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As Toby's personal assistant, Tom knew very well how much he loved and worried about Sonia. Whenever Sonia called and sent a message, when did Toby not reply immediately? Even if he was in a meeting, he would break the rules he had set to answer Sonia's phone calls or reply to her messages, and he had never missed any of them.

This time, however, Toby was clearly not busy, and he had also seen that it was Sonia who was calling, but he chose to ignore her coldly. If this didn't mean that he was having relationship problems, what else could it mean? After all, if they weren't having any problems, Toby would never treat Sonia like this.

However, Tom had no clue what happened between the two without him knowing that could make Toby act like this all of a sudden. The two of them were still deeply in love yesterday, and Toby was still working hard to deal with all kinds of troubles Sonia was facing that day, making it clear that his feelings for her had not faded in the slightest. So, did the problem lie with Sonia?

Tom rubbed his chin as he pondered. That seemed to be the case, but he had no clue what Sonia did to offend Toby to the point where he refused to answer her calls.

Suddenly, a vibrating noise sounded in the quiet atmosphere, breaking the creepy silence. Tom looked down, only to see the sound had come from Toby's phone again, but this time it was not a phone call, but a text message instead. The sender of the text message was still Sonia.

Tom immediately raised his head and snuck a peek at Toby, who was sitting with a fountain pen in both hands, not showing any intention to reach out to get his phone. However, this time, he didn't deliberately ignore his phone, but looked at the screen as if deep in thought.

Seeing this, Tom couldn't help but purse his lips. "President Fuller, I don't know what happened between you and Miss Reed, but it's not a good thing for you to give her the cold shoulder. If Miss Reed knows that you deliberately didn't answer the phone or read her text, your previous situation will be even worse, so you should take a look," he advised sincerely.

He was well aware of how much Toby loved Sonia, and knew how Toby had even nearly given up his life just to get her back. Hence, he didn't like how the couple would let a misunderstanding build up without dealing with it immediately, causing their

conflicts to grow even worse and making Toby regret it even more in the future. That would do more harm than good, and there was no point in it either.

Toby could naturally tell that Tom was saying these things for his own good, so he did not get angry at his suggestion. He just frowned, then waved his hand and said, "This is my business, and I will take care of it myself. I don't need your reminders. You can leave first."

"Yes, sir." At Toby's words, there was nothing more Tom could say. Thus, he nodded before picking up the documents he had processed and turning around to leave.

Soon, Toby was the only one left in the office. At that moment, his phone screen had turned dark again. He pursed his thin lips with a stiff expression, as if he was struggling or hesitating. After a while, he let out a small sigh and decided to pick his phone up.

Yes, he knew that Sonia had called him, but he chose not to answer on purpose. Sonia refusing to tell him her problems and choosing to ask others for help rather than looking for him made him extremely angry, and at the same time, he felt like a failure. He was her lover, but why did she always go to other people instead of him? Was he an unreliable person in her heart?

Hence, he had deliberately ignored her call with the intention to give her the cold shoulder and silently show her that he felt unhappy and that he had complaints. He wanted to let her know how uncomfortable it was to be deliberately ignored by one's lover. However, he was also aware of how childish his approach was. After all, Sonia didn't know that he ignored her on purpose. Therefore, she wouldn't be able to experience the feeling of being ignored by the man she loved. In other words, by giving her the cold shoulder, he was only torturing himself in the end, and he couldn't get back at Sonia at all.

Toby's thin lips twitched as a self-deprecating smile appeared at the corner of his mouth. Even if he was angry and wanted to ignore her on purpose, he still gave in and was unable to continue his actions. Clearly, he had barely lasted a moment before he picked up his phone again. At that thought, he realized that he was quite useless at times.

Toby rubbed his forehead as he unlocked his phone with his other hand and tapped on the text message from Sonia. 'Sorry, I didn't know you were busy. Did I disturb you with the call earlier? You don't have to call me back. I just wanted to ask you a question, but if you're busy, it's fine. I'll just ask you when you come home at night. Also, what time will you be back? If you'll be too late, just tell me and don't let me worry. Of course, it's best if you can come back earlier. I'll cook you your favorite dishes.'

Though the message wasn't particularly warm, it was full of concern.

The furrow between Toby's brows loosened and his expression eased. Then, he replied with a text, 'I'll go back earlier.'

In the end, he was still the only one who was angry, and his anger had decreased rapidly after a few words from her. He was truly stuck with her for the rest of his life.

On the other end, after Sonia sent the text, she did not receive a reply after a long time, just like her phone call. However, she did not feel downcast as she had already confirmed that Toby was too busy to check his phone, and that he would definitely reply once he saw her text. Hence, the moment she sent the text, instead of waiting for a reply, she cleverly turned off her phone and held it in her hand as she leaned against the car window and closed her eyes to take a nap, just like Charles.

Probably because she had also drunk a lot, she felt a little dizzy at this moment. However, it was not as serious as Charles, who was completely drunk and was deeply asleep. On the other hand, she didn't feel like sleeping much.

Not long after Sonia closed her eyes, the phone in her hand suddenly buzzed. Caught off guard, her hands suddenly trembled, and if she hadn't reacted in time, she would've subconsciously thrown her phone out.

She opened her eyes and sat up straight, turning her phone to face her. Upon seeing that there was a text from Toby, she immediately smiled and tapped on it quickly. However, he had only sent a short sentence that was no longer than ten words, which was far shorter than her lengthy text, and it made her feel a little disappointed.

However, she quickly regained her composure. No matter how long his text was, she should be satisfied if he was able to take the time to reply to her amidst his busy schedule.

Sonia smoothed her hair that had become messy from leaning against the car window and replied, 'Okay, then I'll wait for you. Stay safe when you come back.'

After sending the text, Sonia thought that Toby would be too busy to reply again, so she placed her phone in her bag before peeking out slightly to say to the driver, "Sir, when we reach Bayside Residence, please send me to the luxury mall nearby. I'm planning to get some groceries. After that, you can just send him back to the Lane Residence. You can leave my car there without sending it back."

"Yes, miss," the driver answered with a smile.

Sonia nodded and leaned back on the seat again.

Half an hour later, when they arrived at the luxury mall in Bayside Residence, Sonia got out of the car and instructed the driver to call her after he had sent Charles back. Then, she turned around and entered the mall.

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That night, she wanted to stock up on groceries and make a feast for Toby to make up for her neglecting him during the past few days. At the thought, Sonia smiled as she pushed the cart around the fresh food section.

By the time she finished shopping and came out, it was already past six in the evening, and the sky had already turned dark. With two large bags in her hands, Sonia swayed left and right like a penguin as she walked toward Bayside Residence. Due to the amount of heavy groceries, her speed was extremely slow, and the bags would also hit her calves from time to time, which hindered her from walking. Fortunately, Bayside Residence was not far away, and it was just a short walk from the mall. Finally, about ten minutes later, Sonia successfully returned to the apartment with the groceries.

After she placed the things in the kitchen, she let out a sigh of relief and leaned against the wall, panting heavily from exhaustion. Because she had been wearing high heels while walking back with two bags of heavy groceries, not only did her feet hurt, but her arms and shoulders were also sore. Leaning against the wall, she bent over and rubbed her calves for a moment, then straightened her body to knead her shoulders before her body finally felt much better. Then, she started to go through the bags and use the ingredients to start cooking.

At the same time, Tom parked the car at an empty spot in the parking lot of Bayside Residence and turned to look at the resting man in the back seat. "President Fuller, we're here."

The car lights were not turned on, so the back seat was completely dark. Though Tom couldn't see Toby clearly except for a part of his body, the man who was concealed in darkness like this gave off an extremely pressuring aura.

When Toby heard Tom's words, he opened his eyes slightly, and a dark glint flashed in his gaze as he hummed in reply. However, he still remained seated with his legs crossed gracefully and his head leaning on his hand that was resting on the armrest, showing not the slightest intention of getting out of the car.

Tom turned on the smallest lights in the car and was finally able to see Toby's current expression. When he saw him looking blankly at the empty parking lot outside the car window, Tom said in surprise, "Miss Reed's car isn't here. Hasn't she come back yet?"

"She has," Toby indifferently replied.

When she sent him a text message in the afternoon, she said that she was back to Bayside Residence, and he believed that she would not lie to him. As for why her car wasn't parked here...

Toby pursed his thin lips. "Check if her car is at the Lane Residence."

"Huh?" Tom was taken aback for a moment, but when he looked at Toby's cold handsome face, he shivered. Not daring to delay any further, he quickly took out his phone and made a call, providing the other end with Sonia's car's license plate. After around two minutes, he acquired the desired answer.

He put down his phone and looked at Toby in surprise, giving him a thumbs up. "President Fuller, you're right on the money. Miss Reed's car is really at the Lane Residence, but how did you know that?"

"They went for lunch together. After Charles sent her back, he took her car with him," Toby replied, slightly lifting his gaze.

Tom said in realization, "Right. I forgot about that."

He couldn't help but swat at his forehead. Then, he thought of something that caused his eyes to widen, and his mouth gaped as if he wanted to say something. However, he held back and remained silent.

Toby's eyes narrowed. "What do you want to say?"

Seeing that his hesitation to speak had been discovered, Tom could not hide it anymore and could only voice out his guesses. "President Fuller, are you treating Miss Reed so... weirdly because she went out to eat with Mr. Lane?"

However, it didn't seem quite right. During the day, when Toby found out that Sonia was going for lunch with Charles, although he was a little jealous and was rushing to pay the bill, his attitude toward Sonia wasn't like this. Besides, he had also said at that time that Charles was going to help Sonia, so it was normal for her to invite him to a meal, and he would not be jealous for such a reason. Hence, he thought that his guess seemed a little wrong.

However, apart from this reason, he really couldn't figure out why Toby was suddenly giving Sonia the cold shoulder. He could only say that love was a confusing thing, and it was fortunate that he had not experienced it yet.

Toby glanced at the panicking Tom and nonchalantly replied, "No."

Tom blinked in confusion. "No?"

He couldn't believe he had guessed wrongly.

Meanwhile, Toby pursed his lips and didn't reply.

At the sight, Tom mustered his courage and asked again, "In that case, what happened between you and Miss Reed, President Fuller?"

Toby rubbed his fingers together, showing no intention of answering.

Tom sighed helplessly. Toby really was stubborn. Once he had something he didn't want to say out loud, he would never say it. Tom had still been considering helping Toby come up with a solution, but as he refused to say a word, Tom couldn't come up with any ideas either.

While he was deep in thought, a cell phone rang in the car, interrupting Tom's inward grumbling. He looked at Toby, realizing that it was his phone that was ringing.

At the same time, Toby had already taken his phone out of his pocket and was looking down at the screen. Although Tom was in the driver's seat and was a little far away from his phone, he was able to see the contents on the screen by stretching his neck out slightly. The call was from Sonia.

Tom's mouth gaped open again before he looked at Toby, wanting to see what he would do this time. Would he choose to ignore her on purpose like he did earlier, or would he pick up the phone? Tom didn't have to wait long before he received his answer.

He watched as Toby put his hand down from the armrest and straightened his head before he gently swiped at the screen with his thumb and put the phone to his ear.

He picked up! He actually picked up the phone! Tom's eyes turned wide in surprise. Toby did not ignore Sonia's call as he had done during the day, but chose to answer. From the looks of things, the situation between the two did not seem to be particularly bad. He thought it made sense. After all, if it were bad, why would Toby choose to go back to Bayside Residence instead of going back to his residence? It seemed that he didn't have to worry too much.

Tom breathed a sigh of relief and smiled in reassurance as he quietly listened to Toby talking to the person on the other side of the phone.

"Hello?" Toby answered in a low voice. His tone was still a little cold, and it was completely different from the usual gentle and doting voice he usually used when he talked to Sonia.

However, Sonia was cooking at the moment. She sandwiched her phone between her head and her shoulder while her hands busied themselves, one of them holding the handle of the pan while the other held a spatula as she stir-fried the ingredients in the

pan constantly. The sizzling sounds were loud, and it covered the indifference in Toby's tone.

Hence, she didn't sense anything wrong and spoke to him as she usually did. "Are you done with work? When are you coming back?"

On the phone, Toby naturally heard the sounds of cooking on the other end, and he began envisioning the sight of Sonia in an apron and busily cooking for him in the kitchen. Just the thought of it filled him with a warmth that only a lover could bring about. Toby's frown relaxed, and the apathy in his tone instantly disappeared. The usual gentleness of his voice returned.

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"I'm already downstairs. I'll be back soon," Toby replied in a warm voice.

Hearing that, Sonia smiled. "That's great. I was just finishing up the last dish and was worried that it won't taste good if it gets cold. Hurry up, it's almost time to eat."

Toby nodded and hummed in reply.

After the call ended, he put down his phone and uncrossed his legs as if he was finally ready to get out of the car. Sure enough, as soon as he put his phone away, he immediately opened the car door and bent over to exit.

Tom hurriedly lowered the window at the driver's seat and called out to the man who was about to walk toward the elevator. "President Fuller."

Toby stopped and frowned, as if he was displeased with Tom stopping him from going home. "What is it?" He pursed his lips, his tone clearly impatient.

The corners of Tom's mouth twitched. What now? Blaming me for keeping him from going home? He rolled his eyes inwardly. Who was the one who stayed in the car and refused to move earlier? Toby wasn't rushing to get out of the car and go home just now, but now that Sonia had called him, he immediately wanted to rush home. Ha, men will always be men!

Although he was ranting in his mind, Tom didn't show it on his face and asked with a smile, "Do you need me to pick you up tomorrow?"

"What do you think?" Toby asked expressionlessly.

Tom glanced at Sonia's empty parking space and fell silent. After a few seconds, he spoke again. "I understand, President Fuller. What time should I arrive tomorrow morning?"

"Eight o'clock." Toby thought for a moment before giving him a time.

Tom nodded, making a note of it in his head.

Then, when Toby turned around and was about to leave, Tom suddenly recalled something and extended his hand from the car window, calling him again. "President Fuller!"

Toby was getting a little angry this time, and he turned around with a dark expression. "You'd better have something important, or you can go back to the company to work overtime now."

Tom fell silent as his breath got caught in his chest. This man really was vicious!

"President Fuller, I want to say that no matter what happened between you and Miss Reed, I hope that when you go back tonight, you will have a good talk with her and try to resolve the misunderstanding as much as possible so that it wouldn't cause you any problems in the future. After all, you almost gave your life to pursue Miss Reed, and I don't want you two to break up because of a minor issue. President Fuller, d-do you understand what I'm saying?" Tom looked at Toby and asked cautiously.

As an assistant, it was out of line for him to be involved in his superior's private life. However, he really couldn't bear to see Toby falling back into his pain after breaking up with Sonia. Hence, he plucked up the courage and boldly gave his advice, hoping that Toby wouldn't blame him.

In fact, Toby really didn't mean to blame Tom. He was not the kind of person who didn't know any better of himself. He knew that Tom was worried about him when he said those words, so he would not punish him indiscriminately for stepping out of line.

"I don't need you to tell me that. I was going to do that myself." The displeasure on Toby's face disappeared, replaced by an indifferent calm.

His expression showed that he was no longer angry about Tom stopping him earlier, and he wouldn't care about Tom's rude behavior in meddling in his private life either.

Hearing that, Tom was relieved. After patting his chest, he laughed. "That's good. In that case, I won't delay your reunion with Miss Reed anymore, President Fuller. I'll leave now and come back tomorrow morning."

After Toby hummed in reply, Tom rolled the car window up and backed the car before he turned and left.

While massaging his eyebrows, Toby entered the elevator. Two minutes later, he opened the apartment door and walked in. As soon as he stepped inside, a mouthwatering aroma filled his nostrils. His expression softened even more at the scent and the air around him turned relaxed. He was no longer as cold and indifferent as he was in the parking lot just now.

Toby changed his shoes and walked into the living room. There was no one there, except for a few dishes that were placed on the dining table. When he saw the dishes, his eyes flashed with surprise. The dinner tonight was so lavish! Usually, as it was only the two of them, they would prepare a small meal that was delicious but not large in proportions. Sometimes they might even have leftovers if they didn't have much of an appetite. However, Sonia had prepared so much tonight, and the entire table was filled with food. Did something good happen for her to prepare such a feast?

Toby took off his coat and hung it on the shelf on one side, then turned and walked toward the kitchen. As Sonia wasn't in the living room and there was still movement in the kitchen, it was clear where she was.

Toby treaded lightly, making almost no sound as he walked. When he arrived at the kitchen entrance, he saw Sonia standing behind the kitchen counter with her head down, busy doing something seriously. However, her hands were blocked by her body, and Toby couldn't see what she was doing.

Still, this did not prevent him from leaning against the door frame as he stared at her figure with folded arms. She had a good figure, and with her height of five feet five, though she wasn't considered tall for a female, she wasn't short either. In particular, her proportions were good, making her look tall and eye-catching. Coupled with her curves and her slender waist, along with her long legs, she was a beauty that made people unable to move their gaze away from her.

Toby kept looking back and forth between the woman's waist and her firm hips with a dark expression, as if he was about to suck everything into his eyes, making it difficult for one to return his stare. Perhaps he had been staring too openly as Sonia faintly sensed something, and she paused in her movements to turn around, just to come face-to-face with Toby's deep and intense eyes.

"Ah!" Her body jolted in shock.

At the sound of her shout, Toby immediately returned to his senses and strode over to her in one big step. He then grabbed her shoulders with both hands, asking urgently, "What's wrong?"

Upon seeing his nervous expression, Sonia said with an amused smile, "I'm fine, you just scared me. Anyone would be scared if they turned around and saw someone at the door, right? You should've said something if you're back. The way you don't even make a sound when you enter, who wouldn't be scared?"

When Toby heard this, he let out a sigh of relief. "Sorry, I just wanted to see what you were doing, but I didn't expect that I'd scare you."

He really didn't mean to do so. After all, he hadn't expected that she would have such a big reaction after seeing him.

At his apologetic expression, Sonia patted his arm lightly. "All right, I'm fine. It's not entirely your fault. It's also because I was too focused just now that I got startled so easily."

"What were you doing?" Toby stepped past her and looked behind her.

Sonia turned around and replied, "I'm carving."

She picked up the pumpkin she had carved in half and smiled sheepishly. "I need to set up the last dish for it to look good, but I forgot to buy an orchid, so I planned to carve one by myself. When I followed a tutorial online, it looked simple, but it was difficult when I actually started doing it myself. I didn't expect it to turn out so bad after all that work. It's all crooked, and it doesn't look like a flower at all. It looks like a pool of mud instead."

Toby laughed under his breath. "It does, but it's still salvageable."

"This pile of mess? Salvageable?" Sonia's eyes widened in shock.

Toby nodded and answered confidently, "Yes!"

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"Really?" Sonia looked at Toby with wide eyes.

He nodded. "Yes. If you don't believe me, why don't you let me try?"

She handed the carving knife over without saying anything. After he took it, he took two steps forward and stood where she had just stood before he picked up the mud-like pumpkin she had carved and inspected it carefully, as if he was wondering where he should start from.

Sonia didn't know what he was thinking. As she watched him remain motionless with the knife in one hand and her carved pumpkin in the other, she thought that he finally realized that things were not as simple and easy as he had said they were at the beginning. Just as she was about to laugh at him for boasting, she saw him move all of

a sudden. With his long fingers wrapped around the carving knife, he carved onto the pumpkin little by little. His movements were deft, and he didn't seem like a novice at all, more like a master with many years of carving experience.

Her red lips opened slightly in surprise. "You're so good at this. When did you learn how to carve? Did you pick it up when you learned to cook?"

Even though food carving was a part of culinary arts, there were not many people who would learn it, and it was mostly those who dreamed of being a hotel chef or a chef in some high-end restaurant who would learn it. After all, it was only in a situation like this that food carving would come in handy. The average chef in a small restaurant would only know some simple dishes, but there was no need for any complicated food carvings in those dishes. Although Toby had been learning cooking recently, he was mostly learning home-cooked dishes from major cuisines instead of any exquisite and beautiful dishes. Therefore, it surprised her greatly that he knew food carving.

"I never learned it." Unexpectedly, Toby's answer was that he hadn't learned it.

Sonia walked to his side in surprise. Looking at the movements in his hands, she looked even more astonished. "You never learned it? Then how did you know how to do this? You even look so good at it!"

Toby focused on his carving and did not look up. He only replied with a chuckle, "I studied jade carving for a bit during high school."

"Jade carving?"

"Yeah." Toby raised his chin slightly. "At that time, I wanted to give my grandmother something special for her birthday, but I didn't know what to give her. Later, Tom suggested that I give her a carved statue."

"Oh, I get it now." Sonia clapped her hands. "Grandma likes these things, so it's a good gift for her."

Toby hummed in assent. "Yes, but Grandma has many statues that were all made by famous sculptors. If I gave her another one, it wouldn't be anything new to her, and she wouldn't be amazed by it."

"So, you went to learn jade carving just to make Grandma surprised by your gift?" Sonia guessed, touching her chin.

Toby smiled. "Something like that. Besides, I couldn't do many things because of my heart condition back then, and I felt useless. Because of that, I was always angry and depressed. Learning jade carving was not only for Grandma's gift, but it was also a form of self care. It requires great patience and carefulness, so if I wasn't in a good mental state, I wouldn't be able to pick it up at all."

"In other words, if you hadn't learned jade carving, your heart might take a bigger burden due to your anger issues to the point where you might not have held on long enough to replace your heart?" Sonia bit her lip and asked.

Toby nodded. "That's right."

Sonia felt her heart stop. Then, she slowly took a step back and went behind him to embrace him, burying her head on his sturdy back.

Toby's body jolted and his hand stopped carving; he was obviously shocked by her sudden behavior. He placed down the carving knife in his hand and turned his head slightly to look at the woman behind him.

As she was hugging him, he couldn't turn much, so he couldn't see her entire body and only saw a part of her body and her side profile. Even so, his gaze was still gentle and doting as he asked, "What's the matter? Why are you so affectionate today?"

"I'm not." Sonia lifted her head to roll her eyes at him, before she lowered her head again and rested her head on the middle of his back, her red lips opening as she spoke in a sad yet grateful tone. "I was just glad that Tom recommended you to give Grandma a statue back then. If not, you wouldn't learn jade carving, and if you didn't, you wouldn't be able to calm your heart down, and then..."

She couldn't continue. Her voice trembled and choked with fear. She was afraid that if he had not studied jade carving to calm his mind, he wouldn't be able to last long enough to find a suitable heart and would've died back then.

Sensing that she was feeling down, Toby placed the pumpkin in his hand down and turned around to hug her tightly, rubbing his chin against the top of her head as he softly comforted, "All right, I'm fine now, aren't I? Don't be scared. That's all in the past. I'm all better now."

Saying that, he caressed the woman's hair. He put in more strength than usual to let her know that he really was fine at the moment, that he was right in front of her, and he wasn't an illusion. He wanted her to stop overthinking and stop being afraid.

When Sonia raised her head, her eyes were a little red. "I know you're fine now, but what happened back then was still really scary and dangerous. It was such a close call. If Tom hadn't advised you back then, or if you hadn't accepted his suggestion, you... you wouldn't be here now!"

Toby's face was filled with a smile as he said, "But what happened was that Tom made a suggestion, and I accepted his suggestion, right?"

"What if you didn't?"

"There is no what if," he replied seriously.

She pursed her lips. "What do you mean?"

"Don't forget that you and I were already pen pals back then." Toby pinched her face gently. "I remember that at that time, we had been pen pals for two years. Although I hadn't fallen in love with you, I was already interested in you. I always knew that I needed to calm my mental state instead of being angry all the time, so when Tom suggested that to me, I immediately thought of learning jade carving and fixing my anger issues. Only then would I be able to live longer and hold on long enough to find the right replacement for my heart in order to meet you in the future."

"So, what you're saying is that because you wanted to meet me, you wouldn't refuse Tom's suggestion, right?" Sonia sniffled as she looked at him.

He lowered his head and dropped an extremely gentle kiss on her wet eyes, replying in a low and pleasant voice, "Of course. So, do you feel better now?"

Sonia huffed and rested her forehead against his chest, falling silent in tacit agreement. Toby chuckled and wrapped an arm around her waist while he placed the other on the back of her head and caressed her gently as if he were coaxing a child. Sonia leaned in his embrace with a slight smile, enjoying his doting actions. After all, which woman wouldn't want to live like a child and be spoiled like one by their lover? In any case, she liked it.

However, she knew that she couldn't keep hugging him like this. Hence, after he had embraced her for about two minutes, she took the initiative to come out of Toby's arms and looked at the man who was still a little startled with a smile. He seemed to be wondering why she wasn't letting him hug her anymore.

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"All right, it's getting late. You'd better hurry up and finish carving the rest of the orchids. After you're done, we should eat before the food gets cold," Sonia said as she fixed her ruffled hair.

On the other hand, Toby felt relieved after finding out why she left his embrace. He had thought that she didn't want him to hug her anymore.

"Okay, I'll speed it up." Toby nodded slightly and turned around, picking up the pumpkin and carving knife he had just put down before he continued to carve.

Sonia stood next to him again, watching him carving obediently. "I really didn't expect that after you learned to carve a jade statue, you would even know how to carve an orchid."

Hearing that, Toby smiled. "A jade statue is a big object. I wouldn't have been able to carve it from the beginning. Although I have money and I don't care how much jade is wasted, the master I was under the tutelage of cared and felt sorry for the jade shards and asked me to use scraps of jade to learn carving, starting from some simple small objects. Orchids were one of those objects. After I learned some carving techniques from carving small objects and I became better at it, he started to teach me how to carve larger objects."

"I see." Sonia nodded in realization. "But this was all so long ago. I didn't expect you to remember it and still be so proficient at it. If it were me, I would've become a novice again a long time ago."

A glint flashed past Toby's eyes, but he did not reply, whether consciously or not. However, Sonia didn't sense anything wrong, and looked at the pumpkin in Toby's hand with bright eyes. She had turned the pumpkin into a mess earlier, and it barely looked like anything, much less an orchid. It was so ugly that she couldn't even bear to look at it directly. Now, however, after Toby gave it a makeover, it was already starting to look like an orchid at a glance.

She gasped, "You're amazing. So it really was salvageable. You're so amazing, Toby!"

Her praises made Toby overjoyed. His smile grew even wider, and his chin was lifted even higher than earlier. Clearly, he enjoyed her compliments, and he subconsciously became proud.

However, he still acted nonchalant on the surface and replied indifferently, "This is nothing."

Sonia wasn't aware that he was just being humble, and she felt unhappy at his nonchalant answer. She pursed her lips and said, "You call this nothing? To me, this is amazing. I can't believe that you were able to do this. You've never mentioned this to me before." She looked at him with admiring eyes.

Feeling a little embarrassed by her expression, he pursed his lips and coughed softly, pretending to be calm as he replied, "This is not something important, so I never told you in the past. As for now, I've already forgotten about it myself. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have recalled my carving skills."

As he spoke, he lowered his eyes, covering the glint that flashed through his gaze.

However, Sonia didn't notice anything and said gleefully, "Does that mean that I helped you rediscover your skills?"

At the sight of her proud expression, Toby extended a hand and lightly scratched her nose. "That's right."

Sonia's smile became even brighter. "It seems that I have to look for more new things in the future. That way, I might discover even more of your talents."

Toby raised his eyebrows. He hadn't expected her to be so mind blown by his skills. However, she was right about one thing—he did have some skills that he hadn't told her about or shown her yet. After all, as a part of the Fuller Family, he was destined to become the heir from the moment he was born, and he naturally had a lot to learn. Although he was not skilled in all areas, he still knew a little about everything. In short, to this day, he was still unsure what skills he had.

"All right. I'll be looking forward to the day you rediscover all of the skills that I know," he said dotingly.

Sonia nodded heavily. "Okay. Just wait, I'll make sure of it."

"Yeah, I believe you." He nodded as well.

Then, Sonia let him do his thing and fell silent.

After Toby carved the pumpkin for a while, he saw how seriously she was watching him and pondered for a moment before he stopped his movements and asked, "Do you want to try it out?"

Sonia straightened her body in confusion. "Me? Try it out?" She pointed at her nose.

Toby nodded. "Yeah."

"No way. I can't do it." Sonia hurriedly shook her head while waving her hand, indicating that she wasn't able to do it.

Toby looked at her. "Why not?"

"You already saw how badly I did earlier, and I'm different from you. I'm a novice, and this is my first time trying this, while you have learned this since a long time ago. You've already fixed the pumpkin from what I've done to it. It would be a pity to ruin the orchid that you painstakingly restored again," Sonia spread out her hands and said.

Toby looked at her, then at the orchid in his hand, and finally chuckled. "It's okay. If it's ruined, then so be it. Either way, it's just the two of us, so you don't have to be scared of anyone laughing at you. Besides, with me here, I don't think it'll be ruined. Come here, I'll teach you."

He beckoned at her.

Sonia looked at the orchid in his hand, her thoughts still wavering. In fact, after seeing how easily he restored her hideous work, she had been curious and wanted to give it a try. However, she knew her level, so in order not to make a joke of herself, she held it in. But now that he brought it up himself, he stirred her urge again.

At the sight of her eager yet hesitant expression, Toby immediately stretched out his hand and grabbed her wrist to pull her over to his side. As Sonia was struggling to make a decision, she was caught off guard when he pulled her in front of him, and she let out a scream.

Toby placed his index finger on her lips. "Don't be scared. It's just me."

Sonia blinked before pulling his hand away from her lips, saying angrily, "I know it's you, but you scared me by suddenly pulling me over."

Toby smiled. "I'm sorry. I saw that you wanted to try, but you didn't dare to, so I just helped you make a decision. All right, come and try it out. Don't worry, I'm here, and I'll teach you. I won't let you ruin it."

As he spoke, he tugged her in front of him while he stood behind her, then stuffed the pumpkin and carving knife in her hands and held them from behind, slowly teaching her the carving steps.

With Toby guiding her step by step, though Sonia was cautious at the beginning, her movements became more natural at the end, and she ended up laughing happily. "Toby, do you see this? I know how to do it too. Even though you only taught me the simplest steps, I actually managed to learn them."

She looked at the man behind her, her face turning red from excitement.

Seeing that she was so ecstatic, Toby laughed along as well. "Not bad. You're smart."

"Of course." Sonia raised her chin triumphantly, then jabbed the man behind her with her elbow. "You can let go of me."

"What's wrong?" Toby asked, looking confused.

Sonia snorted. "Obviously it's because I already know how to do it, and I want to finish the rest on my own. I don't need you anymore, so you can let go of me now."

Toby fell silent as his lips twitched before he questioned, "Are you sure you don't need me to teach you the rest?"

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"Yes, I'm certain!" Sonia nodded with a very serious expression, indicating that she had indeed learned enough, and she really didn't need him anymore.

At the sight of her confidence, Toby shook his head with a laugh. "All right. I'll leave it to you, then. Show me what you've learned."

He wanted to see if she really didn't need him anymore.

"Don't worry, I won't let you down." She smiled at him, then turned around and began to carve the rest of the pumpkin.

Seeing that she was no longer paying attention to him, Toby patted her head lightly, then walked away with his arms crossed and leaned against the wall.

Sonia turned and glowered at him. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing. I'm just teaching an ungrateful person a lesson," he replied with a shrug.

She shot him a glare. "Hey, who are you calling ungrateful?"

"I'm not wrong." Toby unfolded his arms and spread them outward. "I just finished teaching you, and you pushed me aside now that you don't have a use for me. If that isn't being ungrateful, what is it? Not only that, but you don't have a conscience either."

"You..." Sonia was rendered speechless by him as his words seemed to make sense.

It was true that she pushed him aside after she felt that she had learned enough, and it was ungrateful of her to do so. All of a sudden, Sonia felt so embarrassed that her face turned red.

At the sight of her expression, Toby no longer had the heart to tease her anymore. He stepped forward and gently caressed her hair, messing up her hair that she had painstakingly tidied earlier once more. "All right, I was just teasing you. Don't overthink it, okay?"

She pushed his hand away from her head huffily. "Go away. I don't want to talk to you."

"Really?" He narrowed his eyes.

She rolled her eyes at him. "If you still want to eat later, don't disturb me anymore. Aren't you hungry?"

Toby nodded. "A little."

"Then move aside and wait for me to finish carving it so that we can eat." Sonia waved him off, urging him disdainfully.

He laughed under his breath. "All right, I won't disrupt you anymore. Go ahead."

Seeing that she was so impatient, Toby retreated again and gave her space. After she watched him leave obediently, Sonia turned her wrist before she continued to carve the pumpkin with her head lowered. However, she had thought that it would be an easy process as she had learned how to do it, but for some reason, it was not as easy as she had imagined. At first, with Toby guiding her, her movements were extremely smooth and skilled, but why did it become so difficult all of a sudden?

Every time she carved the pumpkin with the knife, she could feel a clear obstruction blocking her, and it was not as simple compared to when she had Toby helping her. With his help, the pumpkin was easily sliced away with the knife, but now that she was doing it alone, she clearly had to put in the effort to be able to cut the pumpkin off. In less than two minutes, she felt that her arm was turning sore, just like how she had felt when she was carving before Toby came back. What's going on? Sonia's hands stopped in their tracks as she looked down at the carving knife in her hand, as well as the pumpkin orchid that was almost completed, and began to space out.

When she tilted backward, the man leaning against the wall saw that she had suddenly gone motionless, and a glint flashed past his eyes as he asked with a smirk, "What's the matter? Have you finished carving?"

Sonia's red lips gaped. A moment later, she said sheepishly, "No."

"Then why did you stop?" The smile on Toby's face grew even wider.

Sonia's grip tightened around the knife as she fell silent. Why did she stop? Of course it was because she felt too tired.

Seeing that she had fallen silent and turned her head to look at her arm, Toby stepped forward with a smile and took the carving knife and pumpkin orchid from her. "All right, let me do it. Your arms are feeling sore, aren't they?"

Sonia looked at the man in surprise. "Why are you… You knew I would end up like this a long time ago, right? That's why you asked me if I was sure."

Toby didn't reply and lowered his head, saying as he began carving, "You're a newbie who has never carved before. Even if you have learned a little bit of the basics, you're still unclear on the amount of strength or the skills you need to carve something. That's why I was sure it won't take long for your arms to be sore, because I was like that at the beginning too."

"I see." Sonia pouted unhappily, her gaze falling on his hand.

As she watched the man gently carve off a piece of pumpkin, she asked again, "I could carve through the pumpkin easily when I first started, but how come it didn't work earlier?"

Toby raised his gaze and looked at her. "Obviously, it's because I was guiding you in the beginning while holding your hand. Rather than you, it was me who was putting in the strength to carve the pumpkin, which was why you felt very relaxed, and it became difficult for you after I left."

At this moment, Sonia fell completely silent. It turned out that she was actually the fool. It was no wonder that when she was with Toby, she managed to carve the pumpkin so easily without facing any troubles. It was all because he was exerting his strength behind her back. To put it bluntly, he had been doing all the work from beginning to end, and what she thought she had learned was just Toby deliberately making her happy. However, she had taken it for granted, thinking that she had really learned it by herself, and she became proud and complacent about it.

Sonia covered her face. "You must've been laughing at me earlier, right?"

Toby chuckled. "I wasn't."

"I don't believe you," she mumbled.

Toby blew the scraps of pumpkin on his hand away and said, "All right, I'm done. How does it look?"

As he handed the completed orchid over, Sonia's eyes immediately lit up at the sight. "It's gorgeous."

She took the orchid with a smile and placed it in her hand to have a look.

Toby was washing the carving knife to put it away. When he heard her words, his smile became wider. "It's good that you like it. If you have time in the future, do you want to learn how to carve? I can teach you."

"Okay." Sonia put the orchid on the side of the dish and nodded happily. "In the future, I'll make a beautiful carving by myself, and I'll never make a fool of myself in front of you again."

"Then it's settled. Let's go and eat." Toby took the plate from her.

Sonia didn't stop him either, and she trailed out of the kitchen behind him.

When they reached the dining table in the living room, Toby put the dishes down, then pulled a chair out and patted the back of it. Seeing that, Sonia walked over and took a

seat. She knew that he had pulled the chair out for her. Sure enough, after she sat down, he went to the seat opposite of her and took a seat himself.

Once he was seated, he pulled out a napkin and wiped his hands, then glanced at the sumptuous dishes on the table. Suddenly, he asked the question he had been wondering about since he walked through the door. "Did something good happen today?"

"What do you mean?" Sonia poured a glass of mild-tasting juice for Toby and handed it over

After he took the glass, he placed it aside and pointed at the feast on the table. "Usually, we'll only eat half of the amount here. Is there any occasion today?"

Only then did Sonia understand what he meant. He was asking if she was celebrating anything by preparing so many dishes. With a smile, she said, "Nothing good happened. I just thought that you might be busy because you didn't answer my call this afternoon, and you've always been by my side recently without going to Fuller Group often, which made you so busy that you weren't able to answer the phone today. I felt a little guilty, so I decided to make a few more dishes to make it up to you. Quick, have a bite and see how it tastes."

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When Sonia placed some food on his plate, Toby felt that his heart was about to melt into a puddle. It was all because of the food she prepared. At first, he had guessed that she suddenly cooked so much because she had an occasion that she wanted to celebrate with him. For example, getting the spare parts back was a good thing that was worth celebrating. For this reason, he was even going to suggest opening a bottle of wine.

However, she told him later on that she cooked so much not because she wanted to celebrate anything, but to make it up to him. She felt that he had left his work to accompany her during this period of time, which had caused him to fall behind in many things, and she was feeling guilty about it, which was why she prepared a feast to cheer him up.

In any case, she had prepared an entire table of food just for him. How could he not feel moved by that? In fact, he was so moved that he wanted to carry her back to the room and kiss her fiercely to show her how he felt. However, they hadn't eaten yet, so he could only suppress this thought. After all, eating was more important, and it wasn't good for their health to skip a meal.

"I don't need to try it to know that it tastes good." Toby looked at the woman opposite him with a smile.

Sonia glared at him playfully. "Stop spouting nonsense. You haven't even tasted it yet."

"Even though I haven't tried it, I know it. I've always been confident in your skills, just like the way you believe in mine." Saying that, he picked up his utensils.

He wasn't just uttering these sweet words to make her happy. He meant everything he said. Although she had never studied cooking properly, her skills were sharpened by Jean's pickiness in the six years. Hence, she was quite good at cooking.

"All you can do is talk. Hurry up and eat." Sonia rolled her eyes at him, but there was a sweet smile on her face.

After all, she wouldn't be unhappy by the fact that he thought her cooking tasted good.

She picked up the soup ladle and served him another bowl of soup. "You should drink more of this soup. I made it for you. You're usually much busier than me, so you must feel much more physically exhausted than me. This soup can help to tone your body, so it's good for you to drink it."

"All right." Toby took the bowl of soup with a gentle expression. "What about you? You should drink some too."

"I'm fine. I..."

"No." Toby pursed his lips and said in a serious tone, "Since it's good for the body, you should drink some too. I can't just tone my body alone."

Saying that, he placed his bowl down and filled another for her. He had already placed the bowl of soup in front of her, so she had no reason not to drink it.

Sonia took the bowl from him, not knowing if she should laugh or cry. "All right, I'll drink it."

"That's more like it." Toby lifted his chin and picked up his spoon as he began to drink the soup. It did taste good.

"Oh, right." Suddenly recalling something, Sonia stopped eating and looked at him. "Connor has already sent the spare parts back. Were you the one who went to him and made him give them up?"

Hearing that, Toby placed his spoon down and lifted his head. "It was me." He admitted it boldly.

Sonia bit on her lip. "As expected, I knew it was you. No one could do this except you, but... How did you know about Connor taking the spare parts from Paradigm Co.? I never told you about it. Did you really plant a spy in my company again?"

"Again?" Toby's eyes narrowed. "Who told you that I planted a spy in Paradigm Co.? Or did you doubt me on your own accord?"

Either way, it made him feel a little uncomfortable. If it were the former, it meant that there was someone trying to get in the way of their relationship, but if it was the latter, it showed that she didn't trust him.

Spotting the displeasure on Toby's face, Sonia knew that her suspicion had made him unhappy. After all, no one would be happy to be suspected.

"I guessed it myself." Sonia lowered her eyes, not revealing that it was Charles who made her think that way. If she did, he would probably get jealous again, so it was better for her to hide this fact in order to save herself from more trouble.

"Why did you think that I planted a spy?" Toby looked at her.

Sonia took a sip of the juice before replying, "When I treated Charles for lunch today, you knew about it even though I hadn't told you anything. I also hadn't told you about the interception of Paradigm Co.'s spare parts, but you also knew about it, so I had no choice but to wonder if you had planted a spy in my company again to report everything I did to you."

"Your words do make sense." Toby raised his chin slightly. "However, I did not plant a spy in your company. When you told me to get rid of the men I had planted in Paradigm Co., I did as you said, and ever since then, I don't have any spies in your company anymore. As for how I knew you and Charles were going out for lunch, and how I knew that Paradigm Co.'s parts had been intercepted, it was all a coincidence. My men have been watching Connor and reporting his movements to me at all times, which was how I learned that your company's parts were taken away. After that, it's obvious that I would monitor you. I wanted to see how you would solve this matter, so I naturally had to figure out who you have contacted and who you went to for help. After all, we are lovers, aren't we? Do I have to act like I don't know if something happened to you? Am I supposed to ignore it?"

As she faced the man's all-knowing eyes, Sonia's red lips twitched. "So that was the case. I thought... I'm sorry, I misunderstood you. Please don't be angry at me."

She looked at him, her eyes filled with worry and guilt. She was ashamed and regretful of her doubts toward him. After all, they had promised to trust each other in the past, but this time, she had broken her promise...

Sensing Sonia's uneasiness, Toby sighed softly. "I'm not angry, and I don't care if you suspect me in these matters. After all, I do have a record, but there's something I'm really unhappy about. Do you know what it is?"

She shook her head to show that she didn't know.

Toby rubbed his brows, before he looked at her intently. "What I'm really upset about is the way you're hiding everything from me. If you refuse to tell me when something this bad happens and would rather take the burden alone and ask outsiders for help instead of me, do you know how I would feel, Sonia Reed?"

The way he emphasized her name at the end of his sentence was enough to explain his anger about this matter. Sonia's expression froze. She hadn't heard him call her by her full name for a long time. She also understood that by using her full name, it meant that he was really angry with her.

Earlier that day, Brian and Charles had said that if Toby found out that she never told him anything nor asked him for help, he would definitely not be happy. She hadn't realized it back then, but now that she was looking at Toby, she was speechless. Charles and Brian really had been spot on about the worst that could happen.

"I'm sorry, I..."

Sonia bit her lip and was just about to apologize when Toby suddenly interrupted her. "Sonia, there's something I want to know. Am I actually important to you?"

His gaze was extremely serious as he looked at her. He genuinely suspected that he didn't mean much to her.

All of a sudden, Sonia panicked and gripped her fork tightly. She instantly replied without even thinking about it, "Of course you are!"

If he wasn't important, she wouldn't even think about preparing this meal to make up for her neglecting him recently. However, his doubtfulness made her a little sad. At the same time, she wondered if she had really done a bad job, causing him to doubt if she actually cared about him.

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"If it's so important, then why didn't you tell me? Why did you ask someone else for help when you could've come to me? Am I that unreliable to you?" Toby had no idea what Sonia was thinking. All he wanted was to make things clear with her.

Sonia didn't want Toby to think that he was unimportant to her. She shook her head. "No. I never thought of you that way. I didn't tell you because I didn't want to rely on you for everything. I told you about it, and you agreed. I made it very clear why I didn't want to rely on you too much. I don't want to turn to you every time I run into something. If I do that, I'll lose my independence eventually. I'll turn into a woman who needs you to solve everything for her. I don't want that. And..."

"And what?" Toby pursed his lips. She did tell him her reason before and he supported her, but this was a bit too much. She didn't even tell him anything because she didn't even ask for his help, and it made him feel like an outsider. No, he was less than that. She'd rather ask an outsider for help, but not him.

"And..." She massaged her forehead. "I don't want everyone to think of me as a hapless girl who needs you for everything. I don't want them to think that my company only got this far thanks to you. I don't want them to see me as some sort of sidekick, like I'm just a side dish to the main course. I want them to see me as an independent woman. I don't want them to think I got this far because of sheer luck instead of my own hard work. I don't want them to think Paradigm Co. got big because you helped me out instead of my own hard work."

She had a bitter look on her face, and her voice broke. "I never told you that, but it weighs down on me like a mountain. It's suffocating. Getting back together with you puts a lot of strain on me. You have no idea how worried I am about the public's opinion. They'd say I'm not worthy of you because my family and company are in decline. They called me a common wench who got lucky. They also said that I'm an orphan and that nobody will help me when you argue with me and dump me."

A loud bang interrupted her.

Toby had slammed the table with his fist and shot up, the air around him turning ever colder. The look on his face was dark as a storm brewed in his eyes. "You're my girlfriend. I'll never let anyone call you an orphan."

Sonia smiled bitterly. "Yes. They won't do that in your face. I've never heard those comments ever since we reconciled, but you can't guarantee they won't say the same thing behind our backs."

Toby fell silent. He had no answer for that. He couldn't guarantee everyone would keep quiet. He couldn't control what they said in private. He might be powerful, but not powerful enough to find out what they were saying in private.

Sonia took his silence as an agreement, and she inhaled deeply. "See? Not even you can guarantee that. The comments have stopped now, but it wasn't always like this. Things were different six years ago. Much different."

"What?" Toby's face fell, his heart skipping a beat. "You mean they said that to your face six years ago?"

"Yeah. You haven't cared about me for the past six years. On top of that, my dad died, and my company fell into someone else's hands. I don't have anyone to back me up. I was alone and helpless. Your stepmom, Tyler, business partners, and all the girls who love you laugh at me behind your back. They humiliated me all they wanted, all because you didn't care about me. Just because you didn't care about me, they insulted me all they wanted. It was a dark time. Perhaps the darkest in my life."

She brushed that past off as nothing, but he could feel something squeezing his heart. It felt like his heart was stopping, and his face paled. His lips trembled, and he croaked, "I'm sorry... I didn't know..." He had no idea about that.

He knew Jean and Tyler were borderline abusive to her in the past, but he had no idea everyone else was too.

Sonia shook her head. "I don't blame you. Nobody's gonna be stupid enough to bring it up with you. I was your wife after all. They weren't sure if you'd destroy them if you found out what they did, so they agreed to keep it a secret from you."

Toby pulled his chair back and went around the table. He approached Sonia and bent down to hold her, then buried his head in her shoulder and apologized profusely, "Sorry. I'm really, really sorry." He didn't stupidly ask her why she didn't tell him about it since he knew the answer himself. He was under hypnosis, and Tina was all he could think about. He probably wouldn't even help her out if she told him.

How Jean and Tyler treated her alone was enough to tell him that. He knew what they did to her, but he never did anything to stop it. He feigned ignorance about it. If he didn't even stop his family from pushing her around, there was no way he'd stop anyone else from doing the same thing. "I'm sorry, Little Leaf. I-I was a b*stard. A useless b*stard!"

Toby held her tightly. Sonia couldn't see it, but his face was contorted with hatred and fury. He would tear Tina apart if he could. If it weren't for her, he wouldn't have been hypnotized. If it weren't for her, he wouldn't have hurt the woman he loved. Yes, he didn't mean it, but it didn't change the fact that he did it. He allowed his own family to hurt the woman he loved. That f*cking b*tch! When I find her, I'll make her wish she was never born, or I'm not Toby Fuller! He looked up, glaring into the distance behind Sonia, as if he could see Tina through it.

Sonia didn't know what Toby was thinking as she patted his back and looked down in silence. Sonia didn't tell him it wasn't his fault, or that he was not to blame. She might have forgiven him, but she still had some resentment. Yes, she knew he didn't mean what he did. He was just hypnotized, making him a victim as well, but that did not mean he could be absolved from what he did. She still couldn't get over it. They hugged for a moment, and she pushed him away.

He stared into her eyes, and she smiled. "I wondered why they did that to me at first, but I figured that out after we got divorced."

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Sonia looked calmly into his eyes. "Because I was weak. Because I don't come from a good family. Because I'm an orphan. Because my husband didn't care about me. Because I had no one to help me. Because they only bully the weak. I realized that, and I swore I'd get stronger. Not just myself either. I'd create a whole team of strong people to back me up. Nobody's gonna push me around if I have power. And I don't want to rely on anyone else for that. I can't trust anyone but myself."

She can't trust anyone but herself. Toby felt a little hurt. He clenched his fists and asked hoarsely, "You can't trust me either?"

Sonia averted her gaze, refusing to look into his eyes. She knew he was a little hurt. "Yes. Everyone's prone to betrayal. Some can even betray their own family. That can happen to us too. And besides, I told you one of the reasons is that I don't want to turn to you every time I run into something. If I do that every time, I'll eventually lose my independence. I'd be left for dead if you dump me again."

"I won't dump you!" His face fell, and he held her chin. Toby turned her head to him, forcing her to look into his eyes. "You just don't trust our relationship. You don't think we can see this through."

Toby hit the bullseye, and Sonia heaved a sigh. She stopped averting her gaze and stared at him. "Yes. I don't think we can see this through. Life isn't as short as you think. We might be in love now, but love has an expiry date. We have no idea how long our love can last. Three years? Ten? I don't think anyone can stay in love forever."

"I won't be so sure about that," Toby retorted.

Sonia froze for a moment, staring at him dumbly.

He rubbed her forehead and said gently, "My grandpa died when I was a kid, so you didn't get to see him. You don't know this, but he was in love with my grandma his whole life. So you see, there is someone who can stay in love with the same person their whole life. Just because you haven't seen it doesn't mean you can deny its existence."

Sonia's jaw dropped a little. "I-Is that so?"

"Of course. If you don't believe me, you can ask my grandma about it the next time you see her. Ask her about their love story. You'll see that I'm not lying." He looked into her eyes.

Sonia bit her lip and stayed quiet.

Toby poked her lip. "Stop biting it. Doesn't it hurt?"

Sonia shook her head. It didn't hurt.

He patted her head and whispered, "Put a little faith in it, will you?"

"In what?" Sonia looked at him again.

He gazed into her eyes. "Put your faith in the fact that we can see this through. My grandpa and grandma were in love their whole lives, and they never got into any arguments. They saw their marriage vows through, so why can't we do the same?"

Sonia looked down in silence. Yeah. Why can't we? She wanted to feel confident, but she couldn't. They had long lives ahead of them. Sure, they could make promises like it was nothing at the moment, but nobody knew what the future had in store.

Sonia was still silent. Toby knew she still couldn't believe they could see their relationship through. He sighed in silence, but he could understand why. Nobody could see the future. She had no reason to believe his promise. "It's alright." He held her head and pulled her closer to him. He said softly, "You'll see that you can trust me. I'll show you. You won't lose this war of love, but that's for the future. Let's not talk about that for now. We should go back to what we were talking about. I know you don't want to rely on me because you want to grow. I had no idea you care about what the public thinks about you, and it's my fault. I'm your boyfriend, but I have no idea what you're worried about. I'm sorry."

Sonia shook her head. "It's not your fault. I didn't tell you. Of course you don't know what's happening."

"I'll keep a closer eye on you. I won't let this happen again." He bent over and kissed her head. "And just ignore what the public says. Don't let them get to you. So what if you're not from a good family? That's not why I'm dating you. And I don't think you're not worthy of me. I don't care about what you can or cannot do. You're the best girl for me, and nobody's better than you are."

Sonia was amused. "What are you talking about? Of course there's somebody better than me. A lot of people are better than me."

"But you're still the best to me." He cupped her cheeks and looked into her eyes seriously.

Sonia felt her face burn from how serious he was. She couldn't help it. He was praising her so much. It was embarrassing, but she felt a little happy too. I must be going mad.

"I mean, you're the best girl for me. You don't have to care about what the public thinks. I know they won't stop judging you, and I can't stop them. I mean, I can, but I can't do it for life. They won't stop judging you, but that only stems from their envy. Why should you care about the opinions of the people who envy you? The more you care about what they say, the more you'll feel insecure. You'll start to feel insecure about our relationship, and that's what they're waiting for."

Sonia looked up at him. Yeah. Why haven't I thought of that? All I thought about was how the public's opinion made me uneasy. I started thinking that maybe a regular girl like myself isn't worthy of Toby. I thought we can't be happy, since there's a big gap between us. I keep wondering if I'm a good match for him, but I never thought that they were only judging me out of envy. They're just trying to bring my self-esteem down, and if I continued down that route, I'd leave Toby by myself without them even doing anything. They're gonna call me stupid. They couldn't get Toby no matter what they did, but I got him without doing anything, and I threw him away. Of course that's stupid. Yeah. I'm stupid! Sonia smacked the back of her head.

Toby was about to see if she had hurt her head, but Sonia pulled his hand down and looked at him. She finally relented. "Sorry. I've never thought of that. I—"

"I know," he interrupted her. "And that's why you care so much about what they think. You never stopped to think why they judge you. Everyone on our level is bound to be attacked. It's inevitable. Even someone like me gets judged a lot. The public kept telling me that I'd be worse than any regular guy if I hadn't been born to the Fullers and inherited the company. They said I'd be worse than they are."

Sonia's jaw dropped. "Someone actually said that about you?"

"Yep." He nodded. "And all out of envy. Only guys who are on the bottom of society's ladder don't get envied, so I never tried to stop them. I don't care what they say either. They'll just think they're right if I gave a damn. You don't have to care either. Don't push yourself just to prove them wrong. They won't stop. They'll just think they hit you where it hurts most. They'll think they have a chance at me."

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Sonia was silent for a while. "Yeah. Maybe I was too hung up on that. I was drowning in their comments for years. It has stopped now, but it left a mark. I just couldn't brush it off."

"And now you can." Toby patted her head.

"Yeah, now I can. You talked me through it. If I still can't brush it off, I might kill off our relationship eventually."

"Don't say that." He frowned in displeasure and put his finger against her lips.

She took his hand away in amusement. "Lighten up. It's just a joke. Don't be so uptight about it. I didn't say anything that bad."

"But you mentioned 'killing our relationship'. That's bad enough," he said solemnly. "It's not a good word. I want us to be safe and sound." The last time she fell down a cliff left a traumatic impression on him. He had thought he lost her. From then on, he refused to let her risk her life, or he might do something really drastic just to save her.

"Alright, alright. I'll stop." Sonia noticed how much he was frowning. She knew he cared a lot about this, and she wouldn't challenge him. Going with the flow was the best thing to do now.

He slowly stopped frowning after she stopped bringing that up. "It's great that you're brushing their opinions off. It's the only way we can live our lives without any burden. We don't need that negativity in our lives. It's a sad life to live according to someone else's wishes. The only people who'll be happy about it are them, and not us." He held her tightly, patting her head and kissing it.

She leaned against his chest. Sonia said nothing, but she was listening to him.

Toby eventually stopped, then he looked at her. "If you don't care about the public's opinion anymore, you won't feel too much pressure asking for my help now, will you? I know you still won't do that, since you have your reason to settle this yourself, but you know you don't have the power to settle your problem yourself, don't you?"

Sonia looked at him again, and she was reminded of what Brian and Charles told her in the hotel. She shook her head. "I... Yeah, I know." She didn't know much about the business world or how to survive in it. Sonia was just a newbie, and she had no organization to call her own, nor did she have any connections. They were important elements to survival in business, but she had none of it. There was no way she could solve anything on her own. She didn't want to admit it, but that was the truth. She was in a bad condition. All she had was a company. She might be the boss of it, but that alone wasn't enough to take her into the center of the business world. She couldn't even deal with the D-listers of the business scene either.

Toby cocked his eyebrow. He was surprised that she would admit her powerlessness so easily.

Sonia caught that, and she pouted unhappily. "What? Surprised I'd say that?"

Toby nodded. "Yes. You probably don't know this, but you're actually a stubborn woman who'd push herself to the limits. I thought you wouldn't admit it, but..."

She snorted. "Yeah, but I have to face reality. I can't deal with it on my own, and that's the truth."

Toby smiled. "Why didn't you tell me about it then? Why didn't you ask for my help if you know you can't settle it on your own? I know why you want to do it, and I support it, but you need to at least have enough strength and a big enough team to deal with your problems without my help. However, you still have some way to go before you can stand on your own, and yet you hide things from me. That's just pushing yourself, and it'll only make things worse, you know that?"

Sonia lowered her eyes. "Yeah. Of course. I can't deal with it on my own for now. I'll only make it worse." Brian and Charles had told her that as well. She had taken some time to think it through and realized that it was true. That was the reason she admitted to that so easily.

Toby was surprised she got over that so easily, but only for a moment. Since she could understand that she had nothing, it was natural she would think about the future. It was a good thing, as that meant she could accept what he had to say more easily. "Why didn't you tell me then?" He pretended to look serious. "You'd rather ask Charles for help, but not me. Do you have any idea what that feels like? It feels like you don't see me as your lover. It feels like you think Charles is more important than I am. Do you have any idea how it feels to be less to you compared to an outsider like Charles?"

"That's not what I meant." Sonia shook her head quickly. "I never asked Charles to help me. I never had any plans to do that."

Toby froze for a moment. "Really?"

"Yeah."

"So how did he know about the case about the parts?"

"Did you forget? Charles is a director-in-name at Paradigm Co., and he was the one who hooked Paradigm Co. up with Dwells. My company's guys would tell Charles that someone took the deal from us, and that's how he found out," Sonia explained. Toby was getting angry, and she had to defuse him.

Oh, that's one question answered. I see. He had no idea this happened. "So you didn't ask for his help?" he asked, pursing his lips.

She nodded. "Of course. He came to Paradigm Co. after he found out about it. He asked me if I could handle this. I couldn't, so he gave me a suggestion."

"What kind of suggestion?" Toby squinted.

She rubbed her head against his chest. "He suggested that I use collateral to get a loan from the bank and throw money at the problem. I accepted his suggestion and used the Reed Residence's deed as collateral. I called Brian, the president of Bank of Caruna's Seafield branch."

"So you went to see Brian after you had lunch with Charles?" He looked at her.

"Yes." She nodded. "And he approved the loan. I got it half an hour ago. I was about to give it all to Daphne and have her handle everything about the missing parts, but you got the parts back for me before the loan was approved. So I guess this is extra money." She smiled. Sonia looked like she was happy to get the money, as if it was a windfall.