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"Oh?" Sonia's heart rate picked up, and she couldn't help but clench her fists as she urged, "Hurry up and tell me what clues you have."

Cynthia was pleased to see that Sonia was impatient to hear the clues to Tina's whereabouts.

The more Sonia cared about this information, the greater her resentment for Tina would be as Sonia would be even more eager to take her revenge on Tina.

As long as Tina was doomed, then Cynthia could finally let go of her years of hatred as well.

Cynthia took a deep breath and quelled her excitement as she said, "Melody said that Tina once showed up in Kosovo."

"Kosovo?" Sonia was a little startled. "Why would she go to Kosovo?"

Cynthia shook her head. "I don't know, and neither does Melody. Melody's friend told her that Tina was sighted in Kosovo once. It was a friend of Melody's friend who ran into Tina at the airport in Kosovo, but at the time, the friend didn't pay any attention to this. When she came to look for Melody's friend and found out that they were looking for Tina, she remembered that encounter and told Melody's friend about it. Later on, Melody's friend kept searching and eventually found out that Tina was seen in Westsanshire last month."

"Westsanshire?!" Sonia's expression changed.

"Yeah," Cynthia affirmed. "Melody's friend said that Tina showed up in Westsanshire, but she didn't see Tina in person. Melody's friend had gone to the local government office for something, and she heard that a woman named Tina Gray had been there to get some paperwork done.

"These are all the clues they have right now, but what's for sure is that Tina's still alive and was sighted in Westsanshire. Melody has already gone over there to start searching for more clues. She wants to find Tina. Miss Reed, if you and President Fuller investigate this too, I'm sure you'll be even faster than Melody in the search since you have a lot more power and influence than she does."

Sonia's heart could not stop pounding.

It couldn't be helped. Sonia cared too much about the clues that Cynthia gave her.

She had been trying to find Tina all along, but it was as if Tina had disappeared into thin air, and she couldn't find any traces of Tina, no matter how hard she tried.

Even someone as powerful and influential as Toby couldn't find Tina, which proved just how well-hidden Tina was.

So, how could Sonia not be agitated now that someone was telling her where Tina had shown up recently?

"Cynthia, since you've provided me with useful information, I won't hold the fact that you wanted to use me to avenge yourself against you." She eyed Cynthia.

Cynthia was glad and wanted to speak.

"And don't worry," Sonia added. "If we do find her, I'll let you know, and I'll also let you meet her. You can do whatever you want then."

Cynthia's eyes lit up at once as she gave a deep bow of gratitude. "That's all I could ever ask for. Thank you, Miss Reed."

Sonia patted Cynthia on the shoulder before leaving in a hurry.

She wanted to tell Toby about this.

Soon, she returned to the seating area earlier. Even from afar, she could spot the man sitting on the couch, who seemed to be in his own world as he stood out from everyone else.

His eyes were closed as if he was taking a nap, but as he was still gently rocking the wine glass in his hand, it was obvious that he wasn't actually asleep. He merely didn't want to engage with the world.

"Toby." She walked over and called out to him gently.

His hand stopped moving, and his eyes flew open at once. He saw the woman walking over to him.

She had a slim yet shapely figure that looked even more alluring when she walked. It was hard for others to tear their eyes off her slender, graceful waist.

His icy stare swept across the men who were stealing glances at Sonia. The warning in his eyes could not be missed.

The men sensed Toby's displeasure and immediately withdrew their gazes. None of them dared to take a peek again.

A beautiful woman was a delight to behold, but they valued their lives even more.

All the men sighed to themselves.

As for the women, especially the young ladies from wealthy families, they were all rolling their eyes as they secretly ranted at the shallowness of these men.

Aren't we attractive too?

Why do all of you only stare at Sonia?

They were furious.

Naturally, Sonia knew nothing about all these thoughts going around the room. She stopped in front of Toby and smiled brilliantly at him.

His eyes darkened slightly. "You're back."

"Yeah." She nodded. "I'm back."

He set down his wine glass and took her wrist to pull her down into the seat beside him. Then, he pulled her into his arms right under everyone's nose.

The crowd instantly started sighing again.

Oh, my... Look at them locked in an embrace just as soon as they're together. Is it so hard to be apart for even a short while?

It went without saying that despite all their grumbling, no one could do anything to stop the couple.

Sonia was a little embarrassed, but she didn't push him away. She was red in the face as she said, "That's enough. Let go. Everyone's staring at us."

"Let them stare all they want. Our hug has nothing to do with them. I missed you."

Toby rested his head on her shoulder. His voice was low and hoarse as he spoke. In fact, he sounded a little coquettish.

She was amused. "We haven't been apart at all. Why are you acting like this?"

"Who says we haven't? We've been apart for an hour," he declared solemnly after raising his head to look her in the eye.

It was as if this had been an extremely grave issue.

Sonia's urge to laugh intensified.

"It's only been an hour. From the way you're acting, I would've assumed that we've been apart for ages," she replied.

He rested his head on her shoulder again. "To me, that's already long enough. Since I can tell you that we've been apart for exactly an hour, it proves that I've been keeping an eye on the time and missing you all this while. What about you? Did you miss me?"

She rolled her eyes and answered helplessly, "Of course. I missed you, too."

She knew very well that he would make a big fuss about it if she said she didn't miss him.

Sure enough, Toby was pleased to hear that she missed him as his lips curved into a smile.

It was a faint smile, but everyone's attention was on them, so they saw it as well. All at once, they were filled with amazement.

Oh, my goodness! President Fuller's smiling! Look at how sweet his smile is.

Tsk tsk. I never knew this is how he behaves when he's in love.

It's no different from everyone else.

These were what the men were thinking.

On the other hand, the women were even more envious of Sonia.

The fact that Toby was just the same as any other man when he was in love made them envy her even more.

Initially, they thought he would still be haughty and aloof when he was in a relationship, and the woman would need to be the one to please him and coax him.

However, now they knew how wrong they were. He was the one who took the initiative. He was never arrogant and aloof with Sonia and didn't keep a straight face all the time. He didn't treat her as his subordinate, and she didn't have to be the one putting in the effort to maintain the relationship.

Anyone with eyes could tell that Toby was the one who clung to Sonia.

How amazing! The women exclaimed to themselves in their mind.

That being said, no matter how much they envied her, they didn't plan on doing anything else.

After all, they knew without a doubt that they would fail regardless of what they did, and they would even be inviting Toby's wrath and dragging their families down with them, so what was the point?

Meanwhile, Anya also noticed the women's reactions and was shaking in anger as she was infuriated by their unwillingness to take the challenge.

You're all useless!

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Anya was well aware of just how popular Toby was with the ladies.

After all, his good looks and social status were right on the table. He was a holy grail, and everyone wanted him to themselves. However, no one ever succeeded. Thus, those women had no reason to fight.

But now, someone has succeeded, no? So, why are they still stagnant?! Shouldn't they devise plans to bring that woman down? Shouldn't that be how things should follow? So why are they just sitting there and staring at Reed with envy?! Go on! Move! Attack Reed! Don't tell me you people think you can make Reed leave Toby just by sitting here and staring at her with envy! Pffft! In your dreams!

For a moment, Anya despised the impervious women, thinking they weren't just useless but also brainless.

One had to earn some things themself, but not even a single one of those women fought for themselves. Such a discovery had infuriated her.

Having had enough of it, Anya snorted in anger and rolled out of the banquet, surging with fury.

She believed she would get a stroke from being upset by those impassive women as well as being brokenhearted by Toby and Sonia's PDA.

Of course, neither Sonia nor Toby knew about it, and even if they did, they wouldn't care either.

Meanwhile, Toby obliged and reluctantly let Sonia go. On the other hand, she sat down next to him.

"I assume everything went well for you? You were all smiles when you returned." Toby handed her the glass of juice he had long left on standby for her. However, the young woman frowned in worry as she took the glass of beverage from him. "I've had too much grape juice just now, and I'm still overcoming the sourness. Maybe later."

"Have some water then." While speaking, Toby took the glass of juice from her and gave her a glass of water.

Finally, the young woman smiled with delight before taking a sip. "Yeah, I'm one step closer to success. I'm going to check out the counters on the second floor of the mall tomorrow. I can pick out whichever counter I want, except for those in the middle, and it happens to be the best spot I can bag, given my current position. From that alone, I can tell the host couple didn't make an exception for me just because of our relationship. It makes me very happy, and it also helped me realize I bagged the deal myself, and you have nothing to do with it."

Toby was elated for her after seeing how happy she was, and he ruffled her hair gently. "Good job. I knew you were amazing."

"I think so too." Sonia grinned triumphantly.

Right then, she was indeed a little smug, probably because she had achieved something with her ability.

Toby could tell too, but he didn't remind her and looked dotingly at her instead.

After all, why couldn't she revel in the success she had obtained on her own for a moment? It was just a way of acknowledging her success.

What mattered was that she didn't let it get to her head.

"Oh, by the way, Madam said I can really drink. She even wants to invite me to future wine fairs." At that, Sonia began feeling somewhat guilty. "You have no idea how affected my conscience was. I was really worried people would find out I was drinking juice and not wine. Also, I feel like I've betrayed Madam's trust. After all, she has such a good impression of me and even wants to take me to wine fairs. It's clear that she's beginning to see me as a friend, but I..."

"Don't worry." Toby gave her shoulder an encouraging squeeze. "Just get her some gift as an apology if the cover does blow. Besides, she isn't petty. She'll understand where you're coming from."

"I believe so too, but I still feel bad for tricking her." Sonia sighed softly.

To that, Toby patted her shoulder without a word, for nothing he said would alleviate her situation. At the end of the day, she had to figure some things out herself.

Luckily, Sonia wasn't the kind to reel in situations. After having a moment to herself, she returned to normal and crossed her arms while smiling enigmatically at her man, whose heart skipped a beat after he caught her gaze, having an inexplicably bad feeling.

She had looked rather scary. Sure, she was smiling, but it was evident that she was seething with rage, looking like she would explode any second.

So... what have I done to piss her off? Toby reflected for a moment but still couldn't figure out what he had done wrong, so he just asked, "What's wrong?"

"A little birdie told me someone's pretty popular with the ladies. In fact, a beauty hit on him after I left. And it seems that she has a thing for you. So much so that she wants to know you despite having trouble with her legs. What a role model for the disabled. Oh, hats off to her," said Sonia with a smile and unvarnished jealousy and sarcasm.

Toby quirked a brow and felt somewhat amused when he finally realized what she was upset about.

"Are you referring to Anya?" He crossed his legs.

Sonia snorted in response. At that, he pulled her hand to him and lowered his head to kiss the back of her hand. "Jealous?"

"No." She withdrew her hand.

"No? What's this pout for, then?" Toby brushed a finger against her red lip, and of course, a bit of lipstick got caught on his finger.

"What pout?!" Sonia rolled her eyes at him. "Wipe the lipstick away. Don't get it on our shirt."

With that, she pulled out a piece of wet wipe and gave it to him.

A chuckle escaped Toby when he found her still caring for him despite being upset. "Relax. Nothing will ever happen between her and me." He gave her his world while wiping his hand.

"I know." Sonia's tone seemed to have softened. "I'd look down on you if you fall for her. Anybody can tell she's up to no good. It just goes to show how terrible your taste is if you actually fall for her. Then again, it upsets me that she hit on you. I don't like her. Besides, shouldn't she be seeking treatment in the hospital right now? What is she doing here?" "Connor's order. She won't dare to disobey." Toby turned grim at the mention of the pair. "Of course, she's more than happy to oblige."

Sonia quirked her lips in response. "The father and daughter sure know how to annoy others. What did you two talk about?" she asked.

Toby didn't intend to hide anything from her either, giving her a concise summary of their conversation.

"What?! They aren't actually father and daughter?!" Sonia unknowingly raised her voice in utter shock.

As Toby nodded noncommittally, Sonia's mouth was agape with incredulity, taking a long time to come to her senses. As she was still reeling with shock, her voice was raspy. "H-How is it possible? Didn't you find her to be Salzburg's illegitimate daughter back when you dug into her? The government's system also indicated that they're father and daughter. How come they're not anymore?! I'm confused."

She held her forehead. The news was such a bolt from the blue that she was more than just confused. Her head was spinning!

Connor Salzburg and Anya Steinfeld aren't biologically related?! I... Sonia took a long time to process the news.

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Knowing how stunned Sonia was, Toby suggested she take a sip of water to calm down, which she did.

Her shock finally alleviated a little after taking the sip of water, and she looked at Toby. "How come they're suddenly not biologically related? Did you get the wrong information back then? Or was it the system that was wrong?"

Toby nodded. "The information I got was right. The mistake was in the system itself. Hence, my finding was affected. All Caruns believe in Caruna, and that includes me too. So, I didn't think twice when the government system indicated their biological relationship. It was when I realized something was off during my later searches that I started suspecting if they really were father and daughter. Then, I spend a lot of time investigating. It was only after I got their DNA sample and sent it to a lab that I was certain they weren't biologically related at all." Sonia gasped in response. "That means Salzburg has connections in the government, doesn't it?! Then, we have to rethink his power. This is certainly beyond our initial calculation. This is much bigger than we had imagined!"

If this is really the case, then Connor is even harder to defeat.

At that, Toby ruffled her hair. "Take it easy. All that has naturally come to me. I've already told the Colemans about this, and they're helping me find out if Connor has men working in these systems and how they are connected to him. He's just a businessman, and none of his ancestors received any government merits. So, if there is solid evidence of him, a mere businessperson, being involved in the government system, I don't have to worry about dragging down two conglomerates and two hundred thousand employees. The government will seize him; I'll just have to fetch him later."

"That means it's good that we realize they're not biologically related." Sonia's eyes lit up.

"More or less," Toby answered.

"But that still doesn't erase the fact that he cheated on your mother," Sonia sneered, her lips quirked.

"Yeah." Toby nodded in agreement. "It has never been the reason I hated Connor any less."

"Come to think of it. Why would he want a stranger for a daughter? Just what is his purpose?" Sonia furrowed her brows.

At that, the man cleared his throat awkwardly, causing Sonia to narrow her eyes in response, looking at him with suspicion. "What's with that look? Don't tell me it has to do with you."

Toby rubbed his nose awkwardly, seeing that she got the key reason so quickly.

"Shut up! It really has to do with you?!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah," he mumbled, knowing he couldn't hide it any longer. Then again, he never really wanted to hide it from her anyway. "He made Anya his daughter and had her sneak into Seafield, but then deliberately hid the fact that she was his daughter so that she could get close to me as his spy and update him about me. Also, he's using her as a honeypot to take me down."

As Toby spoke of the latter, he checked Sonia's gaze gingerly, fearing he'd upset her even if it wasn't his fault. Her feelings mean the world to me, so I must be careful.

And sure enough, the young woman flew into a rage after hearing her beloved's explanation.

That said, she wasn't upset with him but with Connor instead.

"That shameless b*stard," she growled through gnashed teeth as anger burned ablaze beneath her eyes. "To think he can come up with such a dirty trick. Honeypot, my grass! What makes him think he'll succeed for sure?"

Toby isn't some licentious man; how is he so confident that Toby would fall for any woman he sends his way? Salzburg isn't hysterical, is he? Sonia mused contemptuously while Toby remained grim.

Instantly, her disdain was gone, replaced by grave prudence. "Toby Fuller, don't tell me you've fallen for Steinfeld."

At that, he looked speechlessly at her. "What are you thinking about? How can I even?!"

Though relieved, Sonia still appeared less than happy. "Then, what's with the look?"

"I was just thinking, does she not remind you of someone?"

Stumped, she asked, "Who?"

However, the man said nothing but only riveted his gaze on her, creeping her out a little.

Then, an idea hit her, and she widened her gaze with incredulity. "No way! Are you saying she looks like me?!" she exclaimed while pointing at herself.

Clearly, she had a hard time accepting the revelation.

She fixed her gaze on him, eagerly hoping he would dismiss her guess. However, it never happened.

Instead, Toby nodded, validating her assumption. "That's right. She looks a lot like you, especially the eyes. In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that you're the model for her cosmetic surgery. But worried that we would tell at first glance, she did it subtly and only did the surgery on her eyes to look like yours instead of fixing her entire face."

"Tell me you're joking." Sonia's voice quivered.

Evidently, she had a hard time accepting the fact, but she also knew Toby wouldn't joke with her about such a serious issue. Hence, the matter was highly likely.

She hurriedly closed her eyes, trying to recall what Anya looked like, wanting to find their differences. However, her face paled when Anya's face surfaced, for she discovered that it was as Toby had said—Anya's eyes were identical to hers!

The only reason she had never realized it before this was because she was so used to seeing her own face and that she never really cared about how she looked that she didn't think Anya's eyes were like hers at first glance. Besides, she never thought anything looked off about Anya, so it never dawned on her until now.

Toby, too, only thought Anya's face looked off, but he could never put his finger on it.

It was only when Tom pointed it out that he was struck with an epiphany.

"You're right..." Sonia opened her eyes, finally accepting the baffling fact that Anya fixed her eyes to look like hers.

Well, what else could she do other than accept it?

Anya had already done it, so what other option did she have other than to accept it?

If she had found out Anya was going to undergo cosmetic surgery to look like her, she could've still prevented it, but how was she going to do that now?!

Sonia felt even more troubled now.

At that, she rubbed her temples and looked at Toby. "Say, how did you come to realize it?"

"I didn't." He pursed his lips. "Tom pointed it out when I found out Anya isn't Connor's daughter, and it was only then it hit me that it was all a scheme. The reason Connor had Anya undergo surgery to look like that before appearing in front of me is so that I'd remember her at first glance. That way, it'd help Anya get closer to me because they know I won't even take another look, let alone remember her if she showed up looking like someone else. It's only when she looks like you that they have the chance."

Sonia pursed her lips at that. "Well, they sure have gone to great lengths. Too bad they've missed."

With that, she smiled at Toby. "They didn't expect you not to realize she looks like me."

Toby took a sip of his red wine before saying, "That's right. To me, there's only ever one Sonia Reed. I never have and never will think anyone else looks like you. Hence, I never realized Anya deliberately underwent surgery to look like you, or she might have left a lasting impression on me. Of course..." He glanced at Sonia. "What I mean is the aversion I have for her from the very beginning. That's all there is. I swear."

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Sonia couldn't help chuckling with amusement seeing how desperate the man tried not to upset her. "I know. I didn't get the wrong idea, nor am I overthinking. If you discover someone looking a lot like me and yet you're not bothered by it, now that's a red flag. That means I mean nothing to you at all."

Hearing so, Toby heaved a sigh of relief. It was good that she didn't get the wrong idea.

"But Salzburg and Steinfeld are indeed conniving." Toby frowned, having nothing but aversion for the two. "He deliberately had her undergo surgery to look like you precisely because he believes I'll keep her by my side if she looks like you. Then, from then on, she can become his spy and update him about me whenever. But little did they expect me to find nothing similar about you and Anya. That's why she never found a chance to get close to me. So instead, she reached her hands toward you."

"You're saying she had done all the hullabaloo and even destroyed our gifts just so that we'd remember her and not treat her as just some random stranger?" Sonia pursed her lips.

Toby nodded. "If she doesn't do any of that, then she'd really be just a nobody to us. In fact, we might just forget about her the next second. Forget about becoming Salzburg's spy; she won't even have a chance to appear before us! And it turns out her scheme worked. We remember who she is."

"Touché." Sonia shrugged.

"Anya's job is to act as the honeypot," explained Toby as he rubbed his temples. "Even if she knows that she might fail, she won't give up when she has your eyes. She also had the notion when she came to me earlier. But she didn't expect me to find out that she isn't biologically related to Connor and even say it to her. Now, her plan is down in the gutter."

"Well, that's good." Sonia smiled as she crossed her arms in front of her chest. "At least she won't be hitting on you anymore."

Toby didn't give a direct answer to that. "But that woman's artful. After I revealed knowing she wasn't Connor's biological daughter, she immediately defended herself, saying Connor made her do everything, and that she was innocent. Imagine the kind of character she is when she can counter so quickly. Now my biggest question is, who exactly was she before all of this."

At that, he narrowed his frosty eyes.

Sonia, on the other hand, nodded and turned to him as she spoke. "Indeed. Connor probably wouldn't even consider using her if she's just some orphan. Hence, Anya's past certainly wouldn't have been plain."

Then, seeing that Toby was pondering, she let him be and drank her water.

Moments later, he sighed under his breath, then said grimly, "Whoever she was, and whether she was telling the truth about Connor forcing her into this, she still did it, and I will deal with her the same time I deal with Connor."

Sonia didn't argue with him as Anya had done whatever she had. Be it that she did it willingly or was forced into it, she wasn't innocent. What was done was done. No matter where she had come from, she was no longer innocent the second she did it.

"Alright, let's leave that aside now. Just order the guys to dig into it." Sonia hurriedly took the glass of wine from Toby, seeing that he was looking uncomfortable, then massaged his temples for him.

Toby smiled as he looked at his concerned beloved, then leaned against her and closed his eyes, enjoying the peaceful moment.

Seeing that, Sonia shook her head as a chuckle escaped her, continuing to massage his temples.

A while later, a thought hit her, and she paused her movement. "That reminds me. Toby, guess whom I bumped into on my way to you."

"A man or a woman?" He frowned without opening his eyes.

He wasn't concerned about whom she ran into but more about the person's gender.

If it was a lady, sure, okay, no big deal. But if it was a man, oh, that raised a lot of red flags.

Sure, many women had a thing for him, but many men would fall for Sonia as well.

Charles and Zane aside, there was Carl from Westsanshire too!

And these men were very, very different from the women who liked him.

Those who liked him feared him as well. Thus, they would keep their feelings to themselves and dared not hit on him.

Of course, there were a few crazy ones who dared overlook his warning. But he could send them on their way with just one warning.

Sonia's admirers, on the other hand, not only dared to hit on her blatantly, but they were also influential in one way or another, unlike the women who like him. Hence, dealing with them posed a challenge for him.

Sure, he wouldn't break a sweat if he dealt with them one by one. But if they ganged up, even he would suffer a massive blow.

Sonia rolled her eyes exasperatedly at him. "Who's talking about gender here?! I'm asking you to guess whom I bumped into." As if she couldn't tell what the man was thinking.

"All humans have genders," he countered solemnly, making her livid yet amused. "Oh, forget it. I'll just tell you. I bumped into Cynthia."

"Cynthia?" Toby's frown deepened. Though he kept his eyes closed, his bewilderment still showed. "Doesn't ring a bell."

Sonia was naturally happy that he had completely forgotten about Cynthia.

Even when she knew that he and Cynthia barely ever talked, she'd still feel somewhat uncomfortable if he had a good picture of who Cynthia was.

"The daughter of Stone Incorporated's Chairman and Tina's old sidekick," she reminded while rubbing Toby's temples.

It was only after mentioning Tina that he recalled a woman who would indeed follow Tina everywhere.

"Oh, that woman. Did she pick on you?" Animosity surged beneath his eyes when he opened them, looking like he would belabor Cynthia at once if Sonia said yes.

At that, Sonia patted his shoulder, telling him to calm down before saying, "No, I just bumped into her, literally. But it was really just an accident."

Though Cynthia had been rude verbally, the former had indeed bumped into her by accident.

As she wasn't a fan of twisting the truth, she told him exactly how it went down. But Toby still looked grim. "Are you hurt?"

"No." She shook her head. "I just got hit in the shoulder. It hurt back then, but I'm all okay now. Cynthia, on the other hand, had it worse. She fell on her bottom."

At that, she couldn't help giggling. "But that's beside the point. What I'm trying to tell you is that she gave me some clues to Tina's whereabouts."

"What did you say?" Toby sat up right away. "Tina's whereabouts?!"

"Yes."

"How could someone like her know when even I can't find anything? Are you sure she isn't deceiving you?" He stared at her intently.

At that, Sonia bit her lip. "I thought she was lying to me as well, at first. But I kept a close eye on her gaze and expression the whole time. I don't think she's lying unless she had been deceived as well. But I don't think it's likely because the person who told her was Melody Stryder."

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"Melody Stryder?" A hint of a profound expression laced Toby's face when he heard the name.

Sonia, on the other hand, pursed her lips, for the enigmatic expression hadn't gone unnoticed when she had been observing his reaction to the name in the first place.

I knew it! This dude knows Melody's out of jail!

Or how could he not be surprised at all that Cynthia had met with Melody?!

"I, um..." Toby deliberated his words when he sensed the gaze that she had on him.

"Still not saying it, are we?" Sonia smiled enigmatically at him. "When did Melody get out of jail?"

Here we go. Toby sighed and regained his usual composure in two shakes. "Two months after she went in."

"So soon?!" She frowned.

Watching him nod in affirmation, she found it hard to believe what had happened. "Why didn't you tell me about it?"

"I didn't want you to get upset. After all, she came out not long after she was finally put behind bars. Anyone would've gotten upset. That's why I hid it from you." His eyes were drooping.

Meanwhile, Sonia bore into the man, for she knew he had her best interest at heart. However, it still bothered her. Thus, she ignored him for the next two minutes.

Toby, too, knew she would be upset at the fact that he deliberately hid it from her, but he didn't regret doing so. At that, he wrapped an arm around her gently and cooed, "Please don't get mad at me. I only found out later too."

Sonia looked at him in response, and he clarified, "The reason Melody can get out is that her granduncle bailed her out with his life's merits. Because he got injured in his early years in the war, so he couldn't have his own children, and Melody treated him the best, so he couldn't sit back and watch her spend the rest of her life in jail. Hence, he used his merits in exchange for her freedom before he died."

"That's the case, huh?" Sonia frowned. "That veteran sure has gotten senile. Does he not know what sort of a character her grandniece is? How can he let a villain out?!"

"He had gotten senile. But then, it's also not surprising. So many will become injudicious as they get on in years despite being shrewd when they were young, especially when it's someone old-fashioned and childless. Because he took a liking to Melody, he regarded her as his own grandchild. Hence, he naturally wouldn't sit back and watch her live the rest of her life in prison."

"So, he used his merits to exchange for her freedom. Honestly..." Sonia sighed.

There was no doubt Melody was a lucky one.

"The penitentiary contacted me after Melody was out. They told me the reason for it and hoped that I would understand, but how could I understand?! Yet there was nothing I could do about it. After all, it was exchanged with merits. I couldn't stop it," explained Toby icily.

Sonia was no longer upset with Toby at this point, for it was as he said—he couldn't stop it when it was exchanged with merits. It was a perk given by the government to those who had contributed immensely during wartime.

Of course, the elder would become insignificant to the country after giving up his merits. Then again, the man was dead, so it didn't matter.

"But don't worry. She isn't absolutely free even if she's out. She's under constant surveillance. They'd seize her once she goes rogue," Toby clarified at once, worried that Sonia believed that Melody lived her life like any other decent citizen after leaving prison. "That's good to hear." She nodded. "Melody's now looking for Tina everywhere. According to Cynthia, Tina deceived Melody. Thus, she wants to retaliate against Tina."

"I know." Tobias nodded.

"You know Melody's looking for Tina?" Sonia asked in shock.

"I do," he affirmed. "She has been looking for Tina since leaving prison. It's precisely because I know the fact that I've been leaving her alone thus far. Melody and Tina had been pretty close back then, so I thought maybe she'd have clues to Tina's whereabouts. So, I had my men keep a close eye on her, planning to put her back in prison once she had found Tina."

Though the penitentiary asked that he accept the reason they let Melody out, how could he really let the young woman live freely like a normal citizen?!

While promising the penitentiary that he would overlook the fact that Melody had been bailed out of jail, he covertly prepared traps for Melody to fall into so that she would break the law again. With that, she'd stay in there for good, and there would be no one to bail her out anymore.

However, he found out Melody was looking for Tina when the inchoate thought had just formed. Thus, he put the idea aside for now.

After all, it would be even better if Melody did all the work of finding Tina. Then, he could just swoop in and seize them all at once after Melody found Tina.

"That works too." Sonia nodded. "When I bumped into Cynthia earlier, she said Melody revealed some of Tina's whereabouts to her. One was Kosovo, and the other was Westsanshire. They were information from Melody's old fair-weather friends, who had helped her, seeing that they used to be close. Though they are far less influential compared to you, they have their bizarre ways of finding a person. So, it might be legit."

"Kosovo and Westsanshire..." Toby mumbled the names of the places and squinted. Suddenly, a thought flashed across his mind. However, it flashed by so quickly that it disappeared before he could catch it.

That said, he didn't plan on just dismissing it, for his gut told him whatever that thought was, it was very crucial. So crucial that it could be the key to locating Tina.

But the fact that it disappeared so quickly irritated him.

"What's wrong?" Sonia was concerned about what was on his mind, seeing that he was upset.

"Nothing." He shook his head. "I'll have Tom send people to those locations for inspection. Though it has been some time, it'll still be good if the surveillance still stands."

"You're right." Sonia nodded.

With that, Toby pulled his phone out to call Tom, only for the man to call him instead.

"Looks like your brainwaves are in sync." Sonia sniggered, leading Toby to turn grim.

In sync? With him? No, thank you.

That said, he didn't say anything but just answered the call. "What is it?"

"Lynette escaped, President," Tom answered anxiously.

Toby didn't put the call on speaker, but because Sonia was right next to him, she heard Tom clearly. "What? She got away?!" she exclaimed in shock.

"Yes, Miss Reed," the assistant answered with a nod.

"Aren't she and Mr. Lore waiting for me in the room?" Toby was looking beyond grim. "How could she have gotten away? Did you not have anyone keeping watch over them?"

Why Lynette would run away and where she would run to were already obvious answers.

She would certainly come and find him. After all, this was her only purpose for coming on this night.

Tom defended himself in the face of Toby's questioning. "I have, President. But they said they didn't want people staring at them in the room, so they chased our men out, having them keep watch in the corridor. Later, Lynette asked for a server to go into the room. With that, she knocked the server out cold, put on the uniform, and ran away."

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"Shoot, she did that?!" Lynette's plan stumped Sonia.

"Who allowed the ones guarding the Lores to let people in?!" Toby hit the roof.

Knowing they were in the wrong, Tom answered, "You just said not to let them out, President. But you didn't say other people couldn't go in. So, Lynette used the loophole to get away."

So, it's my fault?! Toby turned grimmer by the second, making Sonia snigger.

"Is Mr. Lore still inside?" Toby asked while rubbing his temples.

"He is." Tom nodded. "Only one server went in, so only one could leave. Since Lynette ran away, Mr. Lore had to stay."

"Right," Toby replied. "From now on, I don't want anyone else going in or out until I get there. Get the food and drinks ready for Mr. Lore, and also have someone check on him every ten minutes. I want him safe and sound."

"Yes, sir." Tom nodded in acknowledgment.

He knew well that Toby didn't really mean 'safe and sound' but rather that Mr. Lore wasn't using his life to threaten anyone.

"Also, find another two people to guard the door and send the ones originally keeping watch back to security school to work on their vision. What use do I have for them when they can't even tell the wrong person left the door?!" Toby ordered through gnashed teeth.

Tom, too, agreed with Toby. It was indeed time to send them back to security school when they couldn't even tell Lynette had passed by them.

"Understood. I'll get to it right away, but Lynette..."

'She'll definitely come to the banquet. Have someone find her," Toby ordered.

"Yes, sir."

"One more thing." Toby narrowed his eyes.

Tom listened quietly as Toby gave his order. "Tina went to Kosovo?!" Tom exclaimed in shock.

"It's a fact yet to be verified. So, these are your next tasks," said Toby plainly.

"Understood, sir." Toby turned solemn. "I'll send people over right away, and Westsanshire, too."

Toby ended the call with a hum, then put the phone down and reached for the wine. However, Sonia placed her hand over the glass.

"What is it?" The man looked at her with bafflement.

"Don't drink anymore," said Sonia as she pushed the glass further. "You've already had a lot. You're going to get drunk if you keep at it. Have some of this."

She poured half of her juice out and handed it to him, who smiled as he looked at the juice in the wine glass. "Alright, no more wine. You're the boss. I'll have this."

"Props to you." With that, she ate a piece of fruit using the expensive-looking fork, then put it down and stood up after she was done.

"Where are you going?" Toby looked up at her.

"The washroom. I've had too much juice," answered Sonia as she grabbed her bag.

"I'll go with you," Toby suggested as he put the glass down.

"You want to go into the women's bathroom with me?" She rolled her eyes at him.

"I'll wait outside," announced Toby as he stood up.

"No need." Sonia found it ridiculous. "I'm not a child that needs attending to. Besides, there are so many people here. It wouldn't be good if someone caught you waiting outside the women's washroom. Alright, just wait for me here. I'll be back in a sec."

With that, she made her way to the washroom.

Meanwhile, Toby's gaze turned enigmatic as he watched her saunter away, and he picked up the glass of juice to take another sip.

At the washroom, Sonia reapplied her lipstick at the bathroom vanity after doing her business.

After she had drunk so much juice, her lipstick had long faded.

What was more, she had on heavy makeup that night, so her entire look would look off when her lipstick faded. Hence, she would need to reapply to complete her entire look.

When she was done, she turned her head from side to side to check everything was okay before putting the lipstick into her bag and leaving the washroom happily.

Just as she exited the washroom, a female server approached her direction, and her beauty stunned Sonia.

She wasn't the bombshell type. Instead, she was adorable. She had a round face, delicate facial features, and adorably chubby cheeks. Even adorable was an understatement.

Plus, she wasn't tall, probably only around five feet. And she had on a bun. Coupled with her doll-like face, she was the epitome of a sweet princess.

If she puts on some frilly princess-style dress or some preppy clothes, she'll definitely look the part! Sonia mused. No one wouldn't say no to anything adorable, and the same went for her too.

If it wasn't for the fact that it was rude, she'd really want to rub the female server's face. Her face must feel good to knead, she mused with regret while sizing the approaching server.

Then, the second she walked past the server, the latter suddenly stopped and turned her head to Sonia. "You must be Sonia Reed."

The server not only looked like a doll but even sounded like one.

Of course, that was beside the point. The point was this server knew her!

Sonia reflexively stopped as a hint of surprise flashed across her eyes, and she turned to look at the server standing next to her. "Hi, do you know me?"

She indirectly acknowledged she was indeed Sonia.

The female server had turned entirely around at this point and stared at Sonia face-on with nothing but malice and jealousy.

Her gaze shocked Sonia, and it baffled her that a stranger would have such intense animosity toward her. But she very quickly realized something when she looked at her unfitted uniform.

Hadn't Tom said over the phone that Lynette knocked a server out cold and ran away wearing their uniform? Also, Lynette had a doll-like face!

The slightly large uniform and doll-like face that fitted Lynette's description appeared on this server, so it was clear now who the person standing in front of her was.

"Lynette!" Sonia blurted out.

The female server smirked and crossed her arms in front of her chest. "So, you know me too, huh?"

She admitted she was indeed Lynette.

Sonia pursed her lips. "Well, I've heard of you, but I wouldn't say I know you." She didn't think she would be so lucky as to bump into Lynette right outside of the washroom.

No, perhaps it wasn't that she was lucky, but that Lynette might have come specifically for her.

After all, she never saw a sliver of surprise in Lynette's eyes.

So, it was apparent that the young lady had come for her.

On the other hand, Lynette's smile froze after she heard Sonia's answer, displeased.

What do you mean 'I've heard of you, but I wouldn't say I know you.'?!

To her, they were love rivals, and to fight Sonia, she spent tons of time and money collecting various information on Sonia. It could be said that she knew Sonia through and through.

Shouldn't that be the case for her too?!

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We're love rivals! Reed should learn everything about me as I had done! But... she didn't do a single thing! This...

For a moment, Lynette was overcome with fury. She held significant regard toward her love rival, yet the latter thought nothing of her! Who wouldn't be livid if it happened to them?!

Sonia, on the other hand, thought the heavens had made the wrong decision to give someone like Lynette such an adorable face when she saw the latter baring her fangs, ruining her adorable face. Such an adorable face should've been on a sweet, gentle girl and not someone like Lynette.

Bored, Sonia quirked her lips and withdrew her gaze, wanting to leave. However, Lynette grabbed her arm in time, preventing her from walking away. "You're not going anywhere!"

Probably coming from jealousy, Lynette sank her nails into Sonia's flesh when she grabbed Sonia, who winced and frowned in pain.

Lynette, on the other hand, grinned victoriously in response.

Made livid, Sonia wrested her arm away out of annoyance, causing Lynette to take a couple of involuntary steps back and fall on her bum from the momentum, stumping her.

Meanwhile, Sonia checked her wrist, never once giving two hoots about the young woman.

She instantly turned grim when she saw the few unmissable fingernail marks on her fair arm.

This woman sure plays dirty. The skin where Lynette had clawed turned purple. One could imagine the force the young woman applied.

Sonia, seething with rage, put her arm down and wanted to get back at Lynette. However, before she could do so, the young woman got back up on her feet and glared daggers at Sonia. "How dare you shove me, Reed?!"

"Shove you?" The young woman's ridiculousness made Sonia amused with rage. "I'm not as shameless as you to blame-shift. Huh, look at you, calling me a villain for shoving you when I haven't accused you of pinching me. What a joke! You've fallen on your own, and yet you blame others for it."

"I fell on my own?!" Lynette gibed. "Would I have fallen if you hadn't yanked your arm away?! So, it's still ultimately your fault! This won't end until you kneel and beg for my forgiveness!"

Kneel and beg for your forgiveness?! Sonia couldn't help rolling her eyes. At what age does this woman think we live in?! The middle ages?! Kneel and beg my grass! What a lunatic.

"So, what if I did pull my arm away? You sank your nails into my arm first. If you hadn't done it, I wouldn't have pulled my arm away, and you wouldn't have fallen. So, if anyone is at fault, it'll be you. Have you ever heard that empty vessels make the most noise? So, you should be the one to kneel and beg for my forgiveness." Sonia lifted her chin and took advantage of her height to look down at Lynette like she was looking at a clown.

The young girl, on the other hand, wasn't only aggravated by her gaze but also her words. Empty vessels make the most noise?! This woman is calling me ignorant! She looks down on me!

"How dare you call me out and even tell me to kneel and beg for your forgiveness?!" raged Lynette while pointing maliciously at Sonia, looking so ferocious like she would eat the latter up.

To that, Sonia rolled her eyes exasperatedly. "How dare I not? What? You can attack me, but I can't retaliate? Huh, sorry to break it to you, but the world doesn't work that way."

"Take a look at yourself and take a look at me! You think you're worthy of being compared to me?!" Lynette screeched like she wanted the world to hear her.

Sonia quirked her lips, glowering at Lynette. "Why not? Are we not both human? Or are you some sort of monarch that no one can criticize? Huh, jokes on you; you're now but a daughter of an affluent family that's about to be washed up. In terms of status, you and I are not far off. In fact, if we're to be serious about it, I am a chairman of a company, while you are just someone from a rich family. In terms of status, I stand taller than you. So, tell me who's the unworthy one."

Exasperated, Lynette stomped her feet with rage. "You... You..."

"What about me?" Sonia sneered disdainfully, biting back without mercy. "Look at you; you can't even get your words straight. Why don't you go back to school and actually learn something before further humiliating yourself?"

Lynette was so livid that her eyes turned bloodshot.

Indeed, her upbringing disallowed her from even cussing, so what more retort others wittingly? Thus, not even two of her could defeat Sonia in eloquence. So, she would naturally be made infuriated.

However, Lynette was strong-willed. Despite being beside with rage, she bounced back in two shakes, and she maniacally chuckled while glowering at Sonia. "This is the real you, isn't it? It must be tough to act docile in front of Toby."

"What?" Her words stumped Sonia. "Act docile?"

"Hmph, don't play dumb with me. Don't think for one second that I don't know this sharp-tongued and vitriolic side is the real you. But because you worry Toby won't like it, you hide this side of yourself away from Toby and pretend to be all gentle and sweet. You sure are a sly fox, Reed," Lynette snarled.

The young woman's words sounded so ridiculous to Sonia that a chuckle escaped her. "Are you sure it's not just all in your head? When have I ever pretended to be gentle and sweet?"

At least she never behaved the way Lynette thought she would in front of Toby. She behaved however she wanted. Thus, the young woman had certainly imagined it all herself.

"Still lying, are we, Reed?" Of course, Lynette wouldn't believe a word Sonia said. The way she saw it was that Sonia was merely making excuses. "I know full well just the kind of person you are, and so does Toby. So, it's useless no matter how you pretend. Given how you threatened Toby to get back with you, it's doomed that he will never love you." Lynette raised her chin triumphantly, looking like she had unveiled what Sonia cared about most.

She had believed she would find Sonia hitting the roof after bursting her bubble, but she waited and waited... Yet, she barely received a reaction from the latter. Instead, she found a hint of ridicule in Sonia's gaze.

Ridicule? The expression on Lynette's face froze. What is the meaning of this? How dare this woman ridicule me?! Shouldn't she be flipping out right now?! After all, I've called her out on what she cares about most! But how can she look at me like I'm some joke instead of being angry? She must be mad!

While the young woman was reeling in bewilderment, Sonia's voice traveled to her ears. "I've once heard that you Lores believe the reason Toby only got back together with me is that I blackmailed him into it, and he had no choice but to agree to it. So, I want to know now, just who in the world told you and your family this is how Toby and I got back together?"

"As if we need anyone to tell us about it! Isn't it obvious by itself?!" Lynette snorted. "Toby doesn't love you at all. Do you think no one knows what your six years of marriage to him were like?! Would he even treat you like that if he loves you?! Whom he loves is Tina. You're just a homewrecker who threatened Toby into marriage while Tina was in a coma. Since he doesn't love you, the only possibility that he would marry and even get back together with you is that you have something on him and nothing else!"

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Anyhow, Lynette refused to believe or even come close to accepting the possibility that Toby got back with Sonia because he loved her.

Sonia, on the other hand, couldn't be bothered to explain herself anymore, seeing how affirmed Lynette was in her notion.

Alas, it was useless to convince someone who had their whole head stuck in their little world. They would never believe nor listen to anything that challenged their notion.

So, why bother explaining?

"Oh, since that's how you believe how things are, what are you going to do next?" asked Sonia as she tucked her wavy hair back, on the verge of not giving a duck anymore.

"Expose your phony little mask in front of Toby and reclaim his leverage, of course!" Lynette snarled.

"Good idea." Sonia clapped, applauding her. "And after that? Reclaim the leverage to save your dear Toby from jeopardy so that you can use it to threaten Toby to be with you, am I right?"

"How did you—" Being called out, Lynette turned subtly grim, then hurriedly backtracked her words with an evasive gaze when she realized what she was doing. "What are you talking about?! Who do you think I am to blackmail Toby with the leverage?! If you have nothing nice to say, don't say anything at all, Reed! I'm not as vile and shameless as you are! I will naturally let Toby dispose of the leverage. No way would I do anything with it."

While she ranted, her heart raced wildly.

Goodness, I nearly blew it.

Little did she think that Sonia would have such sharp instincts and hit the mark precisely.

She was indeed going to threaten Toby with the very leverage that shackled him to Sonia after seizing it. If Sonia could succeed, why couldn't she?

Though Toby might hate her for it, it didn't matter. Once she was with Toby and became his rightful girlfriend, she would have all the time and plans in the world to coax Toby.

She believed he would eventually be moved and fall in love with her if she took time and effort.

By then, all the aversion and repulse she would face would be nothing.

At that, Lynette beamed as she reeled in the excitement and expectancy of the future.

That said, she wasn't completely hysterical, so she hurriedly put her thoughts and emotions away after smiling for a moment, lest she exposed too much.

But too bad for her because Sonia saw through everything.

The young woman's unfinished words, especially, looked absolutely ridiculous to Sonia.

To think I have thought this girl is madly in love with Toby, but looking at things now, there isn't much love, is there?

Who would bear to use anything to threaten the very person they love to be with them?

Thus, it was clear that Lynette didn't love Toby but the benefits that came along with him. Yet, the young woman loved to use true love to mask her vanity.

A sliver of ridicule flashed across Sonia's eyes, but she couldn't be bothered to call Lynette out. Instead, she clapped for the young woman and praised her perfunctorily, saying, "Wow, how noble of you, Miss Lore. So why don't we go over to your beloved Toby now?"

The expression on Lynette's face froze in response. See Toby? Now? No way!

She hadn't gotten anything on him, so seeing him now would do nothing for her, especially when she had snuck out.

At that, her eyes darted everywhere nervously.

Sonia, on the other hand, snorted disdainfully, seeing that the young woman was chickening out.

To Lynette, the snort was one of mockery and contempt from her love rival. Though it was a fact, for someone who had always been prideful, Lynette naturally couldn't take it at all. Hence, her anger got the better of her, and she snarled while glaring daggers at Sonia.

Because of her doll-like face, she looked like an angel when she smiled. However, when malice enveloped her face, she looked like the haunted doll from the horror movies that sent chills down people's spines.

Though it wasn't to that extent for Sonia, she still felt uncomfortable, and she furrowed her brows in disdain. "What's with the look, Miss Lore? Do you want to eat me up?"

"Enough gloating, Reed. You better hand Toby's leverage over if you know what's best for you! Maybe I might be able to help keep you alive. I'm sure you know just what Toby is like. He would never let anyone threaten him. The only reason you're still standing here today after threatening him is that you have something on him, or you would've long been dead meat. So, you better hand whatever it is over. As long as you hand it to me, I might be generous and consider interceding for you to Toby and ask him to spare your life. If you don't, then it's on you."

Sonia couldn't take it anymore after hearing Lynette's egotistical threat and chuckled with pursed lips.

"What are you laughing at?!" Offended, Lynette turned grimmer by the second.

"Your joke, of course. You said it yourself, Miss Lore. Toby would never spare anyone who dared threaten him. Since blackmail is the reason that I can still be alive today, why should I so idiotically hand it to you instead of continuing to use it? Would it just be a suicidal move? Also, you interceding for me? Ha, what a joke. We're enemies! Would you want your enemy to live a good life? You may be able to fool an idiot with it, but you can't fool me."

At that, Sonia waved her finger with a smile. "Besides, you said it yourself. You might be generous and consider interceding. I'm sure the 'might' here means 'no', or why did you say you would instead of might? Hence, Miss Lore, I wouldn't give up the leverage, much less hand it into your hands."

"You!" Livid with rage, Lynette glared daggers at Sonia, surprised that Sonia could be so cunning. Not only was the latter not going to hand her the leverage, but she was even finding flaws in her words, making her look illiterate.

Meanwhile, Anya was just about to freshen up when she found Sonia as she turned into the corner not far from where the two were standing.

Though all she saw was a back, there was only one fiery red dress of the design, and she knew Sonia's figure like it was the back of her hand. Hence, she could tell at one glance that the back belonged to Sonia.

To think I'd be so unlucky to run into this woman even in the washroom. Aversion enveloped Anya's face as she clenched the armrest of her wheelchair. But what is Reed doing?

With that, she retreated into the corner and peeked.

As she had been looking straight ahead, Sonia's back was all she could see. But now that she switched an angle, she finally saw more than that—Sonia was talking to someone.

Is that a server? Anya wondered, unsure what Sonia had to talk to a server about. Is there something special about that girl?

Withholding the notion that she could only defeat Sonia only by scrutinizing anything and everything that mattered to the latter, Anya finally spared the server a glance, seeing what was so important about the server that Sonia would spend time talking to her.

Lo and behold, her gaze changed for the worse when she finally realized who it was.

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Why does this server look so familiar? I have seen her before, but where?

Anya searched through her memory archive and landed on a young face identical to the server.

Lynette Lore!

Anya's eyes widened with shock and incredulity. As though she wanted to confirm her guess, she glued her gaze onto Lynette's face.

It's her! It's really Lynette Lore!

Who else other than the idiotic, wicked, and useless rich kid would have that face and that lofty attitude?!

Anya clenched her hand that was grabbing onto the wall corner so tightly that the shape of her joints showed through her skin and flesh.

One could see the amount of force she used and how ruffled she was by Lynette's appearance.

Just when she thought the server whom Sonia was talking to was only somewhat distinctive, lo and behold, it was Lynette!

Since when did Lynette need to work as a server? Wait, that's not the point—shouldn't she be abroad?! When did she come back?

She had sent a crestfallen Lynette out of the country seven years ago and even made the young woman promise to never return. But now, she had broken her promise in a short seven years and returned to Caruna! It's all because I...

Anya gritted her teeth, and her eyes were bloodshot. But very quickly, she tucked it all away and smiled maliciously.

It doesn't matter, for it's also good that she's returned. She's a force to be reckoned with.

Sure, she wasn't as smart as Anya, but she could be as wicked as Anya.

What was more, given Lynette's psychotic obsessiveness toward Toby, she believed the young woman's first mission was certainly to snatch Toby for herself.

Since she's going to snatch him, she'll have to defeat Reed first.

Hence, Anya decided to sit back and let the two women fight to their deaths before she swooped in for the take.

At that, she grinned and shifted her gaze to Sonia, feeling bad for Sonia as Sonia had her and Lynette, the lunatic, as an enemy.

That woman was a tough nut. She might be a little dumb, but she was ruthless with her moves. More importantly, she didn't know when to stop and would attack whenever. Thus, Sonia would have her hands full in fighting Lynette for a while.

At that, Anya released her grip on the wall and fished her phone out of her bag.

Lynette's appearance was undoubtedly good news for her, for the young woman could help her get rid of Sonia and also find out some of Toby's hidden forces. All in all, it would help her rather than trouble her.

That said, the original plan with Connor would require some alteration. Nonetheless, it wouldn't be a big deal, and she believed Connor would consider her plan after learning about Lynette.

While calling Connor, Anya moved her wheelchair back. She then silently retreated out of the corner and headed far away.

She not only wanted to tell Connor about Lynette's appearance but also have him find out when the young woman returned, for she hadn't gotten a single hint when she was in police custody.

Meanwhile, Sonia and Lynette never discovered Anya the whole time, and Lynette was still beside herself with anger at Sonia's words.

"Either way, you're not going to hand over the leverage, aren't you?!"

"Yes." Sonia smiled.

"Are you not afraid of the consequences, Reed?" Lynette asked grimly.

Too bad for her, Lynette's face could never look intimidating no matter what she did. Thus, not only would people not fear her, but they would even find her hideous.

What a lost cause for such an adorable face.

At that, Sonia subtly shook her head and felt sad to see such an adorable face on someone like Lynette.

"What consequences would there be? Let's hear it out. For all we know, I might get scared and might eventually yield, no, Miss Lore?" Sonia smiled.

The double 'might' infuriated Lynette, for she knew the woman was mocking her.

Sonia had first countered her 'might', and now, she deliberately used two 'mights' to counterattack.

What an evil wench!

"Need I tell you what consequences you'll face?!" Lynette glared daggers at Sonia with bloodshot eyes. "I will make your life a living hell and have you regret not agreeing to my demand. Toby's means will only be more torturous than mine. Who's to say if you'll even live at the end of it?"

With that, she observed Sonia's expression, wanting to see if the woman would be afraid at all.

If she did, that meant that her intimidation worked.

If she didn't...

However, there was no 'if'. Sonia wasn't the least bit afraid, and the discovery left Lynette frothing at the mouth.

"Are you not afraid to die at all?!" Lynette exclaimed with incredulity, leading Sonia to roll her eyes unapologetically. "Please, Miss Lore. The world is governed by law nowadays. Do you think it's good to paint your dear Toby a law-flouting demon who'd kill whenever he wants to? As for your threat to me—do you want to bet that you'd become their top monitoring subject if I recorded what you said and handed it to the police? Once anything bad happens to me, you'll become their number one suspect."

Seeing that Lynette's countenance turned enigmatic, Sonia snorted, then said, "Judging from your expression, I can tell you're probably clueless about the law. No wonder you're uneducated enough to say something so cocky. Alright, let me enlighten you. First off, Miss Lore, your beloved Toby Fuller is most certainly a law-abiding citizen, and the way you describe him makes me question your ill-intent and also doubt if you actually love Toby. Otherwise, why would you want to slander him? Hence, I will relate your words to him honestly and see what he thinks of you. As for you, I will relate your words to the police and let them give you a lecture on the law."

With that, Sonia turned to leave.

"You can't leave!" Lynette stopped Sonia, looking panicked and apprehensive. "I won't let you tell Toby."

As for whether Sonia reported her to the police, she didn't care one bit. All that mattered to Lynette was Toby, who had already thought lesser of her now. Naturally, she wouldn't want Sonia to ruin it further.

She admitted that she had let her anger take control and thus allowed Sonia to get leverage on her. Hence, she had to stop this woman no matter what.

"And I'm supposed to go along with you just because you don't want me to? Who do you think you are?" Sonia shot Lynette a dismissive glance, then continued walking away.

A hint of malice flashed across the young woman's eyes when she realized Sonia wasn't going to stop, and she raised her hands, wanting to shove Sonia.

Reed can't tell on me anymore once she falls. Yes, she can't leave if she can't move! Also, there's no surveillance here. No one will know what I do to her, not even Toby. Why not do something?!

Once the malice arose, it would only snowball instead of disappearing.

Lynette's evil grin spread across her face irrepressibly as she watched her hand get closer and closer to Sonia's back.

Just one push; one push and her face will land on the floor. By then, her face will be disfigured even if she doesn't die. Then, I'll destroy her throat so that she can never speak again. By then, no one will ever know it was me!

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As the thought came to Lynette, her breathing grew heavier by the second.

However, the second she touched Sonia's back, an angry and malicious male voice rang behind her. "Lynette Lore, touch her and I'll send you flying out of here!"

The voice rendered the young woman aghast, for it belonged to none other than Toby.

Just like that, her hand froze mid-air, no longer daring to do anything. Meanwhile, Lynette stood rooted to the floor, pale-faced and drenched in sweat as fear and panic surged beneath her eyes.

How can this be?! What is Toby doing here? He even caught me about to push Sonia over! What is he going to make of me now? Will he think I'm a wicked woman?!

Unsurprisingly, it never occurred to the young woman how her actions could affect Sonia. Rather, she was worried that Toby's impression of her would plummet.

Sonia had stopped as well when she heard Toby's voice, and his threat shocked her even more so.

If her guess was right, it meant that Lynette was about to do something to her right behind her back.

At that, she turned around at once, but before she could manage to catch Lynette's reaction, Toby had already moved toward her grimly.

Meanwhile, Lynette finally came to herself when Toby walked past her, and she hurriedly reached out to grab the man. "Toby..."

However, he lifted his arm and impassively avoided her touch, then walked past her without even sparing the woman a glance.

At that moment, Lynette thought her heart had sunk to the bottom of the ocean, and it felt as though someone had dumped a bucket of ice water on her. Tears instantly pooled in her red-rimmed eyes as grievance enveloped her face.

Did Toby pretend not to have seen me?! It was something that would never have happened.

In the past, he would always respond whenever she greeted him. Sure, he never replied enthusiastically, but he would still nod or hum a response instead of ignoring her completely like she was invisible.

Toby has changed! No, maybe he hasn't. That woman must've threatened him. Yes, that must be it! She probably forbade him to talk to any other woman but her!

As Lynette grew more confident of her guess, her gaze at Sonia turned more baleful by the second, looking like it had been doused in poison, wanting to rot the woman away.

In her mind, the reason Toby ignored her had nothing to do with Toby himself; she believed that Sonia had egged him, and it was all of Sonia's doing.

On the other hand, Sonia rolled her eyes at the young woman's reaction and couldn't be bothered to give a damn. At that, she withdrew her gaze and looked at her beloved. "What are you—"

"You okay?" Toby grabbed her shoulders and sized her up with nothing but worry in his eyes. "Did she do anything to you? Are you hurt?" he peppered anxiously.

Before Sonia could even respond to such concern, Lynette was already beside herself with jealousy.

She couldn't believe Toby would be so concerned about Sonia and even questioned if she had bullied Sonia!

How can Toby do this?! Doesn't he feel nothing for Sonia?! Why would he care if she got bullied and if she was hurt?! Can it be... Does he actually... No! No, no, no, no, no! No, that's impossible! He would never!

Lynette shook her head violently and dismissed the inchoate thought at once.

She couldn't and refused to believe the reality. Hence, she negated it entirely.

Sonia and Toby, on the other hand, never paid any attention to Lynette but only focused on each other.

"Relax. I'm good, and I didn't get hurt. You came just in time." Sonia shook her head with a smile, feeling warm and fuzzy toward his anxious concern.

She had a good hunch that Lynette was indeed about to attack her, and if it weren't for Toby's timely arrival, she probably wouldn't still be standing on both feet and talking to him.

Seeing that Sonia wasn't lying to reassure him, Toby let out a sigh of relief. "Good-"

But the next second, he spotted something, and he brought her wrist up at once. "What is this?!"

He pointed at the bruises and asked her grimly, "What is this? You said you didn't get hurt!"

Sonia parted her lips as she looked at the nail marks but couldn't utter a word. Tsk, great. I forgot about this one.

As it no longer hurt, she had forgotten about it. Hence, she said she hadn't received any injuries when he asked. However, he didn't know, did he?! He'd instinctively think she was deliberately hiding it from him.

Sure enough, seeing that she remained silent, Toby concluded that Sonia deliberately hid her injury and made nothing of it so he wouldn't worry. But to him, this was a big deal!

His heart would already shatter whenever she got a little scratch, so what more when she got bruised from a few fingernail marks?! It was evident how brutal and strong of a grip the attacker had used.

"It's fine, Toby. It's just a few scratches," Sonia held Toby's hand and cooed upon seeing his malicious, infuriated, yet aching gaze. "I'm not trying to hide it from you. I've

just forgotten about it. It doesn't hurt at all, so it didn't occur to me. I'm sure you understand."

"I don't," said Toby grimly as he caressed the bruises tenderly. "I understand that you're hurt, and it hurts me."

Meanwhile, behind the couple, Lynette felt envious as she listened to their conversation, but at the same time, she also had a lingering fear, for she knew just exactly what they were talking about—the fingernail marks she left on Sonia.

She didn't make much of it at first, for she believed it was no big deal that she had just pinched Sonia a little. Toby wouldn't come at her for something so minor, after all.

As if he'll ever stand up for her! Toby doesn't love Sonia at all. Why would he do that when I've done nothing else but only pinch her?

Now that she was seeing Toby reacting so apprehensively over something as minor as a few nail marks, she grew less confident and even nervous.

Toby wouldn't avenge Reed because of a few bruises, would he?

Lynette gulped nervously as she took a subconscious step back, which drew Sonia and Toby's attention.

One look was all Sonia took to know the pale-faced young woman wanted to run away, and she couldn't help smirking.

Toby, on the other hand, had his back facing Lynette, but he could still guess what the young woman was up to through Sonia's gaze despite not seeing it for himself.

Sonia's gaze was as bright and clear as crystal, reflecting everything she saw in her eyes. Thus, he didn't need to turn around to know everything that was going on behind him.

Hence, when he saw Lynette retreating, he stood straight and asked in a sub-zero voice, "Who left these marks on you? Was it her?"