

Be Gentle 1691

Chapter 1691

Luca listened to Luke's simple explanation, but she had a feeling that things were not as simple as they seemed.

A ten percent drop in the stock price... The wealth of Johnston Corporation had disappeared into thin air after a second in the market.

Percy must have something to do with this. After all, he was not an obedient person. However, he obeyed the Mallory family's elders to be together with the daughter of the Johnston family. He must be up to something.

Luca had a suspicion that Johnston Corporation's share prices would not only drop by ten percent. They would probably continue to fall today and tomorrow.

"What's on your mind?" Luke looked at how serious Luca was and deliberately interrupted her by asking a question.

Luca snapped back to her senses and said, "If the Johnston family gets into trouble, will the Mallory family sever their ties with them immediately?"

"The marriage of convenience between the Mallory and Johnston families is for the sake of their benefits. Besides, Percy isn't married to that woman yet. If the Johnston family can't survive through the crisis, the relationship between the two families will certainly come to an end," answered Luke. This was Percy's goal.

"If they end the relationship, won't there be rumors flying all around?" Luca was not worried about Percy. Instead, she was worried about Nina.

Once Percy got rid of the Johnston family, he would probably go back to pursue Nina. There were already bad rumors about Nina spreading around back then. If Percy really went to look for Nina after this, then many others would be prejudiced against Nina and even speak ill of her.

"A marriage of convenience is always like that. The ones who are involved will understand, and they won't talk too much about it," said Luke. He looked at the worried expression on Luca's face and knew she was not worried about the Johnston family's situation but her best friend, Nina.

"Is it? Maybe I don't know much about a marriage of convenience..." Luca said disconsolately. She did not want to know that much about it either. All she wanted was for Nina to be happy.

However, Percy had used such means to get together with Nina. Would she be happy?

did not know, and she was not sure how the future was going to be. No one could predict the future, everyone can interfere with the Johnston family's matter," Luke said. He picked up the napkin and wiped his

He was done eating his breakfast.

She knew well that not everyone could interfere with the Johnston family's

everyone could bring down the Johnston family. After all, the Johnston family's history went much further back than the Crawford and Mallory families in A City. She even heard that the ancestors of the Johnston family had their own business since the

be capable to have managed their family business until

not easy for Percy to be able to trip the Johnston family up that

certainly be happy if she got together with him. This man was good at what he did. After so long, she could also finally realize that this man was not a

Nina would be truly happy if she got together with

stood up and said, "I'm off to

Luca nodded, "Alright."

She did not intend to go to the office today. She chose to finish translating the documents at **home**.

Luke cleaned up his dishes, carried his briefcase, and left.

Luca picked up her phone once the door was closed. She went to look up the Johnston family.

The news of the share prices of the Johnston family's company dropping ten percent was viral on the internet. Everyone was coming up with all sorts of reasons, but the Johnston family had yet to release an official response.

They chose to keep quiet when they were facing the netizens' various **suspensions**.

They gave no answer to all the guesses that were circulating. The way they were handling it would only make more retail investors sell off the shares in their hands when the market opened later.

Looking at the trend, Luca reckoned that when once the stock market opened, the share prices of the Johnston family's business would probably fall another ten *percent*.

They were not even trying to deceive the investors now. Luca thought they might have really gotten into trouble.

Luca thought for a while, then sent a message to Nina: [Nina, are you aware of what's happening to the share prices of Johnston *Corporation*?]

[I don't do any investments. Why should I pay attention to that?] Nina soon replied to **her message**.

Luca shook her head helplessly. Without a face-to-face conversation with Nina, she could not tell if her best friend said it on purpose or she really did not give a sh*t *about it*.

She was not concerned about the Johnston family, but she must care **about Percy**.

replied: [Johnston Corporation suffered a ten percent drop in their share prices. They'll probably continue to drop today too. If this situation continues, the Mallory family will definitely do something

sent it to her, she did not receive any replies from Nina for a long

put her phone aside, stood up, and cleaned up the

cleaning up the table, she washed Luke's clothes by hand. Then, she took out the shirt that she brought in last night. She ironed it and put it back into the

...

On the other hand.

just arrived at the office. Jason said, "Boss, Mr. Mallory is waiting for you in the reception room.

early?" He frowned. He knew Percy would come looking for him, but he did not expect him to be so

replied Jason, "I saw Mr. Mallory waiting for you on the first floor when I came to

him to come to my office," Luke ordered.

headed to the reception room to

Chapter 1692

"It's hard to eliminate the Johnston family not because of their family business or deep pockets. It's because of their family history and political background in A City. Besides, no matter how abundant their capital is, it'll only lead to a downfall under the guidance of the person in charge now. Their company has low liquidity. A 20 percent drop means that they've lost quite a large amount of money. They won't be able to take it for much longer." Luke analyzed.

"Indeed." Percy nodded and changed to another sitting position. He leaned on the couch comfortably.

"Now, all we have to do is to wait for them to seek Old Master Mallory's help. Judging from his character, I'll be able to take action soon."

"It's easy for you to get rid of the Johnston family due to the current situation. But getting Nina back will be hard." Luke reminded him.

Everything that Percy did was never for the sake of the Mallory family; it was for him and Nina.

However, he chose not to tell anyone and did everything in silence. That was why Nina could not understand him.

He was approaching victory, but Nina was still running away from him. Luke saw it all and broke it to him.

Percy's smile slightly faded when Luke mentioned Nina. "I'm fantasizing about my future now. It upsets me when you say that."

"You have to be clear about the present to embrace the future." Luke switched on his computer. The stock market would open soon.

Percy did the same thing too. He picked up his phone and opened the trading app. "You don't have to lecture me. You haven't even dealt with your matters. Why did Bianca come back with a different appearance and refuse to acknowledge you? Have you found out the reason?"

His words hit a nerve in him. Luke entered Johnston Corporation's stock code proficiently and said, "Would I still be like this if it was that easy to find out?"

never easy for both of us." Percy refreshed the page, and the stock market had opened. People were constantly selling off Johnston Corporation's shares, and the price kept dropping. He said, "Tsk, tsk. Tell me, how long before the price

analyzed the current trends in the stock market and made a guess. "It'll hit a limit down in less than an

"Then I'll sit here in your office for the rest of the

do you want to do?" Luke frowned. He did not like the thought of Percy staying here and disturbing him when he was working.

share prices hit a limit yesterday, that woman started looking for me. I can't get away from her. She keeps telling me to help her elder brother. Tell me, can I still go back to my office under these circumstances?" Percy wanted them to take the initiative to look for Old Master Mallory instead

was at the office, they would only think of

working in Brilliant today. You can go and look for her." Luke gave him another suggestion on where he should

matter with the Johnston family isn't settled yet. I'm not going to disturb her. She'll be irritated." Percy went straight to the point. He had always been bold when doing things, but because of Nina, he would become extra careful whenever something was related

his head. "Then try your best not to

know, I know. You're working on an important project. Don't worry. I'm not going to disturb you." Percy was in a good mood today, and he became more talkative too. He took his laptop out of the briefcase and thought of

After a while, his phone rang. He glanced at it. It was the daughter of the Johnston family calling him.

Percy did not answer the call. After he left it to ring until the call was automatically cut off, he picked up his phone and sent a message to his assistant. He turned off his phone after telling his assistant to contact another number of his if there was anything about work that needed his attention.

He liked to have two strings to his bow. Hence, when he was preparing to lay his hands on the Johnston family, he had already registered for another phone *number*.

Percy put the phone that was switched off in his pocket and began to **work**.

Half an hour later, the Johnston family's share price had hit the limit down.

Percy whistled and said, "I didn't expect it to be *so fast*."

"**You** may make your next move now." Luke **reminded him**.

Percy nodded and gave a call to his subordinate. He ordered, "You can send out the draft that was written earlier. Get the keyboard warriors to launch the publicity stunt at full steam."

"**Yes, Boss,**" answered the person on the other side of the phone.

Half an hour later, there were similar posts showing up on all economic forums in A City. The contents were about the reason behind the plummeting of Johnston Corporation's share prices. The reason stated was that the person in charge of the corporation was deceived, which led him to make a lot of bad investments. It resulted in a loss of a few million **dollars**.

the company was not liquid right now. They even started planning to sell the assets under the corporation to survive the crisis this

news caused an uproar once it was released. Some investors regretted holding their shares and sought proof to know whether the news on the forums was

that, Percy's subordinate provided them with the

truth of Johnston Corporation's investment failure was verified with the evidence

the Johnston family had gone into hiding. They refused to give the investors a reasonable explanation and hid the truth. Some of the investors claimed that no matter how low the share price was, they were going to sell off the shares in their hands tomorrow when the market opened.

took two hours for the Johnston family to collapse. The news quickly went around the country. Apart from A City, some companies that cooperated with Johnston Corporation, as well as investors, had also made their move.

Johnston family fell into the abyss of suffering at once.

popping out continuously on Luke's phone. He looked at the man sitting on the couch and sighed. "The Johnston family shouldn't have messed with

them before, but they refused to believe it. They insisted on messing with me, so now, I'll leave them with a huge mess that's waiting to be cleaned up." Percy smiled lazily. He was satisfied that he had reached

his head. If the Johnston family knew it was Percy who did this, they would regret trying so hard to make him marry their daughter.

Chapter 1693

Mr. Bennet made a guess. "They probably can't reach Master Percy, so that's why they came here."

Old Master Mallory frowned and said, "What troubles are they bringing here? How am I supposed to help them solve the problem? What can I do for them? Well, I guess Percy must have slipped away."

Old Master Mallory did not stand up for them when the Johnston family first got into trouble. It was because he thought the Johnston family would be capable enough to survive the crisis this time, but he did not expect that they would come looking for him the next day.

It seemed like what Percy said about the Johnston family was true. They were not as powerful as they expected.

Mr. Bennet saw that the old master was getting impatient and asked, "Old Master Mallory, should we let them in?"

"They're already at the entrance. How can I not let them in? Just let them in," said Old Master Mallory.

Mr. Bennet went to open the door and led the Johnston family to the garden.

The people who came today were the father of the person in charge of Johnston Corporation, Nick Johnston, as well as the daughter of the Johnston family who was engaged to Percy, Madison Johnston.

Mr. Bennet came over and welcomed them when he saw them get out of the car. He said, "Old Master Johnston, Ms. Madison, welcome."

nodded his head with an arrogant expression on his face and asked, "Is Master Percy at

He went to the office early this morning. He's not at home," answered Mr. Bennet. They had indeed come to look for Percy. He reckoned that they went to Percy's office

hurriedly, "We went to Mallory Corporation, but they said he didn't come to the

Bennet understood at once and answered, "Perhaps Master Percy had something else to do. Mr. Johnston and Ms. Madison, you probably know that Master Percy runs the company alone now. He often has some tasks that he needs to personally handle, so he had to move here and there. Hence, it's normal for him not to be in the office at

the reason deep in his heart, but he chose not to expose the butler. Even though Percy was not at home, Old Master Mallory should be here. Then, he asked again, "Yes, that's true. After all, it's not easy for him to run a big company like Mallory Corporation. It'll be much easier for him after Madison marries him. She can help him to manage the

looked down, lowered his head, and replied immediately, "Yes,

he agreed with him, he could not make the decision. Nick could not be bothered about that and asked, "Then, is Old Master Mallory at home today? I'd like to discuss something with

Old Master Mallory is here. Please come in." Mr. Bennet led them into the

Mallory had already asked the maid to make some tea. There was a sweet smell of tea in the air when the two of them entered.

Madison's eyes brightened, and she sat down opposite Old Master Mallory with her father, *Nick*.

Nick was the younger generation when he was in front of Old Master Mallory, so he took the initiative and greeted, "Old Master Mallory, it's been a while. How are you feeling lately?"

"Thank you. I'm old but I'm still doing great." When Old Master Mallory saw how calm Nick was, he did not point out their motive for coming here. He cracked a joke **with him**.

Then, Madison said, "We're glad to know that you're healthy and strong. Is this chamomile tea? I didn't expect you to like chamomile tea. Oh, my friends gave some to me. I'll bring it over tomorrow so you can try some of it."

Old Master Mallory enjoyed drinking tea, but he refused to accept any gifts from the Johnston family now. "Save the trouble. They're for people who know how to appreciate tea. If your friend gave you chamomile tea, that only means that you enjoy drinking tea too. So, save it for yourself. I have enough

here. I won't be able to finish it if you give it to me. Come on, try my chamomile tea. Bennet, pour the tea."

Mr. Bennet heard him and nodded his head. Then, he poured tea for them.

Nick noticed that Old Master Mallory had yet to mention the Johnston family's matters. He was a little anxious. He thought that the old master would take the initiative to ask about **it**.

However, it looked like he was the **naive one**.

still had a way not to take the initiative to mention the trouble that the Johnston family was in now and have the Mallory family help

Bennet served him a cup of tea, which interrupted him when he was about to say something. Nick smiled, took it from him, and took a sip

a good tea, but he was not in the mood to enjoy

was swallowed into his stomach without being tasted. Nick took the opportunity to say, "Old Master Mallory, I came here today to discuss something

the matter?" Old Master Mallory still did not speak about it.

only go for his second plan. "Well, Percy and Madison have been engaged for quite some time now. I'm wondering if it's time for them to get married and spend their days together happily?"

Mallory was a little startled. Nick was not asking for help from the Mallory family but proposed such a suggestion instead.

the end, no matter if it was asking for help or asking Percy to marry Madison, his purpose was to help the Johnston family survive the crisis this

was no doubt that Nick wanted to use Madison's marriage to Percy to tell everyone that the Mallory family was siding with the Johnston family. If anything happened to the Johnston family, the Mallory family would back them up and support them.

Chapter 1694

Old Master Mallory could not help but laugh when he looked at how desperate they were to use the Mallory family's name to solve their current crisis. He took a sip of the tea and let out a sigh. He remained silent for a long time.

Madison and her father exchanged looks at each other. She then said in a sweet voice, "Grandpa, I really like Percy very much. So, I'm asking for your permission to let us get married earlier. After the wedding, I'll try my best to become a good wife for Percy. I'll help Mallory Corporation penetrate the global market."

Old Master Mallory placed his teacup back on the saucer. He understood how desperate they were.

If it were the Johnston family in the old days, then he would certainly agree to it on behalf of Percy, but things were different now. He put on a serious expression and looked at the father and daughter. He

said, "I don't think it's the right time now. It'd be better if the Johnston family can focus on solving the problem at hand. After that, we can discuss the wedding matters."

Nick got anxious when he heard that. He explained, "Old Master Mallory, you must be thinking that the Johnston family is hoping to overcome the crisis through this marriage, right? I'm sorry but you've got it wrong. We're confident that we can solve the crisis ourselves. It's just that my daughter can't wait to get married, so that's why I came to discuss it with you. If you're not comfortable with it, then I can guarantee that the Johnston family will never ask for a penny from the Mallory family to overcome this crisis after the two's wedding."

All he wanted was the Mallory family to back them up to assure the banks.

Old Master Mallory shook his head. He had already figured out the ways of survival in the business world. The Johnston family did not need the Mallory family to invest their money in them to get through the crisis this time. They wanted the Mallory family to back them up so that it would be convenient for them to borrow money from banks.

However, the Mallory family could not take the risk.

Mallory Corporation was doing quite well now, but no one knew what would happen in the future. Should anything untoward happen and they needed to take out loans from the bank, what should they do if their reputation was ruined by the Johnston family failing to overcome their crisis?

In the beginning, Old Master Mallory was only thinking about the future. That was why he forced Percy to marry the daughter of the Johnston family. Now that the Johnston family was in trouble, he was sure that he could no longer cooperate with them.

was about to say something, Madison tugged at his

was afraid that the old master would break off their engagement if her father kept

Johnston family was in a passive situation right now, but the Mallory family was doing nothing. They were kind enough not to kick them when they were down by breaking off the

not to ask for more. Everyone in A City knew that she was Percy's fiancée now. Perhaps having the title of his fiancée could still be of use to

stopped her father from saying

understood what she meant. He had no choice but to hold back what he was about to

up the kettle and refilled the old master's cup of tea. She said gently, "Grandpa, since you think it's not the right time for us to get married, I'll listen to you. We won't get married

auspicious dates are all fake if it isn't the right time for the couple. It takes the right time, the right place, and the right person. That's how you get a true auspicious wedding date. Madison, what do you think?" What Old Master Mallory said carried

to tell him that she understood what the old master

After they left Mallory Manor, Nick was pissed off. He hit the steering wheel with his fists. "This is outrageous. Old Master Mallory has gone too *far!*"

Madison looked at her father's actions. She understood how mad he was, but she was **angry too**.

She thought the reason for this marriage of convenience was because Old Master Mallory admired her and was fond of her. However, everything was telling her that the so-called 'admiration' was built on the interests of the Mallory family.

Madison was tearing up, and she said with an aggrieved look on her face, "Dad, let's find a way to settle the matter **ourselves**."

Nick was annoyed. "Is there any other way? Those who used to rely on the Johnston family refuse to pick up our calls now. It's the same with the Mallory family. Everything will end up the same way even if we ask the others to **help us**."

Madison knew that, so she was not very positive about things either. She pulled a long face and said, "Maybe I should look for *Percy*."

"Do you really believe that he's not in the office? Madison, you're only embarrassing yourself if you go look for Percy now!" said Nick. Then, he complained about his son again. "Look at what your brother did. Why would he do this when the business was running just **fine**?"

Tears streamed down from Madison's eyes. She drew out a tissue and wiped her tears silently. "Dad, stop complaining. It's useless. Brother wouldn't have wanted this to happen. We should focus on dealing with the crisis now."

"**If** only it's that easy." Nick looked at his daughter.

The reason why Percy agreed to the marriage was not because of how beautiful Madison was. It was Old Master Mallory who forced him to. Now that the Johnston family was in trouble, Percy must be delighted. However, he could only pin his hopes on Percy *now*.

someone to track Percy down. Go ahead and fight for it. You have to make him yours in any case. Do you understand?" Nick considered the fact that his daughter was still a virgin. If Percy touched her body, he would have to take

knew what her father meant. Seeing as she was in love with Percy, she promised. "Alright, Dad. I know what

...

On the other hand.

was translating the documents in her bedroom, the cleaning lady came to tidy the house.

after the cleaning lady tidied up the room, she knocked on the door of the maid's

opened the door, looked at the cleaning lady, and asked, "What's the

Craw, I'm ready to head to the supermarket. What ingredients do I need to buy today?" the cleaning lady asked.

that the ingredients this morning were not fresh. She thought of getting some fresh ingredients herself so that Luca would not have to force himself to eat the food. Hence, she said, "I'll go with you this time."

Chapter 1695

Luca did not think that the cleaning lady had any intention of buying spoiled ingredients to deceive her.

The cleaning lady nodded while she listened to her. She could not help but secretly exclaim how considerate Luca was.

After all, she would have to buy many ingredients to make hotpot. If she came here to buy the ingredients alone, it would be a problem for her to carry everything back to the apartment although it was not far away from here.

The cleaning lady pushed the trolley and asked, "Ms. Craw, how many people are you inviting over to have hotpot?"

"It's just me," said Luca.

"Huh?" The cleaning lady thought she heard it wrongly.

Luca knew why she was surprised, so she explained, "I'm suddenly craving for it, but I don't like the commercial flavor of hotpot sold outside. So, I plan to cook it at home."

"Okay." The cleaning lady nodded. She had no idea what the young people today had in their minds.

Luca walked in front while the cleaning lady pushed the trolley behind her. After a while, she had already picked up a lot of ingredients.

The cleaning lady looked at the ingredients in the trolley and thought that Luca would probably not be able to finish everything if she was really making hotpot for herself. She looked at Luca's skinny figure. It would take days for her to finish all these ingredients.

After Luca finished choosing the ingredients, she received a call from Nina.

"Luca, where are you?" Nina sounded like she was in a rush. At the same time, Luca noticed that it was noisy on the other end as though Nina was beside the road.

in a supermarket. What's the matter?" Luca asked.

I go over to your place?" Nina said. She was avoiding Percy. Sue had just told her that Percy would be heading to Brilliant. Before she found out why, she clocked out and

did not even want to go back to her apartment at the thought that the man might be looking for

no choice but to look for Luca, who was still on leave. After all, she could not stay in the company or return to her

almost done with grocery shopping. You can come over first. I'll be back soon." Luca hung up after she said that. She took a few boxes of sliced beef out of the freezer in the supermarket after learning that Nina would be coming

eating beef slices when she was having

cleaning lady reminded her when she saw Luca grabbing a few more boxes. "Ms. Craw, the beef slices won't taste as good if you leave them in the freezer for too

will be joining me for lunch," said Luca. Then, she grabbed some other hotpot side

out at the cashier counter, they both carried a big bag and left the

cleaning lady thought of carrying the two bags herself, but Luca refused to. She thought would be able to share the load with her if both of them carried one

reached her apartment not long after they returned to the apartment. She pressed on the

Luca went to open the door.

She saw Nina standing at the door with an anxious look on her face. The weather was not even hot out there. Still, there were beads of sweat on her forehead, causing her makeup to smudge a little. She asked, "Nina, what happened to **you**?"

"Will you believe me if I tell you that I got chased by a ghost?" Nina took a breath. She glanced behind her as if she was afraid someone was following her. She let out a sigh of relief when she saw no one behind her, then she walked into the apartment.

"No," Luca shook her head and **replied honestly**.

Nina sighed helplessly. "Luca, you lack a sense of humor. But seriously, the person who's following me is scarier than a **ghost**."

Luca knew what was going on once she said that. She closed the door and did not continue to ask any questions. "I'm planning to make hotpot for lunch today. Care to join *me*?"

"Hotpot? It's my favorite. But don't you still have wounds on your body? You should be taking light meals. Otherwise, you'll regret it when you're left with scars on your body." *Nina reminded her*.

"**The** wounds are long gone. I don't have to worry about scarring. I figured you'd enjoy eating hotpot, so I bought a lot of ingredients. Oh yes, I bought a few boxes of sliced beef too," said Luca. She walked toward the dining table. The ingredients she bought just now were not kept yet.

"*Sure*. They're my favorites. After you reminded me about it, I just remembered that it's been a long time since I had a hotpot. It's time to break my vegetarian diet." Nina looked around the living room, then her gaze fell on the balcony.

There was a man's garment *hanging there*.

Even though she was seeing it from afar, Nina could still recognize the quality of **the garment**.

It was not any usual men's **clothing**.

became alert at once. "Luca, are you staying together with someone else?"

said, "I'm staying alone. When did I start staying with someone

garment hanging out on the balcony..." Nina pointed at the men's clothing on the

understood at once. She paused her gestures for a moment and explained, "It's because it's dangerous now. That's why I hang man's clothing there. Perhaps it can help prevent something bad from happening. Oh, you should do that too. It's safer that way."

doubted it, but Luca's explanation made sense. She believed what she said for the time being. "Sure, it's a good idea. I'm going to get something later to hang it at home."

smiled when she heard that Nina seemed to believe in what she said. Then, she put the ingredients in the

for a moment, not knowing whether or not Luke would be coming today. She then sent a message to him: [Nina came

to inform Luke about it and ask him not to come to the apartment today. It was to avoid any unnecessary

Luke did not reply.

cleaning lady was cleaning up the kitchen. Luca realized there was nothing she could do here and said, "Nina, I still have some work to do. Can I leave you here? Just make yourself

worry. I won't disturb you when you're working. Go ahead, I'll leave you to it. I'm fine here." Nina made the okay hand gesture, and sat down on the couch, scrolling her phone.

Chapter 1696

It was noontime. Luca finally finished translating the contents of one of the folders. She glanced at the time. It was almost time to prepare the hotpot.

She walked out of the bedroom. Nina was sitting on the couch watching TV. She was afraid that she would disturb Luca, so she had turned the TV volume down to the point where she could barely hear anything.

"Are you done?" Nina smiled when she saw Luca walk out of the room.

"I've just finished part of my work. I'm going to prepare the hotpot now," replied Luca. Then, she headed to the kitchen.

Making a hotpot was not as complicated as making proper meals. She only had to season the soup base and clean the ingredients. That was all she had to do.

Nina followed her into the kitchen. "Let me help you."

"It's alright. Just wait for the food," Luca said as she opened the fridge and took the ingredients out.

"You're already treating me to hotpot. How could I just eat without helping? But I'm pretty bad at cooking too. Don't expect me to help you to make the soup base. I can still manage if it's just cleaning the vegetables." Nina helped to take the ingredients from Luca when Luca was taking them out of the fridge.

Luca smiled and shook her head when Nina insisted on doing so. She did not reject her offer.

Nina looked at the hotpot ingredients in the bag and exclaimed, "I didn't expect you to buy all my favorite food."

"Aren't hotpot ingredients all the same?" Luca said. She knew Nina was coming, so she bought some of her favorite hotpot ingredients.

"There are so many hotpot ingredients, but everything here suits my taste." Nina rummaged through the ingredients in the bag and exclaimed, "There's nothing I don't like to eat here."

Luca smiled, and she took the hotpot seasoning out. She planned to make the hotpot soup base first. After all, the soup base was the essence of hotpot.

the ingredients out one after another, saying, "Luca, others would think that we've known each other for years. You know my preferences

opened the package of the hotpot seasoning and said thoughtfully, "Perhaps we have known each other for a

was startled for a moment. She turned around and glanced at Luca, who was busy making the soup base. She smiled and replied, "Is that so? Then did I forget about you? If that's the case, I should be feeling guilty as hell for forgetting

shook her head. She did not continue the subject of the conversation. "Oh, please help me make some juice later. I'm planning to add some spice to the soup base to make it a little

tastes good if it's a little spicy." Nina nodded and agreed to help her. "Leave the juice to

both of them worked together and finished making the hotpot in a short

poured the soup into the pot on the induction cooker and turned

her hands with a smile on her face. "It's been a long time since I looked forward to enjoying hotpot. Thank

poured the juice into the glass, smiled at her, and said, "It's just hotpot. You don't have to thank

have no clue. After my mother fell sick, I feel satisfied just being able to have a proper meal, not to mention hotpot." Nina took the glass of juice Luca handed to her and took a sip

was freshly squeezed by her. It tasted nice and sweet, so she took another sip of

sorry for Nina when she heard

Previously, Percy was beside her to keep these matters away from her. However, Nina was bearing all the burden alone in silence *now*.

Everyone would feel sorry for what she was going through.

"*Then you* should come over here often to accompany me. It's kind of boring to eat alone." Luca extended an invitation to her.

"Alright, but won't you be too busy to entertain me next time? Your wounds are almost healed, right? I think you're going to be busy soon. I heard that you're helping T Corporation with the tender?" Nina asked.

"Yes, their translator is still on leave and can't come back to work. I was asked to do some translating work," Luca explained. She did not expect Nina to know so much about it even though she was not working in *T Corporation*.

It seemed like she had friends in T Corporation observing everything there.

Was it all because of Bianca?

As Luca was lost in thoughts, the soup started boiling. She came back to her senses, lifted the cover, and said, "Let's start putting in the ingredients **now**."

Nina put her favorite meatballs and vegetables in hurriedly.

Luca picked up a big slice of beef and put it into the pot. She said, "Don't forget about the beef **slices**."

"**Yes**, beef slices are my favorite," Nina smiled and said.

While the two of them were waiting for the meatball and vegetables to cook in the pot, the apartment's door was suddenly pushed *open*.

they turned around and looked in the direction of the door at the same time.

Luke came walking in.

was so startled that her jaw dropped a little. Why did he come here? Did she not send him a message telling him that Nina

be that it was because of Percy? He knew Nina was here, so that was why he

Luke was not that kind of person. Moreover, everyone in T Corporation was busy now.

glanced behind him. After Luke came in, he closed the door and changed into slippers. Everything was done at one go. No one followed behind him and came into

speechless. He knew Nina was here now, yet he still came. He was even deliberately walking toward her.

came back to her senses and looked at the man who was heading toward them. She asked confusingly,

shot a glance at the hotpot. His eyes gleamed, and he sat down

at his gestures and suddenly recalled that the apartment unit used a digital door lock. Even if Luke was letting Luca stay in this apartment, she must have changed

be that she changed the passcode and informed Luke about it so that he could come in and out as

no matter what kind of situation it was, it was a fact that Luke could come in and out of this apartment as he liked.

Chapter 1697

Nina looked at Luca, then she glanced at Luke again. Her heart was filled with confusion. Even the hotpot could no longer attract her attention.

The question she had in mind was, what would happen to Bianca if there was really something going on between Luca and Luke?

Nina was struggling internally. The hotpot she had been looking forward to was not as tempting anymore.

She finished eating while in a mentally confused state. Luca looked at the ingredients that were about to be finished and secretly let out a sigh. Fortunately, she had prepared extra servings. Otherwise, it would be awkward.

She rose and took the initiative to clean up the dining table when T Corporation's lunch break was almost over.

Nina sat there, looking at Luke.

He did not help Luca. It seemed like he came to get a free meal, and that was not something a host would do.

However, she could not be sure about that.

Luke knew what Nina was thinking about. He glanced at the time, stood up, and said, "It's almost time. I'll go back to work first."

What he said sounded like a husband checking in with his wife. Luca found it weird, but she was sure that he said that to her. Thus, she nodded her head and brought the cutlery into the kitchen.

Luke stood up, planning to leave.

stood up too and followed behind him. They left the apartment one after

closed the door gently without locking it just to make sure Luca would not hear their conversation.

I have something to ask you." This time, Nina no longer politely addressed him as Mr. Crawford. After all, she now saw Luke as a man who had betrayed her

stood there, turned around, and looked at Nina. "What's

cold tone of voice sounded like everything he did was normal to him. It was as if he had not realized what he did wrong.

and said, "Why do you know the passcode to this

has always been this passcode," answered Luke. Knowing what Nina was curious about, Luke would answer every question she

was startled. Did he just reply honestly?

she asked again, "The garment hanging on the balcony is yours,

"It's mine," Luke continued to answer.

Nina took a deep breath. Under what circumstances would a man's clothing appear in a woman's apartment? The answer was that they were already staying together.

She clenched her fists and questioned him, "Is this how you're treating Bea? Does she have any idea what you're doing now?"

"What can she do whether she knows or not?" Luke questioned her back.

Nina was pretty sure now. Bianca did not volunteer to travel abroad. It was definitely because Luke got tired of her. That was why he sent her overseas. He would not get scolded by the public or found out by Bianca after doing that.

Nina loved Bianca from the bottom of her heart. "Luke, you're a beast. How could you do this to Bea? It's not fair to *her*."

"Nina, you're too naive." Luke looked at Nina, who was out of her mind and thinking of standing up for Bianca. He shook his head, saying, "You know nothing. Don't ever say something like that. And stop minding other people's matters when you haven't taken care of your own matters. Besides, are you here to say such things when you're eating the hotpot that Luca prepared for you? Do you consider her as your friend?"

Nina was started. Of course, she considered Luca as her friend. However, when she thought of Luca being together with Luke, she could not hold herself back anymore. She said, "It doesn't matter if I consider Luca as a friend or not. That doesn't hide the fact that you've betrayed Bea. I never expected that she would choose a bastard like **you**."

"If you consider Luca as your friend, you shouldn't say something like that. If you're calling me a bastard, then what about Luca?" Luke pressed the elevator button. He did not intend to continue to talk to her about *this*.

There was no point talking so much to a woman who could not even control her emotions. It would only **cause chaos**.

a deep breath. She felt a little guilty. Yes, she treated Bianca as her friend, and naturally, she considered Luca as her friend

the man in front of her made her doubt if she treated her

be that her friendship with Luca was insincere? Did she get close with her only because she could be her shelter when she was alone and had no place

become friends with Luca only because she saw her as a tool?

was able to dispel the thought. Her friendship with Luca was

However, Bianca...

reached the floor. Luke pressed the button to stop the elevator from closing the doors. He said, "Don't judge others before you figure out who you consider as friends or before you learn the ins and outs of the matter. There are many things that you don't know. Not only the things on my side but your own personal matters too. Nina, you can't just keep running away. You shouldn't be that

walked into the elevator

pissed off. "Who are you calling a fool? I'm smarter than you!

doors still closed no matter how Nina yelled at him. She looked at the floor number that was descending and yelled in a low

Chapter 1698

"I'm sorry, Luca. I shouldn't have doubted you," Nina said apologetically. If Bianca were not already in the picture, she thought it would be great if Luca and Luke got together.

However, as a friend of Bianca's, she could not stand watching Luke cheat on her.

Luca patted her shoulder and said, "It's alright. I understand."

Nina let go of her and reminded her sincerely, "Bianca is alone out there now. I don't know how she's doing, so I'm always concerned with Luke's private life."

Luca listened to her concern and smiled bitterly. "I'm the one who didn't try my best. If I had stayed away from Mr. Crawford from the very beginning, you wouldn't have misunderstood us."

"I'm just too sensitive. After all those things I've gone through, I rarely believe in men anymore. That's why I doubted you." Nina let out a sigh and realized her problem.

Even though Luke was powerful and influential, there was no way he could control what Bianca did.

Luke sent her abroad, but she could have returned anytime if she wanted to. She would not have waited until now.

Hence, that was probably what Luke meant by saying that there were many things she did not know about.

Luca felt a little sorry for Nina when she saw Nina defending her without knowing it.

She wanted to tell her everything too, but if she told Nina, that would mean she was dragging Nina into this. This was way too complicated for her. Luca refused to see her best friend risk her life for her.

Enough of that. Would you like to have some fruits?" Luca asked.

her head. Even though Luke had suddenly shown up, it did not affect her appetite. After all, the soup base that Luca made tasted good, and the meatballs and vegetables were delicious. She ate a lot.

after eating the hotpot. I can't eat anything now." She touched her belly. It was rare to see her

smiled as she looked at Nina's slightly bloated stomach. She said, "Is it really that

so good. The last time I ate such a good hotpot was made by Bea too. I didn't expect you to be so good at making hotpot too. That's great. I ate too much without knowing it." Nina recalled the taste of the hotpot she had just now. It tasted almost like the hotpot soup base that Bianca made.

it had been so long. She could only vaguely remember that it tasted almost the same, but she could not differentiate if there was a difference and what the difference

"You'll grow fatter if I make you eat my cooking every

too skinny, and she did not look healthy at all. She looked weak and lacked nutrients. Luca still preferred the chubby version of her back

shouldn't be eating the meals that you prepare every day. It's easy to get fat but it's harder to slim down. Everyone wants to be slim nowadays. It'll be hard for me to slim down if I get fat

look better when you're a little chubby." Luca looked at Nina's thin face. Her face would be pale white if she had no makeup

"Alright, alright. You haven't done the dishes, right? Let me do them. Hurry up and get back to work." Nina listened to her. Bianca had said that to her *before*.

She did not know why Bianca would come into her mind whenever she was talking to Luca. Perhaps it was the way they talked, that was why she could not stop thinking about **her**.

Nina took the job of washing the dishes and let Luca continue with her work.

Luca looked at her heading to the kitchen from behind. She smiled and shook her head. Then, she entered the bedroom and continued to translate the remaining **documents**.

The three documents remaining did not have as many pages as the previous one. It only took her three hours to finish translating the rest of the documents. After she completed her job, she checked through her work again to make sure there was no mistake. Then, she sent it to Luke.

Not long after that, she received a reply email from Luke's work email.

He sent her an address right **away**.

Luca looked at the address. It was the address of a shopping *mall nearby*.

She did not know why Luke would send her the address. She sent a message to him to ask **about it**.

Luke replied, "You have to go there on your own today."

He did not mention what he wanted her to do. Luca was confused about what his plans were. She could only listen to his orders and follow them.

on something that she could wear outside. She walked out of the bedroom and saw that Nina was lying on the couch, taking a nap.

TV was still switched on, and the volume was low. Luca shook her head as she looked at the woman who was fast asleep. It was late. If Nina continued to sleep, she probably would not be able to sleep

Luca walked toward her and shook her. "Nina,

opened her eyes slowly. She woke up and looked at Luca with her groggy eyes. "Luca, what's the

late. If you continue to sleep, you won't be able to fall asleep tonight. Get up. Come with me," Luca said gently. She lowered her voice when she saw Nina in a daze after waking up.

her head and sat up. She picked up her phone and glanced at it. "I've been sleeping for so long?"

to feel sleepy after filling your stomach,” said Luca. She would take a nap too if she was not sleepy. I’m messing up my sleeping schedule like this.” Nina opened her Instagram and saw the message that Sue sent to her. After she replied to her, she turned to look at Luca. “Luca, are you asking me to go out with

Mr. Crawford assigned me a task. He told me to head to the mall nearby. Let’s go together?” Luca said. She wanted Nina to hang out with her.

Nina. She used her fingers as a comb and ran her fingers through her hair to tidy up her messy long hair. Then, she asked with confusion, “By the way, do you have any idea why Luke asked you to go to the shopping mall?”

Chapter 1699

“Welcome, Ms. Craw.” A few of them surrounded Luca and greeted her passionately.

Luca got even more confused, and she quickly told them why she was here. “Hello, Mr. Crawford sent me here. Did he buy something here?”

After the manager knew that Luca was here, she quickly came forward. “Hello, Ms. Craw. Mr. Crawford didn’t buy anything here, but he has given us his orders. Please come with me.”

Luca looked at Nina. What was Luke up to?

Nina held her hand and followed behind the shop manager. She said in a low voice, “Based on the situation now, they’re planning to ask you to buy something.”

“Ah, there’s nothing I’d like to buy,” Luca replied in a soft voice. Why did Luke ask her to come here, then?

The manager walked in front of them and listened to their conversation. She turned sideways and explained, “Ms. Craw, Mr. Crawford told us that you’ll be attending a party the day after tomorrow. Hence, we’ll be creating a perfect look for you to attend the party.”

“Party?” Luca frowned. She had never accepted any party invitation.

Nina was able to figure it out at once. She said, “She’s probably talking about Old Master Crawford’s birthday party. I heard that they’ve been preparing the birthday party for a long time. It’s going to be a grand one.”

“But I didn’t receive any invitation. Why am I attending the party?” Luca said. If it had not been for Luke who asked her to come here, she would doubt that the shop assistants might have mistaken her for someone else.

“You didn’t? Aren’t e-invitations quite popular now? Check if they sent it to your email. You might have missed out on the e-invitation,” Nina said thoughtfully. Luke must have invited Luca to the party if he made such arrangements.

shook her head helplessly. She read every email in her mailbox. She would never have missed

shop assistant smiled and said, "Yes. Since Mr. Crawford has made such arrangements, you must have received the invitation but you probably missed

shook her head helplessly. Nina touched her with her elbow and suggested, "Just go along with it since Luke arranged it."

Luca decided to listen

assistant brought the two of them into a fitting room. She picked up the measuring tape and took Luca's measurements. Then, she explained, "Ms. Craw, there's not much time left, so we can't customize a new gown for you. I'll try my best to pick a gown and alter it to fit you. Is

had no opinion on this. She thought it would be fine as long as the clothes fit her. She may not attend Old Master Crawford's birthday party even if Luke bought a gown for her.

she did not have the

glanced around at the gowns, gave a tsk, and exclaimed, "As expected from the haute couture of a luxury brand. These gowns are beautiful."

Luca heard that she said, "Which do you like better? I'll buy you

can't wear gowns to work. What's the point of buying one for me?" Nina turned around and smiled. She blinked her eyes. She had worn these gowns before, but it was in the past.

When she was together with Percy, even though she did not have a status, he would still bring her to various kinds of events.

Getting luxurious gowns and pieces of jewelry was a must when she attended those events.

Nina recalled the time when she lived the life people **desired**.

Although she did not feel happy, she could live a splendid life because of that.

Nina began to pick the gowns for her as the manager took Luca's body measurements.

After she took the measurements, she picked two gowns and put them in front of Luca. "These are the ones I picked for you. See if you like them."

Luca looked at the simple but elegant gowns. They would match her if she were still the person she used to be. However, she had undergone plastic surgery and looked more alluring now. She was afraid that she could not pull off such elegant gowns.

"**You look** alluring, but you're going to a birthday party, not a charity event. So, I think these two are more suitable for such occasions among all these gowns," Nina explained.

The shop manager agreed and nodded her head. She said, "The gowns don't seem to suit Ms. Craw, but makeup can change a person's aura. They're good choices. Of course, the most important thing is to choose the gown you fancy, no matter what gown it is."

Luca thought that she did not receive any invitation. Even though Luke had arranged this for her, she probably would not attend the party either. Hence, she just picked one of **them**.

glanced at the size. She smiled and said, "The size of the gown is almost the same as Ms. Craw's measurements. Please wait for a while. Let me alter it for you, then it'll be

saw that the manager was about to alter the gown, she immediately said, "You don't have

who was standing beside her, disagreed with her. "This is not troublesome. A gown should fit your figure well. Just wait for a moment. We're not in a rush

looked at her. She could not help but ask the question in her heart, "I thought you didn't want to see me getting too close with Mr.

are unavoidable. Besides, it's the old master's birthday. It's not Luke's birthday, so it's normal for him to invite you to the party," Nina explained. Then, she turned to look at the jewelry display cases. She grabbed Luca's hand and headed there. "Look, pick a set of jewelry. Match it with the gown so that you won't look dull."

shook her head when she saw the prices of the jewelry.

you trying to save Luke's money?" Nina teased

it instantly. "How's

shop assistant beside them heard their conversation and said, "Ms. Craw, pick one. Mr. Crawford ordered us to get you a set of jewelry apart from the

told you. Luke must have already thought about it,"

Chapter 1700

Nina held her arms and shook her head.

The TV in the VIP room was turned on. The TV was broadcasting the news that the Johnston family had made bad investments and lost a lot of money.

Whenever they mentioned the Johnston family, they would definitely mention the Mallory family too. Nina's expression changed when she was watching the news about the union between the Johnston family and the Mallory family through marriage. She changed the TV channel without listening to what the news was broadcasting.

Luca watched everything she did. She picked up the business magazine in front of her. It was today's issue, and it reported about the Johnston family's matter. It even analyzed the current situation of the Mallory family. She handed the magazine to Nina.

Nina took it from her. She closed the magazine when she saw the words 'Mallory family.' "What's so great about it?"

Luca looked at Nina, who ignored every piece of news that was related to Percy. She asked curiously, "Nina, you came out today to avoid Percy, right?"

Nina put the magazine on the coffee table and looked at her helplessly.

"You can't avoid some people forever. I heard that the reason why the Johnston family made bad investments was that someone plotted against them behind their backs. Nina, who do you think set the Johnston family up?" Luca asked. She was smart, so she knew what Luca meant.

Nina shook her head, pretending to be confused. "I'm just an ordinary person. How can I possibly know so much about this?"

The shop assistant served two cups of coffee. After Luca took one and thanked her, she stirred her cup of coffee slowly. She did not continue to talk to Nina.

The sudden silence made Nina feel uneasy. She stirred her coffee as well and waited for Luca's reply.

However, Luca never spoke.

In the end, Nina could no longer stand it and asked, "Umm, what's this all about?"

also just an ordinary person," Luca repeated the same thing Nina said to her. She took a sip of the bitter-tasting coffee and looked

uncomfortable and was struck dumb at Luca's response. She tucked her loose hair behind her ears and blinked her eyes. "But you're much better than

smiled and said, "No, I just listen more. If you'd like to know more about some matters, it's best to ask the party involved. Give him a chance to make things clear. By doing so, you're also giving yourself another chance. Nina, running away is not an option. Even though he's giving you the chance to escape now, you can't run away from him

silent listening to her words of

from Percy was easier said than

was right. She could run away from him now because he had yet to back her into a corner. However, once he made his move, she would not even have the chance

while, the manager brought the altered gown in. "Ms. Craw, the gown has been altered. Do you want to try

need to. I'm in a rush. Wrap it up for me please," answered Luca. She did not intend to put it on. She did not plan to go to the birthday party after

what Nina said, she was merely an ordinary person. Who was she to attend the

manager was startled for a moment. Usually, the people who came to pick their gowns were very meticulous. They would try on the gowns after the gowns were

all, they were only responsible for after-sales service once the customers brought the goods out of the store. They were not responsible for any refunds on

manager noticed that Luca could not even be bothered to try the gown, she did not think too much about it anymore as well. It was not like she would be getting paid extra for this. Hence, she went to pack the gown.

After wrapping up the gown, the shop assistant also carried the jewelry that had been wrapped up over to them. "This is the jewelry set that Ms. Craw picked."

The manager was slightly startled when she saw that the jewelry set was the representative piece of their collection. Luca, who looked reluctant just now, had chosen the most expensive *jewelry*.

Luca was a tough customer. The manager did not notice it just now. She was in awe when she looked at Luca now.

After everything was packed, the manager carried the things and placed them in front of Luca respectfully.

Luca stood up and asked, "How much in total?"

The manager was startled for a moment. She was the one *paying?*

When she saw Luca taking her card out of her purse, she quickly said, "Mr. Crawford told us that these are for you. You only have to bring them home. We'll settle the bill with Mr. Crawford."

Of course, Luca knew Luke was giving them to her as a gift. However, she dared not to accept these things, especially when she was with **Nina**.

"Let me pay for it." Luca handed her bank card to the **manager**.

The manager smiled and shook her head. It was her first time encountering such a situation. "Ms. Craw, you only have to bring these home. You don't have to do anything else."

Nina grabbed the bank card Luca was holding in her hand and put it back into her purse. "Since Luke is giving these to you, you should just accept them."

"That's not good..." Luca frowned. When she was about to stand her ground, Nina carried the bags and said, "Let's go. It's getting late. Time for *dinner*."

had no choice but to let Nina take her hand and leave.

of them left the store and chose to dine in at a

placed their order, Luca glanced at the two wrapped boxes in the bags and let out a

"Why are you sighing?" Nina asked.

done nothing to deserve these. The gown and jewelry are so expensive. I'd like to pay for them," Luca said. She was not short of money

She was surprised by Luke's arrangement.

still make sense if she were Bianca, but she was using another identity now. It made her think a lot when Luke treated her

Did he have feelings for her?

it did not seem like that to her when she thought of how he usually behaved. She felt exhausted to constantly guess what was on Luke's

doing it on purpose. Stop putting the shop assistants in a difficult spot.” Nina could see through everything clearly and said calmly.

Luca nodded her head.

served them two glasses of juice and placed them in front of them. Nina took a sip of the juice. Her face suddenly turned pale white when she looked around.