinched her chin and said, “I’ll love you more than Abel does. Let me give you a kiss.”

“You disgust me!” Emmeline pushed him away and huddled herself, “You better let me go. Mr. Ryker won’t forgive you otherwise!”

“Stop calling for him. It makes me so jealous. Call my name instead.”

“Dream on! Since you abducted me, you are more like a bandit instead! You are not someone who will love me!” Emmeline said.

Abel smacked the back of his head and said, “You are right. I realized the mistake I made. Let me apologize to you. However, you wouldn’t be here if I hadn’t done this.”

“That’s not necessary. If you treat me politely, perhaps I might fall for you. Using this method makes me hate you.” Emmeline said.

“Is that so? Are you saying that you will fall for me as well?” Adam said.

“I can try if you are gentle to me.” Emmeline tried to negotiate with Adam while trying to think of a way to escape.

“Do you know how bad I felt when I saw you by Abel’s side? How could he find the best woman as his wife and when he turned gay, he actually found the best man? I can’t accept it!”

“Mr. Adam, let me go and we can get along in some other way. Isn’t that better? If you are using barbaric methods like these, who would want to be with you?”

Adam kept quiet.

“Mr. Adam, if you want to know me better, we can have a meal and drink some wine together. Perhaps I might be with you. Why do you have to act like a bandit?”

“You look like a good man, but you are so despicable. You are worse compared to Mr. Ryker. You better let me go and compete with Mr. Ryker fair and square.”

“You are right, but do you think I will let you go after spending so much effort to bring you here? Stay here with me for two days. Then, I will send you back. After that, I will buy you a gift and we can become a couple. What do you think?” Adam said.

“You are still asking for the impossible. You are so boring.” Emmeline said.

“You will know if I’m boring or not later. Go and rest upstairs. Have dinner with me later.” Adam said while touching Emmeline’s cheeks.

“No!”

“Listen to me when you’re at my place.”

Before Emmeline tried to talk back, Adam clapped twice. She found this action familiar, so she kept quiet. She saw this action before when she was trapped in the Imperial Palace. It was the same as the club owner. However, this was not the Imperial Palace.

Emmeline was puzzled when a young woman came over and said, “Master, what are your orders?”

Emmeline was shocked when she heard the voice. She looked up and saw Alana. Emmeline wondered why she was with Adam and called him Master.

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“Which level are you on right now?” Adam asked Alana casually.

“I’m only on the second level. It’s still too early for me to be a qualified assassin.” Alana said.

“I don’t think you are good enough. Why don’t you just become my servant?” Adam asked.

“I want to take revenge,” Alana said as she was feeling dejected.

“Let’s not talk about that for now. Bring my guest to rest. Treat him well.” Adam said.

“Yes, Master.”

Alana turned towards Emmeline and said politely, “Young Man. This way, please.”

Emmeline saw Alana’s left palm and was shocked. She did not expect Alana to train as an assassin under Adam for the purpose of getting revenge. It was obvious that her enemy was Abel and herself.

Emmeline knew she must hide her identity well. Otherwise, it would be more difficult for her to escape this place. She had no choice but to stand up and follow Alana to the guest room upstairs.

Meanwhile, at the Ryker Group.

Abel could not wait any longer even though there were more than ten minutes until “Emmett” got off work. He rushed out of his office to pick “him” up at Nightfall Café. For some reason, that young man made his heart flutter.

At the café, Sam was serving a customer.

“Is Emmett still upstairs?” Abel asked.

Sam was stunned when she saw Abel walk in. She asked, “Mr. Abel, didn’t Emmett go to look for you at the Ryker Group?”

“When was that?” Abel felt something was wrong.

“An hour after lunch. What’s wrong? Didn’t Emmett go find you?” Sam said.

Sam was feeling nervous as well.

“No. How did he go there?” Abel said with a frown.

“I gave him Ms. Louise’s car keys. The car was in the parking lot.”

“I didn’t see him. I don’t think he went to the Ryker Group.”

“Perhaps Emmett went to another place.”

Sam knew Emmeline liked going around, so she thought Emmeline might be visiting the Adelmar Studios.

Abel called “Emmett’s” number immediately, but he could not get through. Abel and Sam were both panicking. Even Luca felt something was wrong.

“Luca, contact the relevant departments to get the parking lot’s security camera footage.”

“Yes, Mr. Abel.”

Luca made a call and got the footage sent to him after ten minutes. Luca played the footage and showed it to Abel and Sam. They saw a black Hennessey Venom taking “Emmett” away.

“Adam! Why are you everywhere?” Abel said angrily.

“Adam? Emmett was abducted by Adam?” Sam said in shock.

“Luca. Bring our men and follow me to Avalan!” Abel was mad.

“Yes, Mr. Abel.” Luca sent a text to the bodyguards’ group immediately.

All bodyguards in the three vehicles received the message and knew something happened. All of them replied and waited for Abel outside.

Abel’s Rolls-Royce was leading three Range Rovers as they drove to Avalan as quickly as they could.

Sam also called Benjamin. "Mr. Benjamin, it's bad. Ms. Louise has been abducted by Adam."

"What? What's going on?" Benjamin panicked as well when he heard that.

Sam explained everything she saw in the footage to Benjamin.

"I'll head over immediately. Is it the Avalan Mansion?" Benjamin asked.

"Mr. Abel said he was going there."

"Got it." Benjamin hung up and informed Eric immediately.

Eric and his bodyguards gathered within a minute.

Benjamin ordered, "Go to the Avalan Mansion."

Sam could only pray, "Ms. Louise, I hope nothing bad happens to you. Otherwise, all of us will be dead."

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Emmeline was lying on the bed thinking of a way to escape. As she was cracking his brain, she heard cars speeding towards the mansion. She quickly stood up, looked outside the window, and saw Abel's Rolls-Royce leading his three bodyguard vehicles.

Emmeline jumped up and said, "Abel, you're amazing! You've found me so soon!"

She ran to the door and tried to open it, but it was locked from the outside.

"Adam, you jerk! Let me out!"

Emmeline was punching and kicking the door, but the door was too sturdy. The room was also soundproofed, so no one came to see what was going on.

Adam was preparing wine, when his butler ran in and said, "Mr. Adam, Mr. Abel is here with his men."

"What? He's already here?" Abel stood up.

Alana ran away when she heard that Abel was here.

The living room door was kicked open. Abel walked in angrily. His bodyguards were following behind with guns in their hands.

Adam did not expect Abel to walk into his mansion so brazenly. However, it was also not Abel's first time doing that.

Abel's bodyguard surrounded Adam.

"Abel, what are you doing?" Adam was saying with a little guilt.

He knew Abel was a cold-blooded killer. He was cruel during a key moment.

"What am I doing? I'm sure you know." Abel grinned.

Adam knew he could not hide it from Abel, so he said, "I'm just inviting Emmett here to be my guest. Is this necessary?"

“Inviting him here as a guest?” Abel chuckled, “Is this an invitation or an abduction?”

Adam sneered and said, “I only used a little force because he would not listen to me.”

“You know Emmett is just a child! Don’t you think doing that is too much?”

“Abel, I don’t think you are qualified to scold me.” Adam got angry.

“Are you saying that when you’ve hurt my people?” Abel scoffed.

“Why does Emmett belong to you? Perhaps he likes to be with me?”

“Adam, you’re overestimating yourself. Emmett is a pure kid. He will try to avoid someone vile like you as much as possible.”

“Anyway, Emmett is my guest. I won’t hand him over to you!”

“Is that so? You must take responsibility for your own words!” Abel said.

“Of course. This is my turf. Are you trying to have a bloodbath here?” Adam said.

“You can give it a try.” Abel waved his hand. All the bodyguards behind him pointed their guns toward Adam.

Adam laughed and said, “Abel, do you think I’ll concede because of that?”

He waved his hand, and his bodyguards took out their guns as well.

Both sides were in a stand-off.

Then, the living room door opened. Benjamin and his bodyguards rushed in.

“Abel, am I late?” Benjamin said.

“Your timing is just right.” Abel said with a smile.

Adam was not happy to be at a disadvantage. He knew a fight would not start easily. It was just a show of power. When Benjamin came, his side became weaker immediately.

“Adam, the security system in Avalan is rubbish. Why don’t you let the Adelman Group help you install a more advanced system?” Benjamin chuckled.

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“Benjamin, I don’t have a grudge against you, and I don’t want to make enemies. I suggest you mind your own business.” Adam said.

“Abel is my friend. If you are an enemy of his, that means you are my enemy as well.” Benjamin said.

“I already told Abel that this is all a misunderstanding.

“A misunderstanding? Where is Emmett then?” Benjamin asked.

“Upstairs.”

“Adam, please ask him to come downstairs. If you hurt him, don’t blame me for turning against you.” Abel said coldly.

“I’m very polite towards Emmett. Why would I hurt him?” Adam said.

“I hope so.”

Adam clapped his hands. A servant came over. Adam asked him to bring Emmett downstairs. The servant complied and went upstairs to open the door of Emmett’s room.

Emmeline ran out of her room and was shocked when she saw what was happening when she ran downstairs.

There was a stand-off between Abel’s men, Benjamin’s men, and Adam’s men. All of them were pointing their guns at each other.

“Emmett! How are you?” Abel saw Emmeline and shouted.

“Mr. Ryker! I’m so glad to see you here. I was so afraid.” Emmeline ran downstairs and went into Abel’s embrace.

“It’s all right now. It was all my fault for being careless. I almost made a huge mistake,” Abel said while patting Emmeline’s back.

He put Emmeline down and checked on her to make sure she was fine. Benjamin was also relieved to see that Emmeline was safe.

“Ben, you’re here too? Thank you.” Emmeline waved her hand.

“You’re all right. What a relief. Otherwise, there’ll be a bloodbath here.” Benjamin said.

Emmeline stuck her tongue out and said, “I didn’t run away on my own. This man abducted me.”

“Whatever! I’m sure all of you can see that I didn’t do anything to Emmett. Why don’t we all keep our guns?” Adam said with a gloomy face.

Abel and Benjamin looked at each other and nodded. They instructed their bodyguards to put away their guns. No one at Adam’s side dared move. They were afraid that they would be killed when they put away their weapons. However, Abel and Benjamin would not be so foolish to fight them.

“Emmett, leave with me.” Abel put his hand on Emmeline’s shoulder and turned around to leave the mansion. Benjamin and his men were following behind.

Luca walked at the back. Everyone left Avalan as quickly as they could.

Adam was so angry to see them leave. It was already the second time that Abel had come and gone as he wished. Adam kicked the coffee table in front of him and shouted, “Abel, I will never forgive you!”

“Master, how do you plan to deal with them?” Alana appeared again and asked.

“Well... We need to plan this out for now.” Adam sneered.

“You are right. Abel is not an easy opponent.” Alana said.

"I will soon get him. Then, I will torture him." Adam finished the wine on the table and smashed the glass afterward.

Abel brought Emmeline back to "The Precipice" and parked the car. He got out of the Rolls-Royce and opened the door for Emmeline.

Kendra welcomed them while carrying Quincy. It was a familiar and warm situation. Abel and Emmeline could feel it in their hearts. Abel suddenly thought the person beside him was not "Emmett" but Emmeline instead. He couldn't help but look in "Emmett's" direction.

"What's wrong?" Emmeline noticed Abel's stare.

"It's nothing," Abel said while holding her tightly. "I only felt a weird feeling."

Emmeline thought Abel was having a reaction toward her. She was afraid that Abel would recognize her, so she quickly shook off Abel's hand to greet Kendra.

"Kendra, is Quincy awake?"

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Kendra squinted at the approaching "man" who walked with a strikingly similar gait to Emmeline. Oh, you're back! Quincy just woke up," Kendra smiled as she informed Emmett, unaware of everything that had just happened that afternoon.

"I can help you carry her!" Emmett said with outstretched arms.

"You?" Kendra chuckled. "I wouldn't expect a man to know how to carry a baby!"

"Well, I carried my younger brother when he was a baby," Emmett explained. "It's no problem for me at all!"

Abel walked over and overtook Emmett instead, grabbing hold of Quincy and carrying her into his arms in one swift move. "Let me do it," Abel told Kendra. "You can go ahead and prepare dinner."

"Dinner is already prepared, Mr. Abel," Kendra informed him. "You're back a little later than usual today."

"Mm," Abel grunted softly. "Some things got in the way."

Behind him, Emmett stuck out his tongue childishly.

Kendra took over Quincy once again as they entered the dining hall. "Why don't you both head upstairs to change and wash up first? I'll get the dishes out," Kendra told them.

Abel and Emmett went upstairs and headed for their respective rooms. Back in her room, Emmeline inspected her fake mustache and made sure it was properly in place before changing and going back downstairs. As everyone was gathered at the dining table, Luca suddenly walked into the hall.

"Mr. Abel, Ms. Murphy is here," Luca informed his boss.

"At this time? What does she want?" Abel raised his eyebrow in suspicion.

“She says Madame Ryker asked her to bring something over,” Luca explained. “Should I let her in?”

“Well, let her in then since it’s Mom’s instruction. She might just tell on me if I turned her away,” Abel said.

Luca quickly informed security to allow Evelyn Murphy’s sports car into the compound. A few minutes later, Evelyn entered the house with two big gift boxes and headed straight for the dining hall.

“Abel! Auntie Rosaline prepared some lamb stew to soothe your tummy, so I’m here to deliver it!” she announced cheerily just before noticing the man next to Abel.

Why was the pretty boy still hanging out with Abel? She thought to herself in annoyance. She had used the lamb stew as an excuse to visit Abel and be closer to him, but she had not expected the wicked man to still be around! Abel was even serving him food and feeding him pieces of meat he had cut up himself.

“Emmett, have more of these ribs. You should eat more to fill up that skinny frame of yours,” Abel told Emmett.

“Thank you, Abel,” Emmett smiled affectionately. “You dote on me more than my own mother.”

“Hey, I’m not your mother or your grandmother. I’m a proper man, ok?” Abel teased in return.

“But you’re always so patient and gentle with me, almost exactly like my mother,” Emmett said coyly.

“You’re impossible, you know that?” Abel scolded, but his voice remained gentle. “Why can’t you describe me like your father instead?”

“No, my father has a horrible temper!” Emmett objected. “You’re much better than him.”

“Alright, alright, you win,” Abel surrendered. “As long as you finish your food, you can say I remind you of your mother or grandmother or anyone else you fancy...”

Emmett almost choked and spluttered at Abel’s words. Even Kendra could not help herself from smiling at their exchange. It seemed like Abel was always looking out and caring for Emmett, no matter her gender.

However, Evelyn Murphy was absolutely raging with anger. She could not believe that a beautiful woman like her who turned heads wherever she went was losing out to a prepubescent boy like Emmett. How humiliating! She could not understand why Abel was attracted to that pretty boy. Perhaps the rumors about him being gay were true?

“Mr. Abel,” Evelyn smiled gently as she placed the food container on the table. “Please enjoy the stew while it’s warm.”

“Mm,” Abel nodded. “Just leave it there,” he said curtly.

“Let me handle it,” Kendra offered. She brought the containers into the kitchen and emerged with a small bowl of stew for Abel.

“Have you had your dinner, Ms. Murphy?” Kendra asked politely. “If you don’t mind, would you like to have dinner with us?”

“Of course, I would,” Evelyn accepted Kendra’s invitation. “Auntie Rosaline did ask me to accompany Abel for dinner, after all...”

Kendra snuck a quick glance at Abel who did not seem to have any objections. “Well then, please have a seat, Ms. Murphy!” Kendra said.

Evelyn smoothed her skirt and gingerly sat down at the empty seat next to Abel.

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Two days later, Struyria was rife with shocking gossip about Abel Ryker. The media outlets had published various photos and videos of Abel and Emmett. Some caught them holding hands, others caught Abel’s arm slung around Emmett’s shoulder. More importantly, the media painted them as two men who could not keep their hands off each other.

It would have less of a blow if Emmett was a woman, since Abel was single and available after all. However, it just so happened that his closest friend and partner was a man, and a charming one too. Anyone who saw these photos and read the news would have concluded that Abel Ryker, the poster boy of Struyria’s wealthiest families and the head of the influential Ryker family, was a homosexual.

The backlash from the news was massive, shaking the upper echelons of Struyria to its core, and no one was happier than Adam Ryker who could barely contain his excitement at the thought of Abel being brought down by the paparazzi. He immediately got someone to print a large batch of these incriminating photos and made his way to the Ryker residence cheerily. Recognizing how rare this opportunity was, he had to take advantage of the situation and fan the flames of discontent in front of Old Mr. Ryker! How lucky was he to have a guardian angel watching over him!

By the time the news reached Abel Ryker, he was fuming up to his ears. He instructed his PR team to get the photos and articles taken down, but the damage control was too late since the news had already made its rounds around social media. The entire city was eagerly lapping up Abel Ryker’s scandalous secret.

Adam presented the photos to Oscar Ryker, knowing perfectly the old man would have a fit. Old Mr. Ryker was so angry that the family doctor had to give him some medicine to bring his blood pressure down.

“What kind of behavior is this?!” Old Mr. Ryker yelled as he slammed his fist on the table furiously. “The noble reputation of the Ryker family has gone down the drain, no thanks to this punk!”

“It’s not just our reputation, Granddad,” Adam added. “It’s affecting our business too! A few of our partners are questioning Abel’s ability to lead the company given his... philandering. There are rumors that some of them are looking to terminate our partnership! The Ryker Group will be in trouble if this goes on...”

“No, no, this won’t do!” Old Mr. Ryker bellowed, clutching his chest.

“Yes, Granddad, it’s happening. Ryker Group is about to go down in Abel’s hands, unless you think of a way to rescue it. We can’t let hundreds of years of history be destroyed by a single person!” Adam poured more oil to the fire.

“Call for a family meeting right away!” Old Mr. Ryker ordered. “If Abel is not fit to be CEO, he will step down and be replaced immediately!”

“Wait, Granddad. Don’t be impulsive...” Adam pretended to be empathetic toward Abel’s plight. company after all. He can’t possibly just... step down, can he?”

“I’m the head of this family and my word is final!” Old Mr. Ryker looked like he was about to explode. “Who cares how much work he has done for the company if he embarrasses us like that! He should be thankful I’m not punishing him worse than this!”

Adam kept silent and lowered his head, but he could not help himself from laughing gleefully on the inside. Oh, Adam... Let’s see how you get yourself out of this one! Even the Gods are on my side this time! I wonder whose toes you stepped on... he thought to himself.

“Make the call now!” Old Mr. Ryker shouted, snapping Adam out of his thoughts. “Call your parents, your uncle and aunty, Adrien and Abel! Tell them we’re having a meeting right now!” Though elderly, Old Mr. Ryker was still as lucid as ever.

“Granddad, I can call Adrien’s family, but I think it’s best if the butler calls Abel’s family instead. I don’t have the authority to call a family meeting...” Abel said.

“Fine, go ahead,” Old Mr. Ryker said before instructing the butler to make a call to the Levan Mansion.

Lewis Ryker and his wife panicked upon receiving the call from Ryker Mansion. They were already upset enough with their son’s scandal, but now that Old Mr. Ryker was calling for a family meeting, it could only mean that there was more trouble to come. They knew that Old Mr. Ryker would not sit idly and allow the Ryker family to bear such humiliation. Evelyn Murphy, who was seated beside the Rykers and overheard the entire conversation, could not help but smirk a little.