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Time to make some families pay for what they did. This will serve as a warning for them and stop them from having any funny thoughts. Apparently, I've been too lenient on them. They took my kindness as a weakness, and now they're exploiting it. I wonder if any other families are doing the same thing. It was time for Toby to show them what he was made of. He would cut these families down and destroy their ambition of soaring to higher heights. He would make it clear that he had never changed. Yes, he might have pulled his punches, but he was still as fierce as ever. He was just lying low.

"Right away, President Fuller," Tom quickly answered. He knew about the Acrees. Sonia told Toby everything Grace had told her the last time they were in the Lane Residence, and Toby told him the gist of it as he wanted Tom to find out all details about the Acrees.

He knew what the Acree Family was planning, and he scoffed at it. A fourth-rate family trying to match up with President Fuller? What a joke. Trying to match up with the worst aristocrats is already a joke in itself, and they're gunning for the best of the best? They're making a fool of themselves.

As Tom was still thinking to himself, Toby asked, "Are the Lores here?"

"Oh, I was just about to say that." Tom set aside his thoughts and answered, "Yes, they are. And it's Lynette and Harry. But I stopped them before they could come in."

Toby wasn't surprised. He knew they would come sooner or later.

"But..." Tom sounded troubled.

Toby frowned. "But what?"

"They refused to leave, so I told the guards to take them into the car, but they broke free. Harry's not as young as he used to be, so we didn't want to get too forceful. If anything were to happen, it'd be problematic. Thus, I asked them to wait for you in a hotel room. The bodyguards are keeping an eye on them. I promised them you'd see them after the banquet, and they went with the arrangement." Tom scratched his head as he thought, This is a big hassle.

A look of irony filled Toby's eyes. "I can't believe Harry could be this unreasonable."

Tom pouted. "I can, though. If it were not for the fact that he would always try to keep up the wise mentor act in front of you, you'd have known about it a long time ago. He has been this unreasonable all this time."

Toby pursed his lips and said nothing. Tom, you just stole my line. He never knew the Lores' true colors. He thought they were just a little unreasonable, but the truth was far worse than that. It took him long enough to find out their true colors as they managed to disguise themselves perfectly, and he had no interest in getting to know them. If he had known who they truly were, he would have cut off all ties with them sooner instead of keeping in touch with them until this point in time. Gosh, I should have looked into them a lot more. They leeches a lot of money off me, and they even went for my girlfriend.

Toby pinched the bridge of his nose and ordered, "Just tell them I'll see them after the banquet. I want them to stay put."

Tom nodded in response. "Yes, sir."

Toby hung up and put away his phone. Then, he sipped some wine as he waited for Sonia to return. He couldn't see her from where he was sitting, so he had no idea where she was right now, nor did he know how her talks with that lady went. He didn't know if the lady had introduced Sonia to her husband, but Toby wasn't worried. She has grown a lot, after all. She will be fine. He crossed his legs and twirled his glass of wine around. For some reason, it felt like he was half-covered in a layer of mist, and the sense of mystery surrounding him made him even more alluring for the ladies.

Every time the ladies stole a glance at him, their hearts would race, and their envy toward Sonia grew. How on earth did a woman from a declining family manage to make him fall for her? They couldn't understand it at all.

I mean, sure, she's hotter and more powerful than us. We have no jobs and no company to run. All we have are some shares and dividends. Our families raise us like pigs for slaughter. When they need to marry us off for profit, they would do it without any hesitation. This was the thought crossing all the ladies' minds. On the other hand, Sonia was the chairperson of the company. She had no parents controlling her and didn't have to sacrifice herself for the sake of her family. That was something all the ladies didn't have—freedom.

And that made them even more jealous of her.

The ladies gnashed their teeth furiously, but then they saw a woman in a wheelchair going into the forbidden area. Yes, they were referring to where Toby was when they said the forbidden zone. Nobody dared to go near him, after all. However, now someone had breached the area and made a beeline for him. That person wasn't just passing through—she was going for Toby.

And it was a lady, too. The other ladies and gentlemen were shocked. All of them gasped in awe.

“Who is she? She’s so brave.”

“No idea. I’d never seen her face before. Probably not a part of the Seafield’s circle. Maybe she came from somewhere else.”

“Not from Westsashire, that’s for sure.”

“Not from Norfolk, either. Never seen her before as well. Never heard of any family with a girl in a wheelchair. Probably not someone in our circle. If she is part of the circle, she would have known President Fuller is taken. She would know he hates it when any woman tries to approach him.”

“Yeah. Tons of women love him, but none would come near him. I think she’s not part of the circle, either. Probably a celebrity or some internet influencer. Or maybe she’s someone’s girlfriend who fell for President Fuller. She’s probably heading over to hit on him. Those are the only explanations I could think of for her actions. I think she doesn’t know he hates it when women try to go near him. Hey, is she a girlfriend of any of you guys?” The lady pointed at the guys.

And the other ladies threw them looks of suspicion as well.

The gentlemen shook their heads in quick succession. One of them denied, “No. None of us brought our girlfriends here. Our families said President Fuller would come, so they had specifically warned us not to bring our girlfriends here in case they might try their luck and hit on him. So, we followed their advice.”

“Yep.”

The ladies could see they were telling the truth, but that raised more questions than it answered. “She’s not either of your partners, and she’s not part of us, so how did she get in here?”

“Probably snuck in. Not like it hasn’t happened before. There was a small event two months ago, and a civilian girl changed into server attire and snuck in. Trying to see if she could snag herself a rich boyfriend. This is probably the same situation.”

“That sounds plausible.”

Everyone nodded in agreement.

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The ladies were giving the girl in the wheelchair weird looks. Looks of disdain. Of scorn. To them, this woman was nothing but a gold digger wishing to marry into a rich family. Such women would gain nothing but contempt from them, not to mention the woman was someone who couldn't even stand up on her own two feet. In most cases, they wouldn't look down on those with disabilities.

However, their circle could be ableist when it came to marriage. They didn't think this cripple was a worthy match for Toby. She was even worse than Sonia, for goodness' sake. At least Sonia has fully functional limbs. But this woman has nothing, and she's a cripple. She has no right to approach President Fuller. They'd rather see Toby marry Sonia than have this woman talk to him.

One of the ladies suddenly asked, "Does anyone have Sonia's number? Call her right now. Tell her some wench is hitting on President Fuller."

"We don't have her number. Not like we're friends with her."

"Yeah. We should get a waiter to do this for us instead."

"Alright. Get a waiter, then."

A server came to them a while later. The ladies embellished the story and told him to tell Sonia about it. The server nodded and looked at Toby for a moment before he went to do his job.

Sonia had no idea that the ladies who were jealous of her dating Toby just became ardent supporters of her relationship with Toby just because of another woman hitting on him. They even went as far as to help her out, too. Yet, she had not the slightest idea of it as she was currently chatting with the host.

Even Toby had no idea a woman was trying to hit on him. He closed his eyes and sipped on his wine, enjoying the moment of peace. However, the moment he heard the sound of a wheelchair, he stopped twirling his glass altogether. Apparently, the wheelchair's appearance had soured his mood.

Still, he didn't open his eyes. He thought someone was just passing through. This wasn't his turf, after all. Everyone made it look like it was, but that didn't mean nobody could pass through his vicinity.

As long as they didn't disturb him, he wouldn't care even if they passed through his vicinity. Since he thought the person was just passing by, he didn't think he had to open his eyes to check who it was.

However, he soon realized his guess was wrong. The person wasn't passing by. They were coming toward him. The sound of the wheelchair was getting louder, and he could smell the scent coming off that person. It's a woman.

Toby's face fell. This woman's appearance soured his mood once more. Probably another lady trying to hit on me. Ignored what I said and came to me, eh?

He didn't think all women would fall for him, but as long as he was the most powerful man in the city, he knew most women would want to date him. And he knew it was not for love, but for power, money, and status instead.

The Acree Family was a perfect example. They were trying to hook their daughter up with him. If their plan were to work, they would become one of the top families in the city. That was why a lot of aristocrats ignored his warning to try their luck. If it worked, they could get a lot of things. So, is this the Acree girl? But nobody told me she is wheelchair-bound. He opened his eyes to see who it was, only to be greeted by a familiar face.

The girl didn't expect Toby to open his eyes. It made her freeze for a moment, but then she quickly put on a gentle smile. "Fancy seeing you here, President Fuller."

The woman had undergone cosmetic surgery. It looked natural, but it didn't change the fact she had gone through that surgery. She might have a great smile, but he still thought it looked fake. So, when she flashed him a smile, not only did he not find it attractive, but he also felt her smile was rather stiff, like a puppet. A hint of disgust filled his eyes as he growled, "It's you!"

"Yes, it's me." She pushed her hair back, her smile broadening. The woman was none other than Anya.

He narrowed his eyes. "This is no mere coincidence. Everyone knows I'd attend the banquet, but nobody from Westsashire was invited. You didn't come here coincidentally. You came on purpose. Let me guess... Connor's orders?"

Connor's base was in Westsashire, but he was powerful enough that the host wouldn't dare to offend him. Even though they had only invited Seafeld's aristocrats, any other city's aristocrats could just tell them they wanted to come, and they would be permitted to enter. Must be the case for this one as well, Toby thought in silence.

Anya nodded in response to his previous question. "Yes, it is. He said it's time for me to get to know people in the circle now that I'm back in the fold. I'm a part of the family, so I must go around and get to know people. So, here I am. Initially, he had wanted to come with me, but he's still in the hospital as his injuries still need to be tended to. Thus, I came alone." She heaved a sigh.

Toby shot her an icy look. "Wrong. The Salzburgs are based in Westsashire. The people you should get to know are also in Westsashire, not Seafeld. There's no point in you coming to this banquet, and this is not where you should announce yourself as the young miss of the Salzburgs. Besides, you're not the real young miss of the family, either."

Her smile went stiff upon hearing that. A great fear overwhelmed her, sending a chill running down her spine, and the air itself seemed to freeze as well.

The ladies in the distance had been watching the conversation closely, and the moment Toby started talking to Anya, their faces were contorted by envy. All of them started biting into their handkerchiefs.

"I can't believe that woman is friends with President Fuller."

That was the biggest shock of the night. They wouldn't think much about it if the woman knew Toby since he was famous, after all. Everyone knew him. However, they were surprised that he knew that woman. They had no idea he knew other women outside of Sonia and Tina. Who is she? How did she become friends with President Fuller? And how did she manage to make him talk to her?

"Where the hell is the waiter? Did he talk to Sonia yet?"

"Yeah. President Fuller's already talking to that woman. Where is Sonia? Why isn't she showing up yet?"

"If it were me, I'd stay with him all the time. I'd have worried about all the other women hitting on him if I had left, but she just went around and left him behind. I can't believe we're worrying about them, dammit."

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If Sonia had heard the complaints of these ladies, she might feel amused. In fact, she might even thank them for helping her out. However, neither she nor Toby knew about this little episode.

Anya was facing Toby, her mind buzzing.

She was shocked Toby would say she wasn't Connor's daughter. Her back was drenched with sweat, and she could feel her skin sticking to the fabric. Even with the heater turned on, she still felt chilly, and her heart was thumping furiously.

Impossible. Why did he say that? Does he know? Did he find out I'm not Connor's daughter? Or is this a bluff? She had no idea how much he knew, but she didn't let her guard down. She held her wheelchair's armrest tightly and took a deep breath to calm herself down. "What do you mean, President Fuller? I don't understand what you're talking about. Would you please elaborate?"

She stared deep into his eyes, trying to see if he was bluffing, but he was inscrutable. She couldn't find any answer she was looking for, and it annoyed her to no end. Damn you, Toby. Still as mysterious as ever.

"Don't try to call my bluff. I know what you're trying to say. You and Connor claim to be father and daughter, but do you think I wouldn't look into it myself? My sources say your claims are false. There are three possibilities for that. First, you lied to Connor, and he still doesn't know you aren't his daughter, but that's nigh impossible. You aren't smart enough to trick him, after all.

"So, this leaves us with two other possibilities. One, he asked you to be his fake daughter, but you are unaware of his plan, so you think you're his real daughter. The second possibility shares the first part of the first situation, but you know you aren't his real daughter, yet you agreed to the deal for some reason. And guess what? The look on your face just now has told me the last scenario is the answer."

Anya's face fell as soon as he stated his deduction, panic filling her eyes. "You..."

Dammit. He knows the truth. Does he know that I... No, he can't possibly know that. If he knew, he would have me arrested before I could get a hundred yards near him. I can still get away from this. Stay calm. Don't panic. If he notices that I'm panicking, he will find out the truth. Then, it's game over. Anya told herself to calm down and recomposed herself in case she showed more fear than she should.

"Well, I don't see the point in lying at this point. Yes, I'm not his daughter. He asked me to be his fake daughter, and the reason was simple. He has a beef with you. Though, I know nothing about the grudge he holds against you. All I know is that it involves the last generation. He wanted me to play the daughter part and sent me here, so I could approach you and become your girlfriend. Only then can I infiltrate your family and tell him your every move."

That was the truth, but not the whole reason she came to Seafield. I have another reason. She looked away and stared at the ground to hide the look in her eyes. She then put on a smile once again. "He got me here just so I could get closer to you. My mission is to become your girlfriend. If I can't even meet up with you, I can't complete my mission. So, he gave me the chance. This banquet is perfect for the mission, and he refused to let this chance slip. I'm just a poor pawn, and I had no choice but to do as I was told."

Anya pretended to heave a sigh of exasperation as she shrugged. "Our first meeting was something he arranged as well. For some reason, he found out you were going to pass that route that night, so he asked me to wait until you showed up. Then, I was forced to run into your car. That was risky, but he wanted me to leave a deep impression on you. I didn't mean to attack Miss Reed back at the hospital. It was all him. I'm innocent." She shifted all the blame onto Connor.

However, Toby was unconvinced. Instead, he shot her a look of scorn. "Do you think I'd believe that?"

She quickly looked at him. "But that was the truth. I'm innocent. That's all on Connor. I'm just his pawn. I couldn't go against him, so I had to do as I was told. Every time I went after Miss Reed, it was all his idea. He told me I had to make her leave if I wanted to have a chance to be with you. I had no choice. If you hadn't exposed his plan, I wouldn't have told you all this. You might still think I did it of my own volition, but that's not true. I'm telling you all this just to say I didn't mean it. I had no choice. Please believe me, President Fuller."

She put on a puppy pout. Any other man would have believed her. They would pity her because she was forced to do things against her will, but Toby was different. He had seen a lot of people in his life. Naturally, he saw through her lies and found them laughable.

Forced to do things against your will? Give me a break. Connor might have made you do a lot of things, but you're scum as well. The orders he gave might have been what you wanted as well. You're just trying to cut all ties with the crimes and wash your hands clean. Not the first time I've seen this. "I don't believe a word of what you just said," he said coolly.

She thought her act would at least plant some doubt in his head, if not erase his suspicion, but apparently, he had a heart of stone. He doesn't believe me at all! What a waste of my breath and time! She stole a glance at him, and the sight of the mockery in his eyes made her freeze. Flames of anger filled her heart.

Of course, she was angry. She tried to put on the victim act just to gain a sliver of sympathy. If he kept suspecting her relationship with Connor, he might uncover more about the secret she never wanted him to find out. To that end, she painted herself as a victim of Connor's scheme. She wanted Toby to think she wasn't evil and that she was forced.

Only then would he not suspect her being in cahoots with Connor. Only then would he think she didn't do all those things of her own volition. Only then would he not suspect her ever again. However, reality taught her a cruel lesson. He refused to play along, and it made things awkward for her.

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He doesn't believe me at all. He thinks Connor and I are in cahoots. That I'm not truly being forced and have wanted to do these all along. Dammit. I know he's paranoid, but this is too much. Still, I need to keep up the act. At this point, giving up would be worse for me.

Anya took a deep breath as she tightened her hold on the armrest before forcing a smile. "President Fuller, I know you don't believe me, and I understand why. I shouldn't have gone after Miss Reed, and I regret what I did. I was being forced to. If you hadn't exposed my fake identity as Connor's real daughter, I would have kept everything a secret. I mustered a lot of courage to tell you this. If Connor finds out that I sold him out, he'll bite my head off. I'm in danger now, President Fuller. Can you—"

"Enough." Toby stood up and put his hands in his pockets. Then, he fixed his gaze on her with an icy look in his eyes. "I won't believe you, no matter how much you say. So, stop scheming, or I'll make you suffer before Connor does."

She froze, and all the color drained from her face. She tried to say something, but not a single word came out. His icy tone and withering look scared her. How could he not believe a single word I said? Goddammit! She hung her head low and gritted her teeth.

He then looked away coolly. "I don't know why you told me so much about your deal with Connor, and I don't care. Get this through your head: no matter what you're trying to do, it won't work. Though, now you've piqued my interest."

She raised her head at that. Huh? What's that supposed to mean?

Anya was trying to figure out why he said that, but then he narrowed his eyes and stared at her. "I'd like to know what your true identity is."

Horror welled within her eyes as she had never expected Toby to blurt that out. That's the one thing I can't let him find out! Her heart thumped as loudly as thunder, and she couldn't even muster the courage to look him in the eye. She was afraid if their gazes met, her soul would be sucked into his eyes, and he would know who she was. By instinct, she pushed herself backward and looked away. Stiffly, she said, "Stop poking fun at me, President Fuller. I'm just a nobody. I'm an orphan with great ambition, so Connor wanted me to help him out. That's all. I don't deserve your attention."

"If you're an orphan, you wouldn't even have the courage to attend this event, nor would you come and talk to me. Besides, you don't even have the insecurity most orphans do. You look like you're well-bred and groomed. Didn't even show any confusion when you

saw the hall. It's resplendent. Most people would be mystified. Yet, you look like you're used to it. That's not what most orphans are used to, but you proved otherwise. I'm really interested in knowing who you are." The look in his eyes became colder.

The world was split into two classes: the rich, and everyone else. And they lived in two separate worlds. The quality of life, education, mannerisms, capabilities, and knowledge possessed by the rich was far from what the masses could imagine. Any layman who made their way to the world of the rich could never act as calm as Anya.

Most of the servers came from regular families. Even though some had worked for years and saw how the rich lived, they still couldn't stay fully calm, let alone an orphan like Anya claimed herself to be. Yet, she was calm when faced with an extravagant life. That alone was worth investigating.

Her mind was in a daze, and her heart raced furiously. She never thought her actions during the event would tell Toby she wasn't who she was. Now, she wasn't just panicking—she was terrified. His all-knowing eyes were putting a lot of weight and fear on her shoulders. She was suffocating from the terror he gave her. I can't stay here anymore. I have to go right now, or he'll find out the one thing he mustn't. If I stay here for a moment longer, I might tell him everything. I have to go right f*cking now.

She clenched her fists so hard that her fingers dug into her flesh, but the pain made her calm down considerably. She put on a stiff smile, and with a tremor in her voice, she said, "That makes me happy, President Fuller. Looks like Connor's training worked."

"Training?" He narrowed his eyes.

Anya flicked her hair as she continued, "Yes. He trained me a bit so that I could approach you easier. If I tried approaching you without any training, I wouldn't have left an impression on you. And I wouldn't even have dared to approach you. That's why I'm happy you said I didn't even act like an orphan, who had never seen anything in the world of the rich. It's proof that my effort worked."

Toby chortled. She wondered if he had bought the story, but she wasn't about to ask. Any questioning would prove she was feeling nervous. "It's getting late now, President Fuller. I just came to say hi, and I already did what I came here for. So, it's time for me to leave. See you around."

She nodded at him and left. However, the moment she turned around, her smile was immediately replaced by malice and venom. There were two reasons she came here. One, she wanted to say hi to Toby and Sonia, telling them she was now the young miss of the Salzburgs. Telling them they would see each other a lot.

And two, she wanted to put a wedge in their relationship. She wanted to cause a misunderstanding between them as a way to get back at them for slamming her into the

detainment center. However, both plans failed before she could even make any progress, and it was all because of Toby.

He already knew she wasn't Connor's daughter, so telling him she was his daughter was nothing but a joke to him. And as if that wasn't enough, he started expressing interest in her old identity. She couldn't have him find out her previous identity, so she kept lying in hopes that it would dash his suspicion.

She had no idea if she had managed to wipe his suspicion off, but she knew she couldn't stay around any longer. Her plans failed, so now she must return to Connor and tell him what happened. If possible, she needed him to erase all her past records. If Toby knew who she really was, she would be dead.

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Anya left in a hurry, and Toby saw her off, but the suspicion in his eyes mounted. He was interested in her past, to begin with. He wanted to see if there was anything suspicious about her. However, after their earlier conversation, he ascertained one thing: her past was not only suspicious but might also be shocking, too. He pursed his lips as he whipped his phone out to text Tom, 'Look into Anya harder. I want results in a week.'

Tom replied a second later, 'Yes, sir.'

Toby's frown loosened up. He tucked his phone away and noticed everyone's eyes were on him. When he raised his head, he noticed the curiosity and questions in the guests' gazes. Obviously, they wanted to know what he and Anya talked about. They wanted to know what his relationship with her was. His face darkened at the unwanted attention he received. They have too much time on their hands. He threw them a glare.

The guests noticed his displeasure. Oh, he doesn't like us looking at him. They turned around and said nothing more.

Once they stopped staring, Toby looked a lot better. He sat back down and finished his wine.

At the same time, Sonia ended the conversation with the host. Once she took their name cards, she happily excused herself so she could tell Toby the good news. Time to look for him.

Right after she emerged from the host's waiting room, a server approached her. "Miss Reed."

Noting that he was calling out to her, she stopped in her tracks and smiled at him. "Hi, do you need anything?"

The server quickly answered, "Miss Reed, Ms. Cheshire and her friends told me to seek you out. They want you to know that a girl in a wheelchair is harassing President Fuller. You should head over right away."

"A girl in a wheelchair?" The look on her face changed, and the air around her seemed to turn icy.

It shocked the waiter, and he quickly nodded in response. "Yes, that's what they said. I saw her myself. She was in a wheelchair."

She pursed her lips, solemnity creeping up to her face. A girl in a wheelchair, huh? If I'm right, that's Anya. There's nobody else in a wheelchair whom we know of. She bit her lip as she thought, So, she came and went straight to Toby. Wonder why she did that. Sonia's eyes glinted with suspicion.

Seeing that she was in her spot, the waiter couldn't help but urge, "Aren't you going, Miss Reed? That lady is still talking to President Fuller."

Sonia calmed herself down and smiled. "It's alright. I believe my boyfriend won't betray me. But do you know why the lady wanted to see my boyfriend? Do you know what they talked about?"

The server shook his head. "Sorry, Miss Reed, but I don't have answers for that. I can't possibly get close to him and eavesdrop on him now, can I? That would be like asking for a death wish."

Oh, right. True. She smiled sheepishly. "Sorry, my bad. You may leave now. I'll see Toby and ask him myself."

"Of course." The waiter bowed and moved to the side so she could go first.

Sonia went ahead. This was the waiter's job, after all. If she refused to go first, it would only make his job harder. However, just as she had taken a few steps, she was reminded of something. She stopped and turned toward the waiter. "Wait a minute."

The waiter looked at her. "Do you need anything else, Miss Reed?"

She gave him a weird look. "You said Ms. Cheshire sent you?"

"Yes, I did." The waiter nodded, wondering why she asked that.

She smiled. "Do you mean the girls in the southeastern corner of the hall?"

The server tried to recall where they were in the hall, and he nodded in affirmative. "Yes."

Sonia nodded, a smirk curling her lips. "I see. Thank you."

She turned back and headed to the hall, a smile twinkling in her eyes. I think I know who those ladies are. When Toby was showing me around, those ladies were looking at me with envy in their eyes.

She knew they were her romantic rivals. They liked Toby, but they wouldn't try to hit on him since they knew they had no chance to date him. However, they showed no malice toward her, either. Jealousy, yes, but no malice. A lot of women liked Toby. As long as they didn't do anything bad to her, she could accept some envious stares. She didn't mind, nor would she get angry. Jealousy was a normal part of humanity. It would be weird if they were not jealous. Even so, they were still her romantic rivals.

In most cases, if any other women were to hit on her boyfriend and try to steal him away from her, these ladies should be laughing at her. However, they didn't do that. Instead, they asked the server to inform her of this so she could go back and tell everyone Toby was hers. How adorable.

Sonia shook her head, smiling. It didn't take long for her to return to the hall, but a woman came up to her. She seemed to be unwell. Her head was hung low, and her hands were on her belly. The woman was walking briskly, and since she didn't see Sonia, they crashed into each other.

Sonia gasped, a surge of pain coming from her shoulder. She staggered backward. Fortunately, the wall behind her stopped her fall, and she remained standing. However, the other lady wasn't as lucky. She didn't have anything to stop her fall, so ultimately, she fell on her butt.

Sonia was rubbing her shoulder in pain. Before she could say anything, the other lady stood up and pushed all the blame for the collision on her. "Hey, watch where you're going! You bumped into me!"

Sonia froze, and she laughed mirthlessly. Hey, you bumped into me first. And now you're playing the victim before I can? That's funny.

Her silence irked the other lady, and she pointed at Sonia as she reprimanded, "Hey, I'm talking to you. Are you mute? Apologize, right now!"

Fury filled Sonia's heart, but she also thought something was weird. Hey, I think I've heard that voice before. She stopped rubbing her shoulders and put her hand down. Then, she looked at the woman who bumped into her. The moment she did, her lips twitched. No wonder she sounds familiar. Another familiar face.

“Well, well. It’s been a while, Miss Stone.” She crossed her arms, smirking at Cynthia. Cynthia, on the other hand, looked like she had just seen a ghost.

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That woman, Cynthia, was standing opposite Sonia at this moment. Her whole face had turned pale with shock as she pointed at Sonia with trembling fingers, her eyes filled with fear for the woman in front of her. “W-Why are you here?”

Seeing how fearful she was, Sonia was satisfied with her reaction. The arc of her red lips curved upward as she questioned, “Why can’t I be here? Does this place belong to you? Is there a reason why I can’t be present?”

Cynthia was rendered speechless by Sonia’s words and deeply regretted coming here. If she had known that she would bump into Sonia today, she would not have attended the banquet in hopes of meeting someone to marry. To her, this woman was simply as terrifying as a monster.

After all, Sonia was the one who put her in the detention center and locked her up for half a month, not to mention Sonia even managed to defeat a ruthless character like Tina and eventually forced the latter to commit suicide by jumping off the building.

Apart from that, Miss Melody Stryder, who came from an influential and powerful family in Norfolk, also ended up being divorced by her fiancé and got kicked out of the house by her family.

If Cynthia went against Sonia again and fell into her hands, she predicted her fate to be much worse.

Therefore, in the past few months, she was afraid that Sonia would take revenge on her if Sonia suddenly recalled that she was Tina’s sidekick and had supported Tina in bullying her several times. Due to that, she had been living her life with a tail between her legs as she dreaded bumping into the woman currently standing in front of her.

During the few months she lay low, Sonia didn’t seem to attack her nor find her trouble. Only then did she gradually let go of the anxiety and fear in her heart and finally mustered the courage to step out of her house, assuming that Sonia wouldn’t seek her out.

However, she didn’t expect that she would encounter the woman she dreaded for the first time in the past few months by attending a banquet. Her initial purpose of attending

the banquet was to seek a marriage partner to help Stone Incorporated, but instead of doing that, she came face-to-face with the living demon.

Worse fact yet, she had just condemned the living demon. Could Sonia possibly choke me to death later? Watching the expression on her face, Cynthia pondered the possibility.

The more she thought about it, the more frightened she became. The colors on her face drained out in an instant, and even Sonia started to worry that she would pass out soon since her colorless face seemed quite terrifying.

“What—” Sonia’s red lips parted as she was about to say something.

As if provoked, Cynthia bowed furiously at Sonia while apologizing, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Miss Reed, I’m incredibly sorry. I didn’t bump into you on purpose just now. I have a stomachache and am searching for the toilet, so I picked up my pace and wasn’t aware of my surroundings. Please accept my apologies and forgive me this time for bumping into you. Please, Miss Reed.”

Her apology sounded pitiful yet sincere. Sonia could also tell that she was indeed apologizing sincerely, not just putting on a show. Seeing how she behaved like a frightened child, Sonia figured that she shouldn’t go hard on her.

As she rubbed her temples, a trace of regret sparkled in Sonia’s eyes. “Weren’t you scolding me for being blind and bumping into you then demanding an apology? Why are you going back on your words and claiming that it’s your fault? Your huge change scares me,” Sonia deliberately teased her.

Cynthia’s face turned even more pallid at that. She couldn’t help wanting to slap herself in the face. How could she be so blunt before looking at who the other party was?!

If she had discovered who the other party was in the first place, she would not have dared to act so haughtily, so much so that she was now caught red-handed.

As Cynthia raised her head, she grinned in fear as if she was on the verge of crying. “I know it is all my fault. I don’t know what was going on in my head earlier. I was just not in the mood just now, and bumping into someone made me even more irritable, so I—”

“So, you lashed it out at the person you bumped into? Does that give you a reason to curse at someone regardless of who they were and take your anger out on them?” Sonia was taken aback by her answer.

Cynthia lowered her head in guilt. “I know I made a mistake, but I promise not to do it again. Please, Miss Reed, please be magnanimous and let me go...”

Her present pitiful look was a stark contrast to how pretentious and smug she was when she was still by Tina's side during their first meeting.

In short, Cynthia was now a completely different person from who she was before. Of course, what Sonia referred to was the difference in Cynthia's attitude toward herself, not toward others. Toward other people, she still acted as she did before.

"You really surprised me." Sonia tapped her digits on her arm as she remarked with a wry smile. "You seem to be extremely fearful of me now. Remember how different you were in the past? Apart from yelling at me and setting up traps for me, you even dared to hire someone to do the flashlight trick on my windows to scare me in the middle of the night. I eventually put you in the detention center and locked you up for two weeks, but all this is solid evidence that you, Cynthia, are a bold person who resents me and is eager to play pranks on me. Why are you suddenly afraid of me now? You begged me to let go of this incident about bumping into you again and again, which is enough to prove how big of a change you underwent."

Cynthia knew that Sonia was deliberately mocking her when she said those words. Although she was furious, she had no choice but to compromise with reality.

Taking a deep breath, she offered Sonia a bitter smile. "That's ridiculous, Miss Reed. After being tortured by reality, I realized that the failure to change my attitude will eventually lead me to my deathbed. Our family has always been mediocre in Seafield, and we have always relied on the Gray Family to gain a foothold in this city. That is why I have to butter up Tina and use our friendship to maintain the connection between our families. That also explains why I must hate what she hates. Miss Reed, I admit that I have done a lot of bad deeds to you in the past, so I would like to officially apologize for my previous behavior."

While expressing her deep regret, Cynthia bowed to Sonia.

However, this time, she did not get up for a long time before she continued, "Among the things I did to you in the past, some were indeed my own ideas, but most of them were instructions from Tina. Back then, she was still dating President Fuller, thus the Gray Family had the support of the Fuller Family. In that case, it would also mean that my family is backed up by the Fullers. Due to this reason, I was bold to go against you, but things are different now."

Cynthia rubbed her face while adding, "Tina and President Fuller broke up, which means that the Gray Family and the Fuller Family are no longer associated. And after Tina's death, the Gray Family can't even afford to take care of themselves. Why would they still pay attention to us? Without their support, our family's business has plummeted. If we had owed foreign debts, we would have gone bankrupt a long time ago. Even if the situation goes on like this, we will not be able to last long. How would I dare to offend you and act proud in front of you? Besides, you have President Fuller's support now..."

“From what you just said, your family’s situation sounds quite awful. Doesn’t that mean you shouldn’t be able to afford offending anyone in this hall? Why did you still act so haughtily earlier before even checking whom you bumped into?” Sonia mocked.

Cynthia’s lips parted, but she couldn’t utter a word. She turned green on her face due to awkwardness, embarrassment, and even a hint of fear.

Sonia’s words made her realize that she could no longer afford to offend any of them present at the banquet.

Her pompous behavior from earlier was a dumb thing to do. It wouldn’t matter even if she found a suitable marriage partner if she remained acting in such a way. She would still bring harm to her family.

Thinking of that, Cynthia panicked once again.

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If she had bumped into someone else just now, they might not let her go due to how bad her attitude was.

What about this woman who managed to defeat Tina and Melody?

Cynthia’s heart was beating so fast that it threatened to jump out of her throat as she panicked. “Miss Reed—”

She was about to beg for mercy again when Sonia raised her hand to interrupt her. “Enough. All you did was verbally abuse me back then. Besides the flashlight incident, you didn’t cause me any harm, and I already got my revenge for that incident, so you’re spared this time. Anyway, you have nothing against me now. Beating a drowning dog isn’t something I would do unless they are a hopeless cause. I won’t bother to waste time on someone like you.”

Although she was unhappy that Sonia made her sound worthless, Cynthia felt relieved that she did not intend to pursue her on this matter.

“Miss Reed, are you letting me go?” Cynthia clenched her fists and asked excitedly.

Sonia raised her chin and questioned, “Did you not hear what I just said? I am not someone who would beat a drowning dog unless they are a hopeless cause. I won’t even spare a glance at someone like you. Are you self-proclaiming that you’re a hopeless cause?”

Cynthia shook her head like a rattle before uttering, "You are well aware of what I did not do to you when I was friends with Tina, except for that one incident. I would usually just verbally abuse you, but after Tina left, I never appeared in front of you again or got in your way. I'm not a self-proclaimed hopeless... cause..."

She forced the last two words out of her lips even though she felt ashamed.

With an arched brow, Sonia questioned, "Why are you still standing here, then? Do you want me to—"

"No!" Cynthia shook her head fervently before forcing an awkward grin. "I will leave right now." With that, she turned around immediately to leave.

However, the moment she turned around, something popped into her head, and she turned back to Sonia.

Seeing that, Sonia narrowed her pretty eyes. "What? Want me to punish you?"

"No, no, no." Cynthia waved her hands in denial.

"Then what?" Sonia frowned.

Cynthia's gaze darted around the room before she bit her lower lip and asked in a subdued voice, "Erm... Do you still hate Tina?"

Sonia squinted her eyes skeptically and questioned, "Huh? Why do you ask that?"

Cynthia squeezed her fists and rephrased her question, "I mean, even though she is dead now, you should not have forgotten what she did to you, right? So, do you still hate her? Or do you still want to take revenge on her?"

Sonia couldn't comprehend why she was asking questions like this. Her eyes flickered as she replied softly, "Why would I still hate on a dead person? Do you think I could resurrect her to get my revenge even if I wanted to?"

Hearing Sonia's answer, Cynthia finally released the breath she had been holding. After taking a deep breath as if to muster up her courage, she looked Sonia in the eye and said, "If you still hate her and want to take revenge on her, I will tell you a secret."

Then, she stepped forward.

Sonia's heart sank as she made a guess in her mind, but on the surface, she pretended like she was calm. "What secret?"

Cynthia stopped in front of her, covered half of her face, and whispered, "I suspect that Tina is not dead. That corpse is fake."

Sonia's pupils dilated. I was right, she mused.

When Cynthia suddenly asked her those questions and said that she would tell her a secret, her first thought was that Cynthia would tell her Tina wasn't dead.

Her suspicion was proven to be correct the next second.

However, Sonia wasn't surprised by the secret at all since she had already known from the get-go that Tina was not dead. She was more surprised that others knew about it. How many people knew about it? And how did Cynthia find out?

Judging from Cynthia's firm appearance, she seemed to be quite certain that Tina was alive, which was strange.

Sonia intended to throw some bait at her, so she didn't let Cynthia know she was aware that Tina was still alive.

Otherwise, she might not elaborate on the information she had.

Thinking of this, Sonia was shocked. Although she wasn't excellent at acting, she could at least fool Cynthia.

After all, Cynthia was not someone who could tell whether Sonia was acting or not.

She thought Sonia truly found the information shocking, so seeing Sonia's surprised face made her feel proud. As a result, she wore a smug expression on her face.

Hah. How could President Fuller's fiancée not be aware of that? Cynthia mused triumphantly in her mind.

Perhaps she had been too transparent with her emotions that they were painted across her face. Sonia couldn't help rolling her eyes at her, but as expected, Cynthia did not notice her subtle expression. Smiling at Sonia, she asked, "What do you think? This secret is shocking, isn't it?"

Sonia nodded. "It is shocking, but it must be fake. Tina's suicide by jumping off a building is known all over the country, and that night, I went to see her body in person. How could it not be her?"

"It's not her." Cynthia waved her hands in denial. "When you went to see her body, her face was covered, wasn't it?"

"Yeah." Sonia nodded in agreement.

"That's it." Cynthia clapped her hands together and explained, "Although I did not witness the scene with my eyes, I heard about the details of when Tina jumped from the

building. They are saying that when she jumped from the building, she was facing backward. In that case, she should've landed on her back after falling. How could she possibly fall face-down and ruin her face?"

Sonia stroked her chin and agreed to her words, "That sounds plausible."

"There's more to it," Cynthia added. "They quickly closed the case of Tina's suicide. Even if it had been a genuine suicide, they would have looked into it further. Doesn't it all seem too hasty? It's so obvious that there is a problem with this that they don't want people to know. That's why they closed the case as soon as possible and sealed the file to cut off the clues to prevent anyone from investigating it."

Sonia looked at her in surprise, as if to say, I didn't expect you to be so smart.

Of course, that went unnoticed by Cynthia. Instead, she continued, "I heard that her suicide has something to do with Melody. Melody went to meet Tina, and the latter committed suicide, implying that Melody was also involved in Tina's suicide case. And Melody was also the one who found a female corpse to replace Tina's body."

Sonia's eyes sparkled. "How did you know about this?"

Cynthia was right about everything. Tina was alive, but she had feigned her death to escape. It was also true that Melody assisted in her plan.

After they discovered that Tina had escaped instead of lying dead, they immediately traced Melody down.

Melody explained everything truthfully, but she didn't know where Tina went. It then became Sonia's biggest regret.

"Melody told me," answered Cynthia.

Question marks popped into Sonia's mind. "Melody told you that?"

"Yeah."

"Isn't she in jail?" Sonia frowned. "How did she tell you?"

Although the authorities decided not to make Melody's offense public because of the Stryder Family's past contributions to the country, everyone knew about her imprisonment. She was still in jail right now!

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If she's still in jail, how did Cynthia know all that? Something's off. "Did you visit Melody in jail?" Sonia narrowed her eyes.

Cynthia shook her head. "No. I didn't even go out for months, so how was I supposed to visit her? Besides, we aren't even friends, to begin with. She thinks she's too good to be my friend, and I'm not going to talk to someone who looks down on my family. I only happened to meet her by chance when I was out shopping a few days ago."

"Wait, you saw her when you were shopping?" The look on Sonia's face changed. "She wasn't in jail?"

Cynthia nodded in affirmative. "Yeah, she has been released."

"Impossible." Sonia didn't believe it. A frown creased her forehead. "She was sentenced to years of jail time. How did she get out of it?"

"But that was the truth." Cynthia looked at her timidly. "I was surprised to see her, too. The public doesn't know she got slammed behind bars, but the upper society does. I even asked her how she got out, but she said nothing. She only asked me if Tina had come to see me. I was bewildered by her question at that time. I mean, Tina was dead, so how could she come to see me? Unless she became a ghost. That was exactly what I said to Melody, but guess what she told me? Tina's still alive. And she even said part of that was thanks to her."

Cynthia carefully studied the changes in Sonia's expression. However, other than seeing her face was rather dark, Cynthia couldn't discern what she was thinking at the moment. Quickly, she added, "Melody told me Tina wanted to see her when she was in the asylum. She even used Peter as an excuse to make Melody talk to her. I'm pretty sure you know how Melody is when it comes to love. She might not care about anyone, but she's head over heels for Peter. Peter doesn't like her and wants to divorce her with all his heart, but he can't do anything about it since the Stryder Family isn't one to be messed with. As long as Melody doesn't want to get a divorce, he can't break up with her."

Sonia nodded in acknowledgment. "I know."

The marriage of Peter and Melody was a joke for the upper society, just like her marriage with Toby. She had heard a lot of rumors regarding Melody and Peter's relationship.

"Peter and Melody have been living separately throughout these years. He slept around with a lot of women just so Melody would get a divorce, but she still won't give up on him. She's deeply in love with him, after all."

Cynthia stole a glance at Sonia and lowered her voice to a whisper as she continued, "It was not until the incident that happened a few months ago that everything changed. She meddled with another town's administration, and you found evidence of it. You joined forces with the Colemans and tripped the Stryders.

"Most of the Stryders who were involved with politics were subjected to investigations. They might not have fallen yet, but they certainly were in decline. Peter seized the chance to divorce Melody. But even so, she still loves him very much. She wanted him to take her back, and Tina used that."

"She promised Melody she could help her to get back with Peter and requested a meetup, didn't she?" Sonia inquired.

Cynthia nodded. "Exactly. Melody told me that Tina said she had dirt on Peter and asked Melody to meet up with her. Then, she promised if Melody helped her in faking her death, she would hand the evidence to her. Then, Melody could use that to force Peter into remarrying her."

"I see." Sonia's eyes twinkled, and her lips pursed.

So, that's what happened, huh? Back when they realized the body wasn't Tina's, they kept investigating and realized Melody helped fake Tina's death. They had arrested Melody right then. She claimed that Tina threatened her, but they never found out what Tina's threat was, as Melody wouldn't talk about it. Now that Sonia knew the truth, she knew why Melody wouldn't talk. Evidence of Peter's crimes. If she came clean, she'd have to watch her lover languish in prison. No way she'd do it. Not when she loves him so much.

"Melody believed her and promised to help Tina right away. Tina asked Melody to pick a girl about her age and size, and then the girl would be forced to commit suicide in her stead. Melody spent almost a week trying to find the girl that fit Tina's bill. The girl was a patient in another asylum. Melody got her out of the asylum and switched her with Tina. Tina was taken away while that woman stayed back at the asylum. Melody and her family's power might be in decline, but she still had some connections. It wasn't hard for her to fool all the asylum staff and take Tina away. More importantly, one of the officers who supervised Tina was Melody's admirer. He bought them enough time to escape by causing distractions for the other cops."

Sonia knew the last part. Once Melody was caught, she sold out the officer who assisted her, and he was arrested. Not only did he lose his job, but he also embarrassed his family. He was slammed behind bars. Once an ally of justice, now a prisoner. All for a dream that would never be fulfilled.

Was it worth it? Sonia didn't pity the officer at all. He was a grown-up. He had to take responsibility for his actions. He must know the consequences of helping a criminal

more than anyone, but he did it anyway. That can only mean one thing: Melody was more important than his job. Sonia saw no need to pity someone like that.

The one she pitied was the woman who died in Tina's place. She was a patient who had a mental illness. She saw the world differently from most people. Probably didn't even know how or why she died. Melody took her to the building and made her kill herself. All for Tina's plan. Everyone has the right to live, even insane people. Yet, Tina and Melody took an innocent life all for their plan. They're nothing but demons. I can't believe Melody got out of jail before she got incarcerated.

"Miss Reed?" Cynthia was a little scared when she saw the angry look on Sonia's face. What's wrong? What is she getting so mad about?

Sonia balled her fists and took a few deep breaths. Only then did her fury calm down slightly. Icily, she asked, "Does that woman's family know? Do they know what Melody did to their daughter?"

Oh, the mad lady. Scorn filled Cynthia's eyes. "Yes, of course. If they didn't, they'd have been out for Melody's blood for what she did to their daughter. I know what you're trying to say. I asked the same questions, and Melody told me what she did. Initially, they didn't want to hand over the woman to Melody since the woman was part of their family. But then, Melody gave them a hundred and fifty grand, and they finally complied. That woman's family used to love her, but their patience ran out halfway through her treatment. It had been years since she succumbed to her madness, and eventually, her family's sorrow turned into resentment, and then..."

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"So, what happened?" Sonia frowned.

Cynthia shook her head. "They wanted her dead. To them, that woman was nothing but a liability. A big one at that. They'd never be able to live normally with her dragging them down. They had to work all day and every day just to make enough money to pay her medical bills. Eventually, their love was worn out by their exhaustion. All they wanted was to cut her off. Melody and Tina offered them just what they wanted. And they made money out of it."

Cynthia wasn't a good person at all, but even she thought what the woman's family did was inhumane. She had nothing but disgust for them. "They probably thought they deserved the money after all they went through for her."

Sonia gasped, a cold shudder running down her spine. "That's... terrifying. I can't believe her family would do this."

"Family? No, they're demons," Cynthia remarked.

Sonia closed her eyes. "Were they not aware that Melody would kill their daughter once they handed her over?"

"No, they knew that. But I did tell you that they thought of that woman as nothing but a burden. A liability. Something that holds them back from normalcy. The thing that keeps them in debt. They were willing to fork out money for her treatment at first, but eventually, they wanted nothing to do with her. Time changed them. They wanted her dead but wouldn't do it since she was family. And the law would come after them if they did. When Melody offered them a hundred and fifty grand to relieve them of the woman, they happily took the offer. They knew the woman would die, but so what?" Cynthia shrugged. "They wanted to kill her off anyway. If someone could help them out and even pay them for it, there was no reason to say no, was it?"

After a long moment of silence, Sonia gritted her teeth as she cursed, "All of them are monsters." The hardships of life would turn the best of people into monsters, but a whole family dumping one of them just to make their life better was appalling.

Even Cynthia stayed silent to process that fact. It wasn't until Sonia had calmed down and started asking her questions again did she snap out of it.

"Why did Melody tell you everything? You barely talk to her, so why did she go into so much detail?" Sonia looked into Cynthia's eyes as she asked.

That was what gnawed away at her heart the most. This testimonial was enough to sentence her to jail. If Cynthia had recorded it and taken the evidence to the cops, Melody would have been done for. Melody must know that as well. So, why did she tell Cynthia? Why?

"I have no idea." Cynthia shook her head. "I only met her by chance, and she asked me if I had seen Tina. And then, she told me about that. Probably thought I was Tina's friend and that Tina might come to see me. Or maybe she just wanted someone to lend her an ear. Honestly, I was shocked when I saw her. I almost couldn't recognize her."

She doesn't look like she's lying. She's probably telling the truth about not knowing why Melody had told her everything. Sonia felt a bit disappointed. "Why? What happened to her?" she asked.

Horror crept up on Cynthia's face. "Melody... was like a different person. I wouldn't have recognized her if she hadn't called out to me. She used to wear nothing but haute couture. She used to think of everyone as beneath her, and most people despised her

because of that. Yet, they couldn't help but still envied her. Not all rich ladies can lead a life like hers, after all.

"However, the last time I saw her, she was wearing something from a bazaar, and it looked washed out. Her hair was unkempt, and she no longer looked at everyone like they were beneath her. Her gaze would dart around, and she seemed to walk with a tinge of fear in her steps. Sometimes, she would even mutter to herself as if she had gone nuts."

Sonia could imagine what Melody must have looked like. An unkempt woman who's suspected to be mad. No wonder Cynthia was shocked. I would be stunned, too, if I saw her in that state. But I can understand why she looked like that. Her family fell apart just because she helped Tina fake her death. She lost her family and the Southfields' help. She became a layman, the kind of person she hated the most. It must have broken her mind.

Cynthia didn't ask why Sonia was keeping quiet. She sighed before continuing, "I asked her why she wanted to find Tina. She told me Tina had lied to her. She had no dirt on Peter. She only said that to trick Melody into helping her."

"Figures," Sonia sneered. "The Southfields might not be as influential as the Stryders back then, but they still were aristocrats. Tina was just the daughter of a rich man. There's no way she could get her hands on Peter's dirt. Melody was just stupid. She loved Peter too much to see through the lie."

Cynthia nodded in agreement. "I thought so, too. Now Peter has a new fiancée, and Melody thought she failed to get back with him because Tina dragged her down too long. She thought she would have time to hound Peter and make him remarry her if she hadn't helped Tina. She figured he wouldn't have gotten a new girl if she hadn't gotten herself into such a mess. So, she now hates Tina's guts and is dead set on seeking her out to destroy her."

"What about you, then?" Sonia smirked. "You asked me if I knew that Tina was alive. And you told me a lot. You revealed this much information to me because you have your own goal to achieve, don't you?"

Cynthia froze. She met Sonia's gaze and could only see indifference in her eyes. Can't lie to her anymore. "You're such a smart woman, Miss Reed. Indeed, I do have a motive, but I promise I mean no harm. I just want to know if you still bear any hatred toward Tina. If you still hate her, you will seek her out once you know what she did. You and President Fuller would locate her faster than Melody could. I just want to make her pay the price for her crimes. I, too, have to get my revenge."

"Revenge?" Sonia grinned. "I thought you were her friend. And now you want to take revenge on her?"

“Friends? With her? No, I was just her lackey. Nothing more. Yes, glamorous life being her lackey, but she abuses me in secret.” Cynthia bit her lip. She came to a decision and pulled her skirt up just enough to show her legs which were littered with hideous scars.

Sonia gasped at the horrifying sight, a chill coursing through her body. Cynthia’s legs were... terrifying. Every inch of it was filled with scars. There were stitches on them, too. The scars were all over her skin like big centipedes. It almost made Sonia hurl. She averted her gaze and covered her mouth, the look on her face pale from the shock.

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Cynthia knew Sonia felt disgusted by the state of Cynthia’s legs and became nauseated.

However, Sonia fought the urge to vomit because she didn’t want to upset Cynthia, so that was why she reacted this way.

Still, Cynthia wasn’t angered by Sonia’s reaction.

Perhaps it was true at the start that she could not accept the fact that others reacted in such a way whenever they saw her legs. If she noticed it, she would be incensed and throw a fit.

However, after seeing it time and time again, she slowly got used to it, and eventually, she could even take it in stride without letting it affect her.

After all, what could anger do for her?

Would her legs recover?

Thus, instead of being bothered by other people’s reactions, she figured it would be better to focus on her state of mind.

“It’s hard to stomach, isn’t it, Miss Reed?” Cynthia calmly rearranged the skirt to hide her legs once more.

Sonia took a few deep breaths to regain her composure. She had a complicated look in her eyes as she stared at Cynthia before she nodded gently. “I was a bit shocked. Your legs...”

“Tina Gray did this.” Cynthia kept her cool as she informed Sonia of the culprit behind her suffering.

Sonia hummed in acknowledgment. “I guessed as much. You just told me you hate Tina, and then you showed me your legs, so it was easy enough for me to figure out who did it. But why did she do it?”

“What other reason could there be? Jealousy, of course.” Cynthia snorted. “It all happened years ago. It was about seven or eight years ago, I think. Once, I went shopping with Tina, and she took a liking to a little black dress from Doir. It was a short bodycon dress, and the slim-fit cutting meant that it highlighted the wearer’s figure a lot. Anyone whose figure was a little less than ideal would look like a trainwreck in the dress, but Tina loved it so much and insisted on trying it on anyway.

“However, the sales assistant told her that her legs were on the short side and looked a little too full, so the dress wouldn’t suit her. I was standing beside Tina at the time, and the sales assistant then said that my legs looked good and that I would suit this dress well. Just because of what the sales assistant said, Tina immediately started resenting me. Although she didn’t do anything there and then, as soon as we went back, she poured a kettle of boiling water over my legs.”

By now, Cynthia’s eyes were bloodshot and filled with her loathing for Tina.

Sonia could imagine just how agonizing it must have been to be scalded by a kettle of boiling water. She pitied Cynthia a little.

She felt nothing but pity.

“You know, Miss Reed, she nearly scalded me to death. If it had not been for the sudden appearance of a maid and Tina being afraid that she’d be labeled a killer, I’m willing to bet that she would not have called an ambulance for me. She would’ve loved to see me die, just like that. When I was writhing around on the floor in pain, she stood right beside me and laughed gleefully at the sight. She didn’t feel any sense of anxiety or regret for what she did. Thus, I knew that she wanted me dead.

“That day, I was taken into the emergency room and had to spend an entire month in the ICU before I could get discharged. When I could finally leave the hospital, Tina came to me, shedding crocodile tears and insisting that she didn’t do it on purpose. She said the kettle slipped out of her hand by accident, and she asked me to forgive her. Hah! What a joke!”

Cynthia clenched her jaw. “How can a huge kettle like that slip out of her hand so easily? Also, if it had been an accident, she would’ve called the ambulance from the start and tried to help me ease the pain. Why would she have stood on the side laughing at me instead?”

“However, even though I knew she did it to me on purpose, I couldn’t tell anyone else. I had to try and convince myself that she didn’t do it on purpose because I knew that my family relied on the Gray Family’s support. My parents could use this opportunity to gain more benefits from the Gray Family. Either way, my lot in life is to be sacrificed for the family’s glory anyway, so I was willing to forgive her if it meant my family would gain from this incident. However, I never thought that Tina had no intentions of letting me go just like that!”

“I only took a glance at the scars on your legs, but I could tell there were scars made from other kinds of injuries instead of just your skin getting scalded. These were the scars left after getting stitches, right?” Sonia piped up.

Cynthia nodded emotionally. “That’s right. You don’t need stitches for scalded skin. The scars left from stitches came from the second time Tina hurt me. Soon after I left the hospital, it was Tina’s birthday. I was one of her lackeys, so naturally, I was invited, and I went. During the party, the birthday girl had to pour the champagne down the tower herself. She stood on a stool and poured the champagne as planned at first, but halfway through, she yelped and started falling toward the champagne tower. Although someone caught her in time and stopped her fall, her hand smacked against the champagne tower. And I was right in front of the champagne tower at that time. Over ten layers of champagne glasses all came crashing down on me—”

“And you couldn’t escape,” Sonia stated confidently.

Cynthia bit her lip. “That’s right. I hadn’t fully recovered yet and was still in a wheelchair. The champagne tower came down too quickly. Even someone with fully functioning legs might not have been able to escape in time, let alone someone in a wheelchair. I was buried under all the champagne glasses, which shattered all around me. The stitches I got were for the cuts I got from the shards of glass. It wasn’t just my legs. I had cuts all over my body. This is why I never wear dresses and gowns that expose any skin.”

“That’s true, now that you mention it,” Sonia commented thoughtfully.

She saw Cynthia several times, and every single time, Cynthia was fully covered up.

However, she only bothered to think a little of it since everyone had their tastes in fashion.

Well, she now found out the reason behind Cynthia’s clothing choices.

“Of course, what I wear isn’t the main concern here. The point is, I knew that Tina did this on purpose, too. She wanted to ruin my legs for good, and it worked. Now, my legs will never fully recover, regardless of how many surgeries I do. How can I not despise her?!”

Cynthia clenched the edge of her skirt tightly as the resentment colored her expression and contorted her features. "However, because of who she was, I couldn't say anything. I had to keep my hatred buried deep down inside my heart. However, the situation's different now. She's become the target of everyone's vitriol now. I can finally take my revenge, but unfortunately, there's only so much I can do. I can't locate her on my own, so I have to rest my hopes on someone else instead."

"Am I that someone else?" Sonia raised her eyebrows.

Cynthia nodded. "Yes. I apologize, Miss Reed. I know that this just means I'm trying to use you, but I have no other choice. You and President Fuller are the only ones I can think of who'd be able to find Tina. That's why I really hope that you can find her and destroy her. It'd be vengeance for me, too. Furthermore, I can also provide you with some clues about the places where Tina has appeared in the past few months."

"What did you say?" Sonia had been a little pissed that Cynthia had been plotting to use her, but her attention was immediately drawn to the clues regarding Tina's location.

"You said you know where Tina has appeared the past few months?"

"Yes."

"That's impossible!" Sonia pursed her lips. "Didn't you say that Tina never came to see you? In that case, how would you know where she's been?"

She stared at Cynthia suspiciously.

Cynthia tapped her cheeks and wiped her resentment for Tina off her face before she swiftly explained, "Melody Stryder's the one who told me about it. She wants to destroy Tina as well and has been looking for Tina all this while. Even though Melody has fallen from grace, she's not powerless as she still has contacts from her past. Some of them were willing to help her out of consideration for her, so they looked into it and managed to find some clues."