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Toby was not dull, so how could he have missed what Harry was trying to say to him? The old man wanted to smear Toby's impression of Sonia in order to ruin their relationship.

It was just that Toby had not expected his teacher to still be hooked on the concept of social hierarchy.

Sure, it was important for most of the rich and powerful families to marry within their social class.

However, it was not necessary for the Fullers and there was no need for arranged marriages as well.

The Fuller Family's development was now saturated and at its peak. Therefore, the country would not allow the Fullers to continue to expand.

As a result, there would not be any problem for Toby to marry a woman from an ordinary family.

Furthermore, he had complete control over who he loved and who he wished to marry. After all, he was the only one who would spend his entire life with Sonia.

No one had the authority to oppose their relationship as long as they did not harm or trouble the others when they were together.

Harry, on the other hand, was completely ignorant of everything and even attempted to force him to end his relationship with Sonia and marry some other wealthy woman.

Ironically, Toby had predicted that Harry would like Sonia and planned to bring her to meet him someday. To his surprise, his teacher had such strong negative feelings for her. It appeared it was not a good idea for them to meet each other now to prevent Sonia from getting hurt.

Harry is such a snob. I'm not sure if it's because of his age or because of his personality. This is something I've never seen before.

But, whatever it is, he shouldn't even try to interfere with, let alone end my relationship with Sonia.

Toby's expression went cold as he thought and a dim light shone in his eyes.

At that moment, footsteps could be heard outside of the conference room.

The next second, the footsteps came to a halt, followed by a knock on the door.
“President Fuller.” Tom had returned after sending off Harry.

“Come in,” Toby said as he collected his thoughts.

Tom entered the room after hearing Toby’s instructions.

“Has Harry left?” Toby poured himself another cup of tea.

“Yes. I saw him get into his car and I only leave after his car disappears from my sight,” Tom assured, nodding.

Toby hummed to acknowledge him. He then sipped his tea and inquired, “Now tell me, what happened to Little Leaf?”

“Yes,” Tom replied before explaining what had happened on the Internet.

Toby’s face changed dramatically as he heard this and went silent.

“Why did you only tell me such big news now?” he questioned Tom coldly.

“President Fuller, I didn’t know about this matter until earlier. I was resting at home this morning and only arrived at the Fuller Group half an hour ago. I only learned about Miss Reed’s scandal through the group employee discussions. After that, I immediately called Miss Reed using your phone to assure her. Following that, I quickly requested that the public relations department suppress the viral news on the Internet, delete all the negative comments, and report the accounts and major media that spread the scandals. I immediately came to you after I finished that,” Tom hurriedly explained.

Toby realized he had misunderstood Tom after hearing his words. His sullen expression improved slightly, but his tense body remained. “Please hand me the phone.”

“All right,” Tom said, quickly reaching into his suit pocket for Toby’s phone and handing it over.

He grabbed it, hoping to find messages from Sonia, but his brows twisted when he saw that there were none from her. After recalling that Tom had phoned her, it could explain why she did not look for Toby after that.

“How was Little Leaf’s mood at that time?” Toby clenched his phone and asked Tom.

“It’s not very good,” Tom replied, “and Miss Reed’s voice seemed a little dull. She must have suffered greatly as a result of this situation.”

Sonia was obviously just attending her own business with Charles and Brian, but she was photographed for no other reason than to cause Internet scandals.

Nobody could stand such a heinous act.

Toby's heart tightened as he heard that Sonia was upset and his breath became quicker. "Did you find out who did it?" he asked.

Tom had told him that the Squirrel Media was the first to report about the scandal.

Still, the Squirrel Media was merely a rogue agency. There was no way they would do something like this without instructions from someone else. As a result, someone despicable must have forced Squirrel Media to do so.

The person who spread such false rumors to smear Sonia was not only bullying his wife, but also ruining his reputation.

Toby would do anything to capture the culprit behind this.

"Not yet. I only just learned about this, so no order to investigate has been issued," Tom admitted before adding, "But what is certain is that the person behind the scenes is a woman."

"A woman?" Toby was stunned.

"Yes, the Squirrel Media photos and texts are intended to mislead everyone into believing Miss Reed is cheating, because cheating is the most unacceptable thing for a couple. The perpetrator intends to use this to destroy your relationship with Miss Reed. After all, there are numerous ways to destroy Miss Reed and this isn't the only one. As a result, there's an eighty percent chance that the culprit is a woman, and she..."

Tom took a brief pause before raising his head and quietly looking at Toby. "The culprit is likely a woman who is interested in you, President Fuller." He coughed.

After hearing this, Toby's expression darkened.

Tom added, "President Fuller, Miss Reed has already guessed this and she's most likely in a foul mood because of that. Apart from the online criticisms, it's most likely because of this. She is, after all, a woman. Having to see some other woman attacking her and stealing you away from her worsens her mood. You should give Miss Reed a call right away, coax her, and stop her from overthinking," he advised.

"I know. There's no need to go the formal route for the investigation," Toby responded calmly before shutting his eyes abruptly, temporarily restraining the blood in his eyes.

He rose to his feet while his face was gloomy and chilling.

“President Fuller, do you think—” Tom asked as he noticed Toby’s expression.

“Let the investigator head straight to Squirrel Media. Gather all the high-level executives and cross-examine them one by one. If no one says anything, knock out their teeth!” Toby’s eyes narrowed with murderous intent.

“Yes,” Tom affirmed, standing tall and speaking clearly.

He was well aware that Toby was enraged. No one would stand it when their own wife was bullied in this manner. If it were Tom, he would not want to waste time; instead, he would force the culprit to confess their wrongdoing.

“I’ll pass your orders right away, President Fuller.” After saying this, Tom left the room.

Toby unlocked the phone, but did not dial Sonia’s number right away. Instead, he was checking out what’s going on online.

He squeezed his phone tightly as if he wanted to crack it when he saw the various abusive comments directed at Sonia.

What’s going on?

Tom, I believe, stated that he has directed the public relations department to delete the negative comments.

It stands to reason that it’s normal even if not all negative comments are deleted. However, the Internet is still flooded with criticism and the number of likes and shares are growing. It’s as if nothing was removed...

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What’s going on?

Toby squinted and dialed directly to the public relations department.

“Hello, President Fuller.” The voice of the public relations director came from the other side.

Toby questioned, “Didn’t Tom authorize you to clear the negative comments on the Internet? Did you go through with that?”

The head of the public relations department was taken aback by Toby's inquiry, but he quickly reacted and responded, "Tom did send someone to instruct us, President Fuller. We completed the order as soon as we received it. After all, you and Miss Reed are involved. So how could we have slipped by unnoticed?"

"Then, tell me what's going on with the comments!" Toby was not pleased with his response.

"Comments?" asked the public relations director, his face flushed with skepticism.

He was clearly not aware of what was going on online at the moment.

"Sorry, President Fuller, I'll take a look; please wait a moment," the public relations director said, placing the phone on his shoulders and tapping the keyboard with both hands.

Two minutes later, when the PR director saw the situation on the Internet, he exclaimed, "How is this possible?"

"What's the matter?" Toby asked.

"President Fuller, I can assure you that our department has cleared the malicious comments on the Internet, but I'm not sure why the situation on the Internet has returned to its original state. We cleared everything, so this is simply not possible. After that, I even double-checked it and ensured all negative comments were deleted. President Fuller, please believe me. I did not lie," the PR director explained.

On the other end of the line, the man was solemn.

Toby could also tell that the PR director had not lied.

However, the situation online was getting out of hand...

"President Fuller!" the PR director exclaimed solemnly after a moment and added, "I suddenly thought of a possibility."

"What is it?" Toby asked with his lips pursed together.

"We did clear up the comments on the Internet, but someone was able to make it return to the old state. There are network companies that specialize in this area. Other than that, hackers can easily accomplish this," the PR director explained.

Network companies...

An image of Harry flashed across Toby's mind.

The Lore Family was a networking expert.

It appears, when combined with Harry's recent dislike and dismissal of Sonia...

No!

Toby shook his head.

This is impossible!

It's true that Harry dislikes Sonia, but he will never attack her in such a manner.

After all, I know Harry enough that he will not commit such heinous crimes even though he hates someone.

Therefore, this is not done by him.

Moreover, Harry is an old man, so why should he do this?

"Can you figure out which network provider or hacker did it?" Toby asked as he pressed his thin lips.

"It might be a little difficult to investigate who the hackers are because they used compromised devices to hide themselves. On the other hand, it should be possible to find out the network provider company. Unlike hackers, network provider companies are operated as a whole, so it's rather difficult for them to hide. It would be better to delegate this task to the network technology division, which has professional talents that our department lacks," the PR director said after some contemplation.

Still though, Toby was aware of these from the beginning.

"Please notify the network technology division," he said flatly.

"All right, President Fuller," said the PR director.

Toby then hung up the phone, pinched his nose, and prepared to dial Sonia's number to calm her down.

He promised himself that he would take care of this issue.

However, he received a call before he could dial Sonia's phone number.

Toby frowned as he saw the caller ID, clearly displeased.

It was a call from Harry.

Harry just departed from Toby's office and he decided to call at this precise moment. Clearly, Toby was aware of his intentions.

However, he respected Harry as his teacher and he could not simply hang up the phone. Therefore, he deliberately allowed the phone to ring longer as usual before answering it, "Hello, Harry."

"Toby, you must know about the issue circulating on the Internet by now, right?" On the other end of the phone, the old man sat in the back seat while holding his phone and smiled.

"Oh, my bad! You should know because your assistant had come to you earlier that something happened to the girl. I guess he has told you about it," Harry added just as Toby was about to speak.

Toby remained evasive.

"Toby, look. I told you she is a woman with bad behavior and you still didn't believe it. It's fine that she caused troubles before, but now, she even cheated on you. Who knows what extreme things she might do in the future? So Toby, you should break up with her soon, she..."

"All right, Harry," Toby interrupted him flatly. "Let's not jump to conclusions. This issue is between me and her, and we'll solve it, so you don't need to intervene. You're an old man, so you should take care of your health. I will return to see you when I have time. Goodbye."

He intended to end the call after he said that.

Enraged, Harry abruptly stopped him by saying, "Wait!"

"Do you have anything else to say, Harry? You should stop if you insist on criticizing her," Toby warned with an icy tone.

Henry clenched the phone in his hand and he only calmed down after a few moments. "Of course. I'm not going to say things you don't want to hear."

Ugh! The news is spreading like wildfire on the Internet. It's so obvious that Sonia has cheated on Toby, but he doesn't believe it!

This pisses me off!

I'm not sure what that woman did to my gullible disciple to make him give her his entire heart. Toby just doesn't want to accept the fact that Sonia has cheated on him.

Harry gained a headache from this the more he thought about it. He wanted to crack open Toby's skull to check if his brain was functioning well.

"That's right, Harry. We can still have a good and peaceful conversation so as long you don't speak words that irritate me," Toby responded indifferently. He had no idea what Harry was thinking and it did not matter to him.

However, Toby's words made Harry sneered.

A good and peaceful conversation?

The moment I mention Sonia, he goes feral.

How can I even have a normal conversation with him?

Forget it! Toby is now obsessed with her. I'll look for opportunities to persuade him in the future.

"Okay. Let's stop talking about this. Lynette will be back in a few days and she hasn't seen you in years, Toby. How about a dinner with us when she returns?" Harry invited Toby for dinner.

"Sure," Toby agreed, nodding.

Despite his disagreement with Harry's displeasure with Sonia, he maintained the respect for his mentor.

Of course, Toby could not possibly reject Harry's invitation.

When Harry learned that Toby had agreed, he exclaimed, "That's great! Come early and bring Sonia over."

If I cannot persuade Toby, I'll persuade Sonia.

I will personally make her leave Toby.

Toby squinted his eyes and his expression sank again as if he understood Harry's plan.

"No need, Harry. You don't like her anyway, so I won't bring her to see you. At the very least, you won't be irritated and she doesn't have to feel wronged. Alright now, I still have work to do, so I'll stop here."

After finishing his words, Toby hung up the phone without waiting for Harry's response. His face was gloomy and ugly after that phone call.

He was well aware that Harry was determined to keep him apart from Sonia.

Still, it was completely out of Toby's expectation that his mentor would attack his Little Leaf.

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Little Leaf has an inferiority complex. She would take the initiative to end our relationship if Harry told her she is unworthy of me.

Even if she does not agree, this will scar her and she will begin to doubt her relationship with me.

After all, it is my respected teacher who dissuades her.

Little Leaf will undoubtedly feel inferior if Harry deems us to be unfit.

Toby massaged his temples.

It appears I should prevent them from seeing each other.

I should also visit him less frequently.

Ugh, I hate to listen to his criticisms every time I see him.

Toby sighed lightly before facetimeing Sonia.

Meanwhile, Sonia was completing some paperwork. She took much longer than usual to process a document since she was suddenly dragged into a pool of Internet scandal out of nowhere. Had she not distracted herself with work, she would have been preoccupied with the online scandals instead.

As such, the former seemed like a much better and healthier option to go on with the day. After all, what more could she do than to keep reading those self-destructive comments online?

Suddenly, her phone that had been set aside rang unexpectedly; it was a video call.

Sonia set down her pen and turned to take a look at her phone screen, which flashed with Toby's invite to a video call.

She assumed he was done with his meeting and Tom had informed him about what was going on, hence his phone call.

She pursed her red lips and complicated her expression as she looked at Toby's call ID on the screen. She had no intention of answering the phone; instead, she zoned out for a long time as the phone rang.

When the FaceTime invitation was finally disconnected, she awoke in a trance to find that the video had been hung up.

Sonia bit her lower lip as a guilty expression flashed across her face.

She was upset at herself that she spaced out and missed Toby's video call.

With that being said, she had no plans to call him back. As the anxious feelings stemmed from the uncertainty of the culprit's relationship with Toby, Sonia was concerned that once he had found out the identity of the mastermind, he would advise her to proceed in a low-profile manner instead.

If so, she would be at a loss for how to deal with Toby and her feelings for him. It's okay, I don't need to take the call. At least I will be at peace of mind for a little while...

"Miss Reed." Several knocks outside the door were followed by Daphne's voice.

Sonia looked up and saw Daphne standing at the door before getting up quickly, "You're back."

"Yes," Daphne nodded before approaching the president.

"So?" Sonia asked worriedly.

"Miss Reed, the surveillance footage has been deleted, just as we suspected," Daphne said, shaking her head.

Hearing Daphne's words, Sonia's anxiety faded.

Am I disappointed?

Yes, but not so much.

After all, I've predicted it and I'm mentally prepared for it.

The answer Daphne gave was a confirmation of Sonia's initial guess.

"What should we do now, Miss Reed? The identity of the person is obviously extraordinary given that they are able to enter a large hotel and delete the surveillance footage," Daphne asked while looking at Sonia.

"I know exactly who did this," Sonia piped up.

“Really?” Daphne asked in surprise.

“Yes.”

“That’s great. Now that you know the culprit, despite their complicated identity, everything will be simple to discuss as long as you hand it over to President Fuller. That person will definitely obey his words. They will also unquestionably hand the surveillance footage to him once President Fuller demands.” Daphne gave a broad smile.

Sonia, on the other hand, remained expressionless.

When Daphne saw this, her cheerful mood abruptly froze. “What is the problem, Miss Reed? You don’t seem to be in a good mood.”

“How can I be? Do you have any idea who did this?”

Daphne shook her head upon hearing this. She would not have asked if she knew.

“The culprit is Harry’s granddaughter.”

“Harry?”

“Yes.” Sonia nodded. “Harry is Toby’s mentor and his granddaughter is also Toby’s childhood sweetheart. Do you think such a relationship makes me happy? “

“How can this be? The culprit indeed has a strong backing!”

Daphne was not referring to their family background, but the relationship between the culprit and Toby.

“If this happens, then you can’t guarantee President Fuller to seek justice for you, right?” Daphne asked as she looked at Sonia.

“Yeah. Toby just Facetimed me, but I didn’t respond because I was afraid to hear that he wanted to settle this matter quickly and quietly. I’m still not sure who weighs more in his heart. Is it me or the Lores?” Sonia explained.

“There is no way to quantify this. One is his teacher; the other is his lover. If President Fuller chooses you over Harry, outsiders will regard him as an ungrateful disciple; if he chooses Harry, he will be caught in the middle, complicating things even more.” Daphne sighed.

Her analysis was irrefutable. Toby had indeed become entangled in the crossfire.

“Let’s see if President Fuller can come up with a better solution,” Daphne comforted.

Still, Sonia remained deafeningly silent.

“Ugh, what is going on? Had the culprit been just a random rich girl who has nothing to do with President Fuller, things would have been so much easier. Unfortunately, that’s not the case.” Daphne pushed her glasses up her nose bridge.

“I know, right?” Sonia laughed.

“Miss Reed, if I’m not mistaken, Harry’s granddaughter should be a generation younger than President Fuller. On the other hand, President Fuller is Harry’s student, which means Harry’s granddaughter is President Fuller’s niece. A niece falling for her uncle is outrageous!” Daphne exclaimed.

“They are not related by blood anyway,” Sonia said as she averted her gaze.

“Even if they are not blood-related, there exists seniority. All in all, Miss Lore is most likely not a good person,” Daphne concluded.

Not responding, Sonia had trailed after the voice in her thoughts.

A good person?

No good person will do such a thing.

It’s obvious that Miss Lore is the same species as Tina and Anya.

I’m sure there will be more emerging in the future, even if this problem is to be resolved now.

Sonia took the coffee and sipped it, only to worsen her headache.

“Miss Reed,” Daphne called.

“What’s the matter?” Sonia looked at her.

“Miss Reed, we don’t know how President Fuller will resolve this matter now. Moreover, the footage at the hotel has also been destroyed, so there’s no way for the footage to clarify the gossip on the Internet. How about we meet President Lane personally and let him come forward to clarify? Perhaps that could be effective,” suggested Daphne.

“No. No one knows who the man in the photo is, so I don’t want to drag Charles into this. I’ll just have to deal with this on my own.” Sonia sighed, shaking her head.

“But...”

The ringing of Sonia’s phone cut Daphne off in the middle of her speech.

Sonia lowered her gaze and expected the caller to be Toby, but it was Zane.

For the last two months, Zane had been traveling to the mountains and countryside to research the dweller's conditions in various locations for his political exam; now, he must review the written portion of the exam.

For this reason, Sonia had not kept in touch with Zane in a while. Frankly, she had almost completely forgotten about his existence.

Who knew he would call at this exact moment?

"Wait a minute," Sonia told Daphne before swiping the screen and answering the call, "Hello?"

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"Are you okay, Sonia?" She had just answered the phone when Zane's loud voice sounded from the phone, which took her by surprise.

Back then, even when Zane spoke in a light tone, the volume was just right and it was neither soft nor loud.

So, why was he talking so loud now? He was practically yelling at the phone by the sound of it.

"I'm fine," Sonia replied, rubbing her numb ears from Zane's opera-esque voice.

"Is everything okay? There's a lot of chaos on the Internet now. I discovered it while researching in the countryside, so I quickly found a spot with a signal and called you. What's going on?"

Oh... So he's in the countryside.

Given the poor signal in the countryside, Zane's voice was probably unusually loud to avoid being inaudible amidst the weak signal.

She had initially suspected that he became rude and loud due to his frequent visits to the mountains and countryside for his research.

"It's like this..."

She did not hide anything from Zane as she revealed what happened and who was to blame.

The only unanswered question was who exactly was behind it.

After all, Zane and Toby were friends. If Zane knew, he would definitely tell Toby.

In that case, her strategy would fail as she wanted to keep it a secret for the time being by not revealing the mastermind yet.

She was planning to see Toby's reaction and how he would handle the situation. All in all, she just hoped that she would not be disappointed.

Otherwise, she would have to end the relationship regardless of how much feelings and love she had for him.

She reasoned that a man who rather wronged his wife for the sake of others might not be trustworthy.

"What?" Zane's tan handsome face tightened as he heard Sonia's words. "It's actually the work of the women who adore Toby? The audacity!"

"She's really brave, but someone gave her the confidence," Sonia sneered while arching her lips.

Precisely! Miss Lore's grandfather was none other than Toby's teacher and she was only audacious enough to act rashly because of their relationship. She must be very confident that Toby would not treat her terribly for the sake of Harry.

"Who?" Zane inquired, patting the tree beside him. "You mentioned that someone gave her the confidence. Do you know who she is?"

Sonia lowered her gaze and stated, "Almost, but not quite."

"It doesn't matter, just tell me and I'll look into it," Zane offered as he assuredly patted his chest, adding, "I'll find out for you soon."

Sonia's heart was moved and warmed as she listened to his initiative.

After all, he was just her regular friend and not even closer to her at the very least.

Seeing that he was one of the first to call when she was involved in a hurdle, it was enough to show how caring and helpful of a friend he was. Not only that, he had also offered his help without a second thought, which not many people were able to do for her.

So of course, she was touched by his good deeds!

"Thank you for offering to help me, but there is no need. We can solve this matter ourselves, so don't you worry." Sonia smiled as he turned down Zane's offer of assistance.

Though he had foreseen her refusal, it still made him feel sad regardless.

"Well, okay. I guess you have Toby, so you don't really need our help," he responded gloomily as he sat on the grass, which he then grabbed and placed in his mouth, before lying down to chew it.

Sonia did not give much thought as to why he was crestfallen, but simply felt that he was disappointed when he heard her rejection.

"Don't be sad. We're still business partners and we need to bring down the Gray Family. Your assistance is much needed since the Grays are still standing strong! You don't need to offer me assistance on things I can handle on my own," Sonia added as she shook her head.

After hearing her words, Zane felt refreshed and stopped chewing the grass in his mouth. "You're right! In this case, I'll stop being so invested in this matter. I'll let Toby take care of it. It's reasonable for him to take action to solve the problem since he's your man," he responded after nodding.

"Yes, you're right," she agreed with a smile.

"By the way, I just asked my assistant to check the situation online. This happened very early in the morning and it's already afternoon now. Why did Toby not suppress the commotion and stop the criticism? Is it possible that he is still unaware of this?" Zane asked solemnly while frowning.

"Toby didn't know about it at first. It's nearing the New Year, so there's auditing going on at the Fuller Group. It's natural for him to be unaware because he's the busy president. However, he did video-call me, but I didn't answer. I guess he should know by now and contacted me for this matter," Sonia responded.

"I see. I can rest assured then. I hope everything will calm down as soon as possible, but when are you going to clarify about it? You can't just suppress the chaotic news and not respond, right? This is a sign of a guilty conscience in the eyes of the outside world," he mentioned while nodding.

"We are going to respond, that's for sure, but it depends on how Toby handles it," she uttered, lowering her gaze.

She had yet to respond to the Internet rumors because she was curious how Toby would handle it now that she knew Harry's granddaughter was the culprit.

Will he ignore it by letting the heat die down, or will he make it public?

She would be pleased with Toby if he did the latter.

If it was the former, then she would definitely disagree with him. Why should I allow myself to be berated and bullied while unable to seek justice in the end?

Toby's attitude, in short, was the reason she held off from responding right now.

Zane was unaware of Sonia's thoughts as he had no idea who was the culprit, after all.

"Since you have your plans, I'll let you do your thing. If you need me, feel free to contact me. You can send an email if you can't reach me and my assistant will notify me in time." After straightening his back, Zane regained his usual lazy appearance, personality, and behavior. He did not appear to be the responsible man he had been two seconds before.

Sonia recognized that while he appeared to be a handsome young man, he did not appear to be a CEO. In reality, he was the best candidate for the position of CEO because he was meticulous and powerful.

"All right. I'll give you a call if I ever need your help," she replied with a smile.

"Okay. You must keep your words! I still have some errands to run and I have to visit a village to collect some statistics about their situation, so I'm hanging up! I made time for this phone call. See, I'm treating you really well, right?" Zane joked as he patted his buttocks and rose from the ground.

Do you want to break up with Toby and be with me instead?

These are the words Zane kept unspoken in his heart.

"You're really nice to me. Thank you so much for your kindness. You should go ahead with your work now. I won't bother you anymore. I believe you will be promoted when you return, right?"

"That's right! I'm doing well, so the promotion is certain."

"That's fantastic! Congratulations in advance, then," Sonia said while pumping her fist in the air.

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Zane could imagine Sonia's gesture on the other end of the phone even though he could not see it. "I accept your congratulations," he said cheerfully and added, "and don't worry, if I get promoted, I'll be your supporter when I return."

He thumped his chest with a thud.

Sonia could hear it clearly over the phone and her heart trembled. Don't break your sternum, man.

"Thank you!" she replied quickly, interrupting Zane's thumping.

He actually stopped hitting his chest. He then turned and walked toward his assistant, who was not far away. "Why are you thanking me? We're friends. Okay, I need to hang up first because I don't have any signal here. We'll talk when I return. How about we get together for a meal?"

"Sure!" Sonia nodded in agreement.

The call was then disconnected.

She hung up the phone and looked at the screen before laughing while shaking her head.

"Is that Mr. Coleman, Miss Reed?" Daphne, who was sitting across from Sonia, asked.

"Yeah. He knew about the rumors on the Internet, so he called to check on me," Sonia explained while nodding.

"Mr. Coleman is a wonderful man," Daphne stated as she rubbed her chin.

"Yes, he is a good man." Sonia agreed with a smile before asking, "Oh, right! What are you talking about earlier?"

Daphne's lips moved and she was about to say something. However, the office door was pushed open the next second.

Her words were cut off and strangled in her throat once more. Ugh... I'm speechless. It seems that even the universe is stopping me from telling her.

Even Sonia was stunned as she laughed at the situation.

The two of them could not stop laughing the next second when Charles' familiar voice came from outside the office door. "Hey, Sonny."

When Daphne heard his voice, she became pale. Her pupils shrank and she asked Sonia for help. "Miss Reed..."

Sonia was also nervous at the time.

After all, none of them had expected Charles' unexpected appearance.

Even if Sonia wanted to help Daphne, she could not even hide her in her lounge.

This was because Charles had already stepped inside.

As she heard footsteps behind her, Daphne's face turned pale while her body trembled before she lowered her head to the point where it was about to touch her chest.

She was obviously terrified of Charles.

Of course, there was more to it than fear; there was also a guilty conscience.

Charles had no idea she was pregnant and she was afraid to tell him. That was why she was always afraid of meeting him; her main fear was that he would find out she was pregnant.

Looking at Daphne's cautious demeanor and Charles' approaching figure, Sonia knew there was no way they could avoid each other and she sighed. That's it; since they can't flee, they should just meet calmly. As long as I keep Daphne's pregnancy a secret...

Sonia coughed lightly as she thought about it. When Daphne looked at her, she gave Daphne a quick look. Keep your cool, Daphne, and don't put on such a guilty and nervous expression! Otherwise, it will be obvious to Charles.

Daphne realized that it was pointless to be fearful. After receiving Sonia's reminder, she quickly returned a grateful look, then closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and adjusted her mentality.

At the very least, Daphne should conceal her guilty conscience, nervousness, and panic in front of the man.

Facing Sonia, Daphne squeezed her palm, finally adjusted her emotions and mentality before reverting to the secretary who was calm and composed.

In any case, she was a professionally trained secretary. Of course, she was best at self-regulation.

With that, Sonia was relieved to see that Daphne's mood had improved. Therefore, she became less anxious.

As such, she did not pay Daphne much attention; she quickly averted her gaze and asked, "Charles, why are you here?"

"I came to see you and discuss the rumors on the Internet." Charles came to a halt beside Daphne.

The tense Daphne's body could not help but contract, but she soon relaxed.

She secretly encouraged herself to keep her guilt hidden, then turned around and greeted calmly, "President Lane." She bowed to Charles with the usual attitude of treating him.

Charles was aware of Daphne's presence from the moment he walked through the door.

However, he pretended not to notice Daphne and approached Sonia.

Now that Daphne had greeted him, he could not pretend to not acknowledge her existence anymore.

He was unsure why he was annoyed when he saw her stiffly greeting him.

Clearly, there was no difference in her way of greeting in comparison to before, while Charles also sensed nothing wrong with it.

However, he did not understand why he hated the way she behaved in front of him.

Still, he could not make out how he wanted to be treated either.

At that moment, Charles was staring at Daphne without any response or hint of what he was thinking about.

With such a peculiar response, Daphne's heart was pounding and her body was tense.

She could not figure out why Charles was staring at her.

All she knew was that when he looked at her this way, she felt nervous and panicky. Miss Reed...

Daphne raised her eyes and signaled Sonia for help.

Sonia was perplexed as to what was wrong with Charles as he stared at Daphne. After shaking her aching head, Sonia was about to open her mouth to ease the awkwardness.

It was then Charles piped up at last.

“What? Aren’t you going to hide when you see me this time?” He directed the question at Daphne, crossing his arms.

When these words were spoken, not only did Daphne’s face turn pale, but Sonia was also stunned.

“Charles, you...”

He immediately raised his hand, which was an indication to stop Sonia from interrupting him. He then looked at Daphne and added, “Do you think that I was unaware of the fact that you were hiding in Sonny’s lounge the last time I came here?”

No doubt, Daphne’s face was now as pale as a white sheet.

Sonia also took a deep breath at the rising tension surfacing in the room. I thought Charles was completely unaware of this. I never thought that he knew about it from the start. So, for Daphne’s pregnancy... No way! He is still most likely unaware of this. If he knew about this, he would have sought confirmation from Daphne at this point. In short, as long as Charles is still in the haze about the pregnancy, I can focus on resolving other issues.

“I’m sorry, Charles. I didn’t hide on purpose,” Daphne apologized, lowering her head and slightly biting her lower lip before adding, “but this time I didn’t expect you to arrive suddenly. I wouldn’t be here if I knew.”

Charles’ face darkened as he heard this and his anger grew stronger in his heart.

“You really did hide yourself when I said that I didn’t want to see you. I didn’t expect you to be so obedient,” he sneered.

His words were odd, revealing a bitterness and anger that no one could comprehend.

Daphne’s eyes glowed with resentment. “Of course, I must follow your orders, President Lane. After all, you are now my superior and I’m just a subordinate. Isn’t it reasonable to expect a subordinate to listen to his superior?”

“Hmph!” Charles gave a cold snort and remained silent.

Although he disagreed with her response, he had to admit that she was correct. As a result, he could not refute it and simply avoided continuing the conversation.

“Okay. That’s enough. Daphne, please make President Lane a cup of coffee,” Sonia instructed as she winked at Daphne.

Daphne realized something and immediately sent Sonia a grateful smile before saying, “Okay, Miss Reed. I’ll get started now.”

She then turned around and left the room as soon as she finished speaking before her figure quickly disappeared.

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Charles’ gaze was drawn to Daphne throughout the conversation despite her figure having vanished outside the door for a long time as she never returned it.

Sonia finally patted him on the shoulder, prompting him to retract his gaze and turn his head.

“What’s wrong?” Charles inquired, his hand touching his shoulder.

“I should be the one asking. Why are you staring at the direction Daphne left? I’ve called you twice, but you didn’t respond,” Sonia said, crossing her arms and looking at the door behind him.

“You’re mistaken. I wasn’t staring at her. I was just thinking about something.” Charles was agitated and retorted quickly.

His reaction made Sonia roll her eyes. “Alright! Whatever you say. Let me tell you, Charles. You can’t treat Daphne this way when you come to look for me next time. She’s my secretary and no longer yours, so it is inappropriate for you to act like this.”

As the president, Sonia had to protect her own secretary. She must ensure that Daphne was not bullied by Charles while under her care.

“Okay, okay. I will ignore her in the future, okay? Anyway, I don’t think I bore any strange behavior toward her. Didn’t you see her expressionless face when she greeted me? I haven’t even had the time to complain about her rude attitude. Why are you blaming me instead?” he explained as he curled his lips and waved his hand.

Sonia’s lips twitched upon hearing this. “Charles, your statement is a little unreasonable. Isn’t Daphne’s attitude toward you the same as it has been in the past? There is no change, so why are you complaining that you cannot accept her attitude ever since she moved to my company?”

Charles was stunned and speechless.

Yes, Daphne did greet me in the same way she has before.

I never thought that there's anything wrong with her.

Why did I dislike her attitude now?

Charles lowered his gaze as he felt an indescribable irritability in his heart.

He drew out a chair and sat down after a while before waving his hand again, "Forget it, let's not talk about this. It makes me upset."

Sonia could not help but roll her eyes at him.

Why is he upset?

He's the one who stared at Daphne and complained about her attitude.

Why is he agitated?

Sonia, on the other hand, had always been respectful toward others' boundaries. As such, she had stopped talking about it since Charles did not want to.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

An assistant, who appeared with a tray, knocked on the door and announced, "Miss Reed, your coffee is ready."

"Please come in!" Sonia nodded with a smile.

"Yes."

The assistant hummed before entering the room with both hands on the tray. She then placed two cups of coffee in front of Sonia and Charles.

After setting the cups down, the assistant turned around and left the room.

At this point, Charles called after her, "Wait!"

"Do you have any other orders, President Lane?" the assistant inquired as she came to a halt.

"Where's Daphne?" he asked, turning the cup of coffee in front of him; his tone was flat and he was unable to express his feelings.

Seated across from him, Sonia had no idea what he was trying to ask.

"Miss Daphne is answering a call and she has to take care of some work, so she's busy right now," the assistant explained, holding the tray vertically in her arms, recalling what Daphne had just instructed.

Charles remained silent as his narrowed eyes fixed on the coffee cup while deep in thoughts.

Presently, the meeting room abruptly fell silent.

The assistant stood there, neither leaving nor staying, and had no choice but to seek assistance from the president.

Sonia stroked her brow, feeling a headache as a result of Charles' actions.

"Charles..." Sonia was just about to open her mouth to speak when Charles sipped his coffee before tossing the cup against the table.

Crack! The noise startled both Sonia and her assistant.

"Is something wrong with her, or is she making up excuses to not send me my coffee? I believe you know the answer." His gaze was full of rage.

The assistant was about to part her lips to speak when she decided to lower her head and remain silent.

"Lexi, you may leave first." Sonia waved at the assistant as she was unable to bear it any longer.

"Okay." When Lexi heard the president's words, she immediately dashed to the door and left the office, as if granted amnesty.

After Lexi had left, Sonia turned to face Charles, who was looking unhappy across from her.

He was obviously upset by Daphne's departure as he still had some unspoken words to deliver.

"Charles, I was the one who asked Daphne to bring in the coffee through someone else, so you don't have to blame her for not doing it personally," Sonia explained quietly while looking at him.

"Why did you do that?" Charles' grip on the coffee cup became slightly tighter.

“Why not?” Sonia pinched her brows and tiredly explained, “Have you noticed how much Daphne fears you, Charles? I’m not sure what happened between you two that makes her fear you so much; all I know is that I’m now her boss and it’s my responsibility to keep her safe. I’ll find a way to keep her from meeting you because she feels uncomfortable and scared whenever she sees you. I was right to protect her, wasn’t I?” She spread her arms.

At the same time, she purposefully concealed the fact that she was already aware of what had happened between them.

After the explanation, Charles was more concerned with her words than with her presence. He felt as if his heart had been ripped out when he heard Sonia say that Daphne was afraid of him.

“Why is she afraid of me?” he inquired quietly as his lips moved slightly. The question was almost directed at both Sonia and himself.

She then rolled her eyes at him. “Shouldn’t you be aware? Anyway, it is what it is.”

He squeezed the coffee cup again before going silent. At last, he appeared to comprehend why.

After that night, I’ve said a lot of inappropriate things to Daphne.

She is probably scared of me because of my words.

Shouldn’t I be pleased with her fear and avoidance though?

After all, this is what I wanted in the first place...

I’m filled with indescribable rage, now that I’ve seen her treat me this way.

It also reveals to me that I... seem to dislike Daphne’s fear of me and the way she avoids me.

Why?

Charles’ eyes and expressions were muddled as he looked down at his hand.

Sonia had no idea what Charles was thinking when she looked at him, but it definitely had to do with Daphne.

“All right, Charles. Enough about that. You don’t want to see her and she doesn’t want to bring you your coffee; isn’t this what you’re wishing for?” She knocked on the table and shook her head.

Absolutely not!

Charles had an unspoken desire to utter these two words.

As he was about to speak, he reacted and realized this was something he should remain in his heart.

As a result, he swallowed abruptly, nodded, and smiled. "You are correct. It's a good thing to avoid meeting someone I don't want to see." He picked up the coffee and drank it after speaking.

The delicate coffee cup precisely blocked the corners of his sinking mouth, masking the fact that his expression was far from calm and happy when he said this.

All in all, it was clear that he was not speaking his mind.

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Daphne, who had been said to be busy with work, was actually not as she remained standing outside the office, listening to every move in the room.

As she listened to what Charles had just said, her heart felt as if it was slashed by a knife. Uncontrollably, her eyes turned bright red and she could feel her anger surging from within.

It turns out that President Lane is overjoyed when he doesn't see me.

Ha. It appears that I'm a person who greatly irritates him.

Lifting her head, she took a deep breath and covered half of her face before leaving Sonia's office to return to the main secretary assistants' office.

Daphne trotted in with her head bowed and her eyes red when Lexi, who had just delivered the coffee, noticed her agitation. "Miss Daphne, what's the matter with you?" she asked concernedly.

"I'm alright." Daphne sat back down and shook her head at Lexi before wiping her eyes to force out a smile.

"You've already cried. How is this all right?" Lexi frowned.

Removing her glasses, Daphne explained as she rubbed her eyes. "Thank you for your concern, Lexi. Don't worry. I'm fine! I just had some sad thoughts and I couldn't hold back all of a sudden."

After she said that, she put on her glasses again and smiled at Lexi.

When Lexi noticed that Daphne was not as depressed as she had been when she first arrived, she nodded and said, "That's good, then. I'll head back to work first. If there's anything you need help with, you must let us know and we'll definitely help."

Daphne nodded, her heart feeling warm. "Sure. I will!"

Next door in the president's office...

Sonia and Charles were unaware that Daphne had just overheard their conversation, which had caused her to leave in distress.

At that moment, Sonia cast a silent glance at Charles.

Having delivered his words, he continued to drink coffee with his head down. Despite the coffee being so hot and bitter, it seemed that he was gulping it down.

"Alright, alright," Sonia said as she noticed Charles' coffee was about to run out. She quickly stopped him from drinking it all at once, "Stop drinking, Charles. It's bad for your throat to dunk it down like this."

As such, Charles took a breather. He had no choice because Sonia had grabbed his wrist and it would be weird for him to resist.

After seeing that Charles had given up on his act and placed down his cup of coffee, she heaved a sigh of relief. "Your entire personality has changed ever since you came here and saw Daphne."

"Did I?" He frowned, refusing to acknowledge it.

"Alright, alright; you didn't, how 'bout that? Let's not discuss this and move on to the real deal. You just said you're here to inquire about the rumors on the Internet?" Sonia shifted the topic after helplessly shaking her head.

In contrast, Charles became solemn when it came to serious matters. It was as if his previous attitude was just an illusion.

"Yes, I am. But damn, I didn't expect you to be photographed by paparazzis when I went out to meet with you. Now, there are so many unfounded rumors on the Internet. Ugh, I'm so done with them," Charles complained with a darkened expression.

"Yeah, it's quite annoying." Sonia casually nodded in agreement.

"What are the Squirrel Media thinking? Are they not afraid of Toby's retaliation?" Charles smacked his fist against the table.

Charles had no idea that someone had been planning this for a long time. He simply believed that the Squirrel Media was just one of the mindless outlets that would do anything for popularity.

"They're completely fearless. They wouldn't risk it if they were afraid," Sonia spoke with a sarcastic smile plastered on her cheeks.

Charles paused for a few seconds before saying, "I know, right? At this point, I'm not sure if it's appropriate to admire the squirrels' bravery. They aren't even giving a heck about their future for the sake of fame. It's absolutely insane." He was still completely unaware of the conspiracy.

Sonia wanted to explain the motive and goals of their rumors. However, she had an epiphany, so she swallowed her words once again.

Forget it. Let's move on.

If the truth was revealed, Charles' rage may lead him straight to the Lores.

"Oh right, Sonny. Did Toby do you wrong? Does he not believe you?" he asked, clutching his palms and looking concernedly at her.

In any case, Charles and Sonia were the central figures in the scandal.

Though he was yet to be publicly identified as the mystery man in the photographs, he was still involved in a controversy with Sonia after all. As a result, he was worried that he would irritate Toby.

On the other hand, women are frequently the ones getting the short end of the stick. It was always Sonia's fault when she and Toby got into trouble, so Charles did not want to witness any further suffering from her.

His concern warmed Sonia's heart as she shook her head slightly. "Don't worry, he didn't."

"Really?" Charles remained worried.

She nodded and confirmed, "Yes."

Although Sonia had yet to contact Toby, Tom realized right away that everything on the Internet was made up and that someone was manipulating her behind her back.

Therefore, it would be illogical for Toby to believe otherwise; if he did, he must have been blind at this point.

It did not matter if Toby did not realize the rumor was false. The most important thing was his strategy for dealing with this situation.

“That’s great news.” Charles exhaled a sigh of relief as he patted his chest, adding, “Do you know that I almost destroyed my accelerator from speeding all the way here? I rushed all the way here because I was worried that Toby would misunderstand you and dismiss you. It’s a huge relief that Toby didn’t let me down.”

“He’s not a moron. He knows what we did at the hotel that day. Besides, there’s no point in me being with him if he doesn’t even believe me,” Sonia explained, smiling.

“That’s correct, but why does he know what we’re doing at the hotel? Did you also tell him what Brian and I told you last night?” he asked.

“Yeah. Both of you are right. I am yet strong enough to be on my own and I will inevitably ask him for assistance in the future. It is preferable to simply communicate in this case,” she said, tucking her hair behind her ear.

“You’re doing fantastic. He won’t have any doubts about us at the hotel now that you’ve addressed it, but why haven’t you clarified the rumors?”

“As long as we show the hotel surveillance footage and we each clarify on the Internet, this matter can be solved very easily,” Charles said, “but now things have been fermenting for so long, and the netizens are getting more and more chaotic, but you and Toby seem to have nothing to say. Do you have any other plans?”

Initially, Charles wanted to stand up and clarify when he saw the scandal on the Internet.

His mother, however, stepped in. Rather than clarifying, his mother instructed him to head to Paradigm Co. and inquire Sonia’s opinion first.

On his way to meet her, Charles had a thousand thoughts. He was familiar with her personality and she did not appear to be a procrastinator.

She did not seem to be the type to put off her explanations for such a scandal, which would damage her reputation and jeopardize her relationship with Toby.

The longer they wait to address and clarify the rumors, the harsher the criticism will be.

Even worse, if they did not show up for an extended period of time, everyone would believe the rumors because not showing up indicated a bad conscience.

Delay, on the other hand, was detrimental to everyone in this case.

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As the smart person she was, there was no way Sonia would not know that; the same went for Toby as well.

However, both of them had no intention to clarify it, let alone averting the public's attention from the news.

Given the situation, the only explanation Charles could come up with was that the couple was planning on something. Otherwise, why would they delay it for so long? It was especially so for Toby, whose loved one was the targeted victim of this scandal.

He loved Sonia and would never turn a blind eye to the malicious comments thrown at her. Yet, he was not doing anything about it; something was definitely off.

Mom must've seen through it. That's why she stopped me from clearing up the misunderstanding and had me ask Sonia herself so that I won't screw up her plan.

"Other plans..." muttered Sonia.

Charles nodded. "Yeah. Otherwise, why aren't you guys clarifying to solve the issue?"

She chuckled with mixed feelings. "There is, but it depends on Toby. This is also a test for him."

Had she not known that the mastermind was Harry's granddaughter, she would not have dragged it until today. Rather, she would have clarified the issue. She wanted to watch Toby looking into the mastermind and see how he was going to deal with the matter. In short, it was the critical moment their relationship was hanging on.

"A test for Toby?" Charles could not follow. "Why are you testing him?"

She pinched her nose bridge. "Now's not the time yet. You'll know soon. All you gotta remember is that I have my reasons."

He then held his tongue while staring at her in silence. A couple of moments later, he sighed. "Fine. What can I say when you already have your plan? Still, I think it's better to settle it as soon as possible. You don't deserve all the criticisms you're receiving now, but... there's something strange."

“What?” She raised her head at him.

Charles touched his chin. “Me. It is a scandal that involves the both of us, but no one recognizes that the man is me. That’s odd.”

Sonia lowered her gaze. “What’s odd about that? Society holds double standards for men and women. Women have to bear more than men do for the same mistake.”

“I cannot agree more. Should I come forward and clear things up, then? I don’t care whether they will believe it, I can at least bear the criticisms with you. I can’t let you handle those alone, can I?” Charles gazed at her.

She was not sure how to respond to that. “Wow, someone volunteering as a tribute for cyberbullying; that’s a first. Isn’t it fortunate that no one recognizes it’s you? Why must you expose yourself and call for criticisms? It won’t do good to you or Lane Corporation.”

“I know, but both of us are involved in this. I can’t let you take it upon yourself all alone.” His brows creased.

Sonia smiled. “Charles, I understand your intention, but it’s really fine. It’s best for one to take the hit instead of two, right? Don’t worry. I know that you’re trying to protect me. I feel the same too, but I don’t wanna see you in trouble. So, you don’t have to meddle in this. I can settle it on my own.”

“But—” He intended to say something, yet someone pushed open the door at that moment. It was Toby, who strode into the office with his slender legs.

She was stunned for a moment to see him after which she rose from her seat unconsciously. “Why are you here?”

Meanwhile, Charles turned his head to see Toby, who made him snort. Despite his silence, he was displeased with the man.

Even so, this was the man Sonia liked; hence, Charles could not be fussy like he did before no matter how annoyed he was. He should at least save Sonia’s face, right? Anyway, he could not snap at Toby, but it should be fine to not talk to the man in the very least.

Toby glanced over at Charles before averting his gaze and walking toward Sonia. He was baffled by Charles’ presence, but at the thought of the raging topic on the Internet, he had a vague guess of the reason behind Charles’ visit.

Charles always had his sharp tongue ready whenever Toby was around, as if Toby did not know how to snap back at him.

Yet, shunning one was the deadliest blow compared to hurling sharp-tongued critics. Thus, Toby would only spare Charles a glance and never interact with him. It was as though he was an invisible man.

“You didn’t accept my video call, so I was worried.” He stood next to her while replying gently. So, he’s worried about my mood because I didn’t accept his call.

A crumb of honey-sweet happiness surged in her chest as the concern about her future choice waned. After all, that was the future; at least he cared for her at the moment and she was delighted at that.

“Have a seat.” Sonia offered her office chair to him before taking another chair for herself.

Toby accepted her offer and sat down.

“Were you busy on something? Why didn’t you accept my call?” He looked at the woman beside him.

She masked her emotions with her downcast eyes and responded indifferently, “I was busy, so I didn’t accept your call.”

He pursed his lips as no one knew whether he was believing her words. Then, he said, “I know everything about the issue that’s going on the Internet. I’m sorry for making you handle it alone.”

Feeling the tingle on her nose tip, she shook her head lightly. “It’s nothing, but there’s something I wanna know. Do you… believe in it?”

Charles was stunned at that. “Sonia, what are you talking about? You didn’t know whether Toby believes in it? But you—”

“No. I don’t trust those articles,” Toby interrupted Charles’ squeaky mouth by answering her question with solemnity. “The netizens are silly to buy it, but I am not. I know you will never do such a thing. Besides, how will other shabby men be able to strike your fancy when you already have me?”

His words were directed at Charles implicitly, causing the man to flip out. Slamming the table, he stood up and pointed at Toby’s nose. “Toby Fuller, who are you calling shabby? Are you trying to put on a fight?”

He folded his sleeves up, totally geared up for a fight.

Toby raised his gaze upon Charles and reciprocated nonchalantly, “Do you think you stand a chance against me?”

It was not a condescending question. Putting Charles' loss in terms of height and figure, Toby learned combat sport; as such, going up against a few at a time was not a problem for him. On the other hand, judging from Charles' small figure, he did not seem like he had taken such lessons.

Charles' aura unsurprisingly shrunk like a deflated balloon at Toby's question. After clenching his hands, he seated himself again in defeat. "Fine. I'm not your match. You win."

Next, he turned his head sideways, trying not to upset himself by looking at Toby.

In the meantime, their dispute amused Sonia as she actually giggled while covering her mouth. "Stop it, you guys."

They're in their thirties yet they fight like three-year-olds. They're so childish and funny.

Her smile smoothened the furrowed brows on Toby's forehead, even the irritated Charles was slightly appeased by it.

She looked at Charles apologetically. "Sorry, Charles. I lied. I didn't ask Toby about it until now, but I knew that he wouldn't believe it. That's why I gave you that answer."

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After Sonia finished her comment, Toby lifted his chin at Charles without masking his smug expression. Without words, he communicated, 'Look how well Little Leaf knows me.'

Charles fully understood Toby's expression and the corner of his lips twitched as his body was trembling.

This brat!

Needless to say, she did not miss any of their little interactions, but she played dumb since they would become childish whenever they were together. As long as it was not a physical fight, she might as well just let them be.

"Fine, fine." Charles waved his hand helplessly. "Even if it's a lie, I won't do anything to you anyway."

In other words, he did not blame her for it.

She smiled. "Thanks, Charles."

Again, he waved his hand in reply before Toby said, "Little Leaf, I didn't know that you have so much faith in me. I'm really happy to know that."

Sonia did not ask him about it, yet she already believed that he would not buy the story. Of course, he should be jumping in excitement for such a solid couple's trust!

She then poured him a glass of water. "That's because you know the entirety of the meeting. If you still couldn't believe it despite that, clearly, I have overestimated you."

"Don't worry. Your man ain't silly." He took over the glass. "Even if I know nothing, I won't doubt your loyalty. I know what kind of person you are."

She glared at him, but a smile appeared across her lips. Evidently, she was pleased by his answer.

"Right, Toby." Charles suddenly landed his gaze upon the man.

Toby frowned. "What?"

Charles crossed his legs. "What else? I just wanna know why you aren't doing anything to dwindle the rage on the Internet? It's been so long and you're letting them criticize Sonia? Although she said there's no need to rush since she's testing you, that shouldn't affect the test, right?"

"Test?" Toby turned to face Sonia. "What test?"

She had not expected Charles to be so outspoken by questioning Toby about the Internet rage as well as blurting the so-called test. She was in a bind, for it would be impossible to keep the truth from Charles later.

"Don't interrupt us." Although Charles was surprised by Toby's oblivion about her test, he was desperate to know the reason behind Toby's decision.

To him, dwindling the rage would not influence the test in any way, since it was neither a clarification nor a solution to the matter.

Toby glanced at her with an intense gaze for a moment before answering Charles' question, "Who says that I'm doing nothing?"

Both Sonia and Charles were put in a trance by that.

"You've done something?" asked Charles in shock.

Toby remained quiet while Sonia parted her lips to say something, but frowned soon after. She was not doubting Toby's words as there was no reason for him to lie.

But why is the issue still trending on the Internet?

That exact question was then brought up by Charles.

Toby's countenance dimmed and in a frosty voice, he recounted, "It's simple—someone's controlling it. Tom had the public relation department take action once he found out about the issue. They did as they were told, but it went trending again very quickly. There's a network company moderating it and I've confirmed it with the network engineers; they're clearly trying to keep me out of the way. My subordinates are looking into it to find out which network company it is. Once we get to the bottom of it, I'll never let them get away that easily."

That explains it.

Sonia snickered as she had a vague guess of which network company it was.

The network is the Lores' forte. Since Miss Lore is one of them, there's no way their network company won't listen to her orders—in the case where she actually tries to stop them. Ha.

"What? There's a network company behind this?" Charles was taken aback once again. "It's not the media trying to ride the wave by framing Sonia? I thought it's just something simple. Why is there a network company behind this? Is it not as simple as I thought?"

Toby looked at him as if he was an idiot. "Of course not. Do you think that an ordinary media would dare to frame my girlfriend without a backer?"

"I know that, but I merely thought they've gone mad for money and attention, so..." Charles' voice trailed off and he kept quiet in the end. It was because he realized how simple and foolish he was.

Toby sniggered. "I wonder how you took over the position as the president of Lane Corporation. It's been a decade since you're in business, hasn't it? Do you think someone would give their future away for a transience benefit?"

Despite the reluctance to admit Toby's words, Charles did not retort because it was true that he took it too simply.

Inhaling a deep breath, he regained his composure before gazing at Sonia with grievance. "Sonia, did you know that things aren't that simple earlier on?"

She avoided his gaze, but her reaction said it all. With that, Charles' face scrunched up. "Sonia, you lied to me again."

"I didn't." She was feeling slightly awkward. "I just didn't refute when you said that it's the media riding the wave by spreading rumors."

"I don't care." He snorted. "You didn't tell me the truth anyway. You lied."

"Enough. Are you a kid?" Toby could not bear the sight of Charles' behavior as he chided with a darkened expression, "She didn't lie. You're stupid for failing to figure it out. It's simple."

While his face displayed disdain, Charles was vexed. "Yeah, yeah. I'm stupid and you're smart. So, tell me. Who's the one behind this? Why are they stirring up a scandal between Sonia and I?"

Toby looked at Sonia reflexively, but she played dumb by facing front without sparing a glance at him. Seeing that, his heart sank at the drop of a hat.

Dang it! So, she's livid because she knows that the mastermind is my pursuer.

"Little Leaf, trust me. I'll find her, so don't be angry." He looked at the glass before her after which he stood up to fill it with water gingerly.

She alternated her gaze from the glass onto his jittery expression, which she found funny. If the mastermind was not Lynette and had nothing to do with him, the anger in Sonia would be placated by his cautious behavior; she would've just smiled and gotten over it.

However, that person was someone related to him and she did not know how he was going to settle it. In hindsight, she could not bring herself to smile.

She pushed the glass aside as she had no intention to drink it. At the same time, she was telling Toby that it would not be easy to quell the rage.

His heart squeezed tighter. When he was at his wit's end, Charles abruptly slammed the table. "What? It's a woman?"

He sprang to his feet and pointed at Toby. "Toby Fuller, is it your pursuer? Is she behind all this?"

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A flicker shone in Toby's eyes as he remained silent and so did Sonia. Pin-drop silence filled the conference room.

A moment later, Charles was being all jumpy due to frustration. "I guessed it right, didn't I? The culprit is your pursuer! The criticisms and grievance Sonia's suffering is all because of you, Toby. This is already the second time. Anya's first and now another one. Is there going to be a third one? Huh?" he bellowed.

Toby frowned and rose to his feet. "It is true that everything happened because of me. I'll put things right for Little Leaf."

"Hmph. What for?" Charles sneered, "Keep a count on your pursuers. After it's settled this time round, there's gonna be another one showing up in future. Are you going to let Sonia suffer every single time? If I'd known this would happen, I would've stopped her from reconciling with you. You're too much trouble to handle."

Toby's pupils shrank as his murderous gaze fixated upon Charles. "What did you say? Trouble?"

"Am I wrong?" Charles met his eyes fearlessly. "Toby Fuller, ask yourself. Are you related to every danger she's in and threats she receives until today? Oh, bar one—Jessica Reed. Other than her, do you dare to claim that others are none of your business? Tina Gray; the Gray Family; the Salzburg Family; and now, your pursuer. If this continues, Sonia might lose her life someday because of you!"

Toby clenched his fists as he could not refute. Indeed, all of the predicaments cast upon Sonia—besides Jessica's incident—were related to him. It was not an exaggeration to say that he was the cause for everything. Toby had evidently caused many troubles to Sonia.

"Sonia." He closed his eyes before staring at her. "Do you think the same too? That I've caused you trouble?"

Although he knew very well himself that he had brought her a lot of problems, he cared more about her stance. If she shared the same notion, he...

No. No matter what she thinks, I'll never break up with her and I'll not let her leave my side. She belongs to me for this lifetime; and the next one; and for eternity!

His eyes flickered a fleeting glint of red glow.

"No." She finally looked at him in the eyes while shaking her head lightly. "They're related to you, but so am I. We can't generalize that you're the cause for their actions since you can't control them. Don't overthink it."

His tight fists loosened up a little, yet Charles was displeased. "Sonia, why are you taking on his side when things are already out of control?"

"Charles, I'm not taking his side. This is the fact and it's not completely on him." She sighed.

Charles snorted. Since he was unable to receive communion from her, he reckoned it was best to pick on Toby.

"Although she said so, don't get full of yourself. No matter what, you're the one to blame for everything that has happened. It's your pursuer that brings the hate train to Sonia. So, if you don't work it out, I'll never agree to anything," warned Charles as he pointed a finger at Toby.

In a same frosty voice, Toby reciprocated, "You're telling me."

Then, he looked at her. "Charles mentioned a test for me. What was that?"

Charles focused his eyes on her and awaited her answer as he was equally curious. Facing the men's gaze, she knew it was redundant to keep it a secret and sighed.

"Before this, I have a few questions for you." Sonia's gaze landed upon Toby.

His eyes glinted in surprise, but it faded the next second. Regaining his composure, he nodded lightly. "Go ahead. I'll tell you everything I know."

"Good." She feigned a smile.

Meanwhile, Charles shuddered as he sensed something was wrong with her. If he was aware of it, Toby should have caught the whiff of it as well. It was then Toby's gaze displayed a doubtful glint.

"Before we ended the video call this morning, you said you were going to meet your teacher, right?" She lowered her gaze to stare at her red nails.

He nodded.

She continued, "What kind of person is he like?"

"Why do you ask?" His eyes narrowed.

She smiled in response as the expression remained insincere. "You just have to answer me."

After gazing at her for a while, he replied, "He is a knowledgeable person, especially in economics. Although he no longer catches up with its fast development, he's the first one who taught me everything I know. I respect him a lot."

"You hold high regards for him."

"In a way, yes," responded Toby succinctly.

As long as Harry did not preach on him by exerting his superiority and seniority, he would always own Toby's respect. Still, Sonia was oblivious of that fact. The only thing she knew was Toby had admitted that Harry carried a lot of importance to him.

"What kind of person is he?" she questioned again.

Charles alternated his gaze between her and Toby before he voiced out his curiosity, "Sonia, what does his teacher have to do with your test? Why are you asking this all of the sudden?"

Toby wanted to know her reason as well.

However, neither did she answer nor spare a glance at Charles. Her eyes zeroed in on Toby. "Answer me. What kind of person is he?"

"What's the matter?" Toby felt that she was behaving stranger than he thought.

She took a deep breath in an attempt to smother the bubbling frustration in her before repeating herself. "Answer me and stop the questions. I really want to know."

Now that things had turned out this way, he would be an idiot if he failed to realize that there was something bugging in her mind.

"Okay. I'm not sure why you wanna know about him, but I'll tell you if you wanna know." He finally gave in. "He's a nice and patient person. He loves and cares for his juniors, but this is my impression of him a few years ago. I'm not sure about him right now since he has changed so much."

Harry's dislike toward Sonia was obvious today. Whenever she was mentioned, not a tad of gentleness appeared on his face and his temper wore thin. He did not even bother to listen to Toby's refutes and almost fainted due to asthma.

It was Toby's first time seeing his teacher behaving in such a manner. Anyway, there was one thing he was sure of—Harry was very different from before.

"A few years ago?" Sonia pursed her lips. "Do you mean that it's been years since you last met?"

He hummed. "His granddaughter pursued her studies abroad and he left the country for treatment, so he had been living abroad. It hasn't been long since he returned back to the country."

She bit her lip. "Seems like you don't know your teacher that well."

“Maybe.” He nodded and questioned back, “Can you tell me the reason now for asking these questions?”

“There’s no need for the rush.” She shook her head. “I’m not done with my questions yet. What do you think of his granddaughter?”