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Tim shot a look at the duo in an embrace and did not bother to say much. He got up and walked to the glass medicine cabinet on the opposite side and opened one side of it. Subsequently, he took out a box of indigestion tablets and flung it right at Toby.

Toby managed to grab it mid-air using his large palms and that move he made was very cool.

Sonia's eyes shone at the sight of that.

He could not help revealing a smug smile on his thin lips upon noticing that.

"Two tablets will be enough." Tim returned to his seat and reminded Toby.

Although Toby did not respond to Tim, he still followed his instruction and opened the box to pop two tablets out from the blister before handing it over to her. "Take this."

Sonia was currently feeling bloated, so she naturally did not reject his offer. She took the indigestion tablet and popped them into her mouth immediately. The tablets were not bitter at all; on the contrary, it was a chewable tablet that tasted like sweets.

As such, she did not even need to take the water that Toby poured for her, so he placed it back on the table after that.

After their meal, Sonia's body check report was finally out.

Tim took the document folder handed over by the nurse and opened it to retrieve the report inside. Subsequently, he checked the result.

Sonia and Toby were already seated on the couch at the moment.

Toby had his head slightly lowered and he was toying with her soft little hands. He did not even bother to cast eyes on Tim while behaving like he was unbothered by the report.

However, Sonia was very concerned about the results of her check-up, so she craned her neck to look at Tim while asking, "Dr. Lancaster, how's the result?"

Tim walked over and handed the report to her. "There aren't any major issues. Other than the low blood sugar that I mentioned before, you have some slight issues with your cervical and lumbar spine from sitting too much."

“Uhh...” She winced and took the report from her. “I can’t help that because I work in an office. At times, I would even be seated for hours if I had a large amount of things to deal with, so these issues aren’t unexpected.” This was practically the issue faced by every young man and woman working in an office.

“That is true, but you should try and improve your condition as much as possible. If you keep this up, the issues with your cervical and lumbar spine will persist. By then, you’ll need to undergo surgery to correct them.”

“Ah...” Sonia gasped in fright. “Is it really that serious?”

“Do I look like I’m joking?” Tim looked at her from the reflection of his glasses. “Or, do you think that I’m not serious with what I do?”

“No, I don’t.” She shook her head and quickly explained herself, “I didn’t mean those things at all.”

“Since you don’t have any doubts for me, then you shouldn’t have questioned my diagnosis.” Tim retracted his gaze. “I’m a doctor, you can be assured of my competence.”

“Okay.” Sonia nodded meekly like a young student.

“Okay.” Sonia nodded meekly like a young student.

At that moment, Tim was finally pleased. “These aren’t major issues at all. I can prescribe you some medications for your anemia and low blood sugar. Take them daily for your body to recover gradually. Then, I’ll give you a menu with a list of suitable food for intake. Take your meals according to the menu and in two to three months time, there should be a significant improvement in your condition. As for your spinal issues, it’s easy to resolve too. Take a short break and go for a stretch after sitting down continuously for one to two hours. Stretch your neck and do some waist exercises. Of course, the best advice would be to take up yoga or go to the gym regularly. Your muscles aren’t firm enough, so these exercises will be beneficial to you.”

At that point, there were no words coming out from her parted lips as she did not expect that she would be riddled with so many health issues. After all, she usually felt fine.

However, now that Tim pointed things out, it suddenly dawned upon her that her issues seemed to be quite serious.

“I’ll supervise her and help her mend her ways,” Toby answered on behalf of Sonia.

As he spoke, he had his eyes on her and the firm look in his eyes were very evident.

Sonia grimaced slightly and she suddenly felt a mounting pressure within her. The look in his eyes was a clear indication that he would be sure to supervise and ensure that she exercised to sort out the issues with her spine. At that point, she could clearly sense that her couch potato days were over from now on. How frustrating!

Though she felt resigned to fate, on the other hand, it was a warm gesture from him and she knew that he was doing all this for her sake. He was so determined to supervise her because he cared about her, otherwise, why would he bother?

“It’s a good thing to have him supervising you.” At that moment, Tim spoke up, “Otherwise, if you try to exercise by yourself without any supervision, then it’s quite likely that you won’t be able to keep it up for too long. You will need long-term exercise in order to correct your spinal issues. If you do it occasionally, then it won’t be effective at all. Besides, I can guess that without any supervision, you will definitely be the type to only exercise at occasions when you feel like it.”

Toby nodded non-committally and agreed with Tim’s words.

As soon as Sonia noticed the two men jumping to their conclusion about her, she found it hard to maintain the smile on her face. “I get it. Well, thanks guys.”

She emphasized on the word ‘thanks’ quite hard and everyone present could clearly tell that she said that through clenched teeth. It was unfortunate because she was clearly unhappy about that. I can’t believe that I’m such a lazy and uncommitted person in their eyes. Although I do hate exercising, laziness isn’t that bad... Well, okay. I admit I do get lazy, but that’s normal though. Of course, people get demotivated sometimes to exercise! I guess I deserve their judgment, but I don’t like this though! All of us work in an office, but why am I the only one who needs to exercise, huh?

As she thought of that, she steered the conversation toward Toby, “Dr. Lancaster, I reckon that he has issues on his cervical and lumbar spine as well.”

Meanwhile, Toby lifted his brows and turned to look at her with a slightly surprised expression. He clearly did not expect her to suddenly mention him. However, he noticed the sly look in her eyes and he realized what was going on instantly. At that moment, he smiled indulgently and shook his head.

Tim guessed the same thing too, so he shifted his glasses and replied calmly, “Don’t you worry. He definitely won’t have any issues.”

“Why?” Sonia’s eyes widened in response. How can he be so confident about that?!

Tim crossed his arms. “Why? Well, you should ask yourself this question. You should know how well he’s able to use his waist, shouldn’t you? As for his cervical spine, well, he’s such a loaded guy, so he must have a personal masseuse, right?”

At that point, Sonia was rendered speechless and she lowered her head to hide her reddened face.

Yeah, I should know how well he's able to use his waist. I'm the one who ends up begging for mercy each time. The answer was quite evident and she felt ashamed to have asked that.

Toby revealed a half-smile and stroked her hair upon noticing the embarrassed look on her face. Subsequently, he changed the topic. "Other than these, are there any other issues?"

Tim flung the brown document on his work desk. "No."

Toby affirmed and shot Tim a look.

Tim nodded knowingly. "That's all for the day. It's getting late now, so I need to go on a ward round before I get off. You guys should leave too." After he said that, he tucked both hands into the pockets of his white coat and strode out of the door.

Sonia glanced at the time on her phone and it was already past midnight. She felt quite tired and yawned as she rubbed her eyes. Her eyes were slightly red-rimmed due to her exhaustion. "Toby, let's go home."

"Sure, but give me a few minutes. I just need to go to the bathroom." Toby patted her shoulders and stood up.

She held her cup and took a sip from it. Next, she nodded her head after feeling refreshed. "Sure, go ahead."

He ruffled her hair in response and strode out of the room on his slender, long legs.

Nonetheless, he did not head in the direction of the bathroom after walking out of the room. In fact, he took the opposite way and walked past a bend in the corridor before stopping to look at the person across from him.

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The person had his back against Toby; perhaps the person heard footsteps approaching him, so he turned around gradually to face him. It was none other than Tim, who had come up with an excuse that he was going to do the ward round!

Toby and Tim were unsurprised to see each other appear at this spot and clearly, they had both agreed to meet up right there.

“Just tell me, is it found in Little Leaf’s report?” Toby looked at Tim and spoke in a low voice.

Tim leaned against one side of the wall. “Fortunately, she’s fine. She didn’t inherit Titus’ kidney failure condition.”

As soon as Toby heard Tim’s reply, the tense expression on Toby’s face finally relaxed slightly. “That’s great.”

However, Toby was not entirely at ease because he recalled that Titus’ condition had just been discovered a few months back, which meant that over the past fifty-odd years, Titus’ kidneys were perfectly fine and it had been a sudden occurrence. Perhaps it had not been a sudden occurrence and Titus’ kidneys had actually decreased in function over the recent years without him realizing. Finally, he collapsed at the point when his kidneys had deteriorated beyond working conditions.

As soon as Toby thought of that possibility, he shut his eyes for a moment. When he reopened them, there was a solemn look in them. “Little Leaf hasn’t been diagnosed to have inherited that condition right now, but would it be possible that in the next ten or twenty years, she would end up inheriting that same condition and collapse in her fifties, just like Titus?”

Titus was the head of the Gray family, so it was virtually impossible that he had never done a thorough body check over the past ten years or so. If he had, it meant that he was never diagnosed in the first place and hence, healthy for the past decades. This could only mean that in recent years—or perhaps just within this year—the inherited condition had suddenly flared up within him. Toby was worried that Sonia would face a similar situation as Titus.

As soon as Tim heard Toby’s query, he reached into the pocket of his white coat and took out a packet of cigarettes. He retrieved one from the pack and placed it into his mouth before removing another one from the pack to hand to Toby. “Would you like one?”

Toby gestured to reject Tim. “No, thanks. I’ve quit smoking. She prefers that I don’t smoke.” As he said that, he lifted his chin slightly and the smug note in his voice was quite evident.

One side of Tim’s lenses glinted under the light as he retracted the cigarette. “You don’t need to emphasize that last sentence.” Tim could clearly tell that Toby had said that to mock him.

Toby pretended not to understand what Tim was on about and he impatiently urged Tim to continue, "That's enough. Hurry up and answer my question. Will Little Leaf end up in the same condition as Titus?"

Still, Tim did not respond but took out a lighter to light his cigarette. Perhaps his lighter was faulty and he tried multiple times to no avail. At that point, his expression darkened significantly.

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With that, Tim reached out and caught it in his hands deftly before releasing his fist to take a look at it. As soon as he saw the expensive-looking lighter in his hands, his eyes lit up instantly. "If I'm not mistaken, this was custom-made for the Queen of Erendale and it is an identification token for the male member of the royal family. There are only two of these in this world. One belongs to her son while the other one was gifted by the Queen to a mysterious person. I can't believe that you're the mysterious person."

"A few years ago, I went on a business trip to Erendale and met the Queen once. She gifted this to me then." Toby explained calmly as his thin lips moved while he spoke.

The lighter was the one that Sonia had confiscated from him at the restaurant the night before.

However, she had returned it to him this morning when they were in the car together. She had mentioned that since she trusted him to not smoke again, her returning his lighter would be a gesture to emphasize her statement. She knew that even if he had the lighter in possession, he would keep his promise. That was also why he was able to retrieve the lighter right now.

At that moment, Tim lifted his thumb and there was a 'clink' sound as the lighter was uncovered; the fiery flames lit up too and subsequently, his cold expressionless face glowed and the scene was nice. He craned his head forward to move the cigarette on top of the flame. Soon enough, his cigarette was lit up too.

He then pressed down on his thumb to cover the lighter. He continued to twirl the lighter in his hands after that and did not have any intention to return it to Toby. "What would you say if you gave this to me? You've quit smoking, right? You won't need this lighter, then. After all, you won't be lighting anyone's cigarette given your identity." After he said that, he puffed his cigarette quite relaxedly.

Perhaps it was because of the luxurious lighter and he found that the puff of his cigarette seemed much nicer than usual.

Toby glanced at Tim indifferently with an unperturbed expression, but Toby's brows were even more tightly knitted. "I don't mind giving it to you, but I have a condition and I want a satisfactory answer from you."

"It's a deal!" Tim instantly stopped his act of flinging the lighter into the air and caught it with his hand. Finally, he started on answering Toby's question, "Don't worry. I reckon that it will not happen."

"What do you mean?" Toby narrowed his eyes.

Tim puffed out once more and held the cigarette in between his fingers. He gently tapped his index finger and some ash to the ground before continuing, "Well, do you think that you're the one who has come up with a question that a professional like me would overlook? After ending the call with you last night, I considered the point that Sonia's test result might not be conclusive of any issue at all, so I wondered whether there was a chance that she would have a flare-up ten years down the line. As such, I investigated the Gray family medical history for those with a similar condition."

"Their medical history?" There was a knowing glint in Toby's eyes at that moment.

Tim nodded slightly. "That's right. Although First World Hospital is a public hospital, part of the shares are held privately in the hands of my family. The hospital was established eighty years ago—pre-war—and the founding father was my ancestor. Back then, First World Hospital wasn't known as this name and it was known as Lancaster Hospital. It was a fully privately-owned hospital and it was the first private hospital in Seafield. The Gray Family originated from Seafield and they are considered one of the oldest families here. Eighty years ago, their ancestor was a landowner, so he could afford to seek treatment at a private hospital. As such, I purposely went to the database to look up all of the medical records of the Gray Family at this hospital dated all the way back. Coincidentally, the person who sought treatment at the hospital back then was the previous person in the family to have the same kidney failure condition; that man was Titus' great-grandfather."

"Oh?" Toby pursed his thin lips. "What happened after that?"

"Titus' great-grandfather was younger than Titus was when his condition was first discovered. Back then, Titus' great-grandfather was only in his twenties and from the records, he clearly knew that his kidney failure condition was inherited from the older generations. The reason for that was because the same condition would appear in a generation after some time went by. The person who treated him in the past was my great-great grandfather. My great-great grandfather had studied medicine abroad and back then, he had learned of the concept of hereditary medical conditions. However, he had never seen an actual case with his own eyes. Titus' great-grandfather was the first

case my great-great grandfather's treated, so he was very interested in the patient and asked the patient a lot of questions, which were all recorded in a notebook here."

"How did you know that your great-great grandfather interviewed him and recorded them in a notebook?" Toby frowned and looked at Tim.

"It's on the records." Tim puffed on his cigarette slowly. "It was the first time ever that my great-great grandfather had encountered a patient with a hereditary medical condition, so be it for him or for the medical world in the country, this was something worth investigating. That's why he purposely recorded this detail in the medical records of Titus' great-grandfather."

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Toby nodded slightly to imply the resolved suspicions in his head.

Tim exhaled a puff of smoke. "So, I went to the Lancasters' Old Residence after I got off from work last night and I discovered a notebook left by my great-great-grandfather. Titus' great-grandfather had written the historical details of their family's health. The men in the Gray Family have kidney failure, but it won't affect the women even if they get married and have children with others."

A flicker shone in Toby's eyes when he heard that. There were finally some nuances on his emotionless face. "Is that true?"

"It's written in the notebook, so it should be true." Tim looked at him. "Genomically speaking, male and female genes are different. There are many genetic diseases in this world with some only passed down through either the men or women, but this possibility is rare."

Toby smiled. "In other words, neither Little Leaf nor our children will inherit the disease."

"That's right." Tim nodded approvingly. "That will be the case if everything that's written by Titus' great-grandfather is true. The women in the Gray Family won't be affected by the disease, which means their genes are healthy. That's why it won't be passed down to their children when they're married to outsiders. Thus, you should put your worries to rest. If you're still concerned about it, you can bring her over for a yearly check-up just to be sure."

"Got it." Toby nodded because he was planning to do so to avoid the worst case scenario even if Tim hadn't advised. Nevertheless, it was really excellent news for Toby as he felt relieved upon hearing the news.

Tim then gave him some advice pertaining to Sonia's diet before separating ways with him. As for the lighter, it was given to Tim. Although it was a precious item to Toby, that was it. Nothing more. Since he had decided to give it, he gave it away with pleasure.

Meanwhile, Sonia had already been waiting for him for about ten minutes at his office, but there was no sign of him returning. She murmured with pouty lips, "This guy. Didn't he say that he'll return in just a few minutes? Why isn't he back yet? Has he gone elsewhere?"

She checked on the time through her phone and it rang at the very next second. It was an unknown caller.

Gazing at the number, she assumed that it was either a salesperson or a scammer. So, she did not pick it up as she had no intention to do so.

However, just a few moments later, she received a call from the exact same number again. It kept ringing as though it was urging her to pick it up. Sonia's brows creased tightly and before she could decline the call, the caller sent her a message while the phone was still ringing like he had predicted what she was going to do.

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Ding!

A notification popped into the screen upon receiving a text, so she could read the content without clicking on it. Despite the short message, the context blew her mind and her expression fall at the drop of a hat.

It read, 'Miss Reed, I'm Connor. Are you really not going to accept the call?'

Gripping onto the phone tightly, she clenched her teeth while her heart was pounding rapidly. It is him!

Looking at the ringing phone and thinking of the message, she knew that she had to accept the call. After taking a deep breath, she swiped across the screen with her finger, which slightly trembled due to the anxiety.

"Hello?" She raised the gadget next to her ear.

There came Connor's voice from the other side of the line. It was surprising to hear him sounded like a brisk young man, not like an old chap in his fifties.

"Good evening, Miss Reed," he greeted with chuckles.

Her gaze fell onto the ground and she formed a fist with her hand in order to suppress the surging uneasiness. She tried to make herself sound calm and natural by saying, "It's not a good evening. It's already late. What's the occasion, Mr. Salzburg? If I read the time correctly, it's already past twelve at midnight. Don't you think that it's unbecoming of you to call someone at this hour, Mr. Salzburg?"

Hearing her reprimand, he was not angry in the slightest. The smile on his face was beaming widely. "My apologies, Miss Reed. It is thoughtless of me, but I can't help it. I told you that you have two days to consider it when we first met. Time is out, so I decided to give you a call. I didn't realize that it's already late at night."

Sonia's expression stiffened as she had not imagined him to ring her at this hour because of the deal. Considering that the time had reached 12.00AM, it was true that it had been two days. Should she praise him for his punctuality?

She remained quiet, but the smile on Connor's became wider. "So, Miss Reed, it's been two days and what do you think?"

How dare he ask me that?! Her countenance slightly scrunched up with her eyes reddened in rage.

"Mr. Salzburg, before I answer that question, don't you think that you should give me an explanation first? About you snatching the components produced by my business partner?"

Instead of feeling guilty in the face of her interrogation, Connor chuckled. "As you've said, it is true. I asked someone to snatch it."

"I knew it!" The fury was visible on her visage as she sprang to her feet. Holding the phone tightly, she growled without a care of her image. "Connor Salzburg, I know why you're doing this. You're trying to threaten me to give in and let go of Anya. But I'm telling you—I will never do as you wish! Dream it on!"

Obviously, he did not foresee her to blurt such words out as the smile on his face went stiff before simmering. Even the gentleness in his voice dissipated, replaced by a crumb of menace. "Are you really going to behave like this, Miss Reed? You should know what kind of consequences Paradigm Co. will face without the components. Are you trying to imply that you have the money to fill the pit?"

She snorted coldly. "That's none of your concern."

Silence dawned upon him because he was aware that those were not impulsive words; Sonia appeared confident in regards to dealing with the predicament. Has she managed to buy the components or is she going to use money to solve the problem?

The latter seemed highly possible since it was not easy to search for such components. During the beginning of the production, the workers would crave the respective logos of each company on the components. Thus, it would take her a long time to dispose of the logos, rendering it redundant to purchase new ones.

Since it was impossible to procure the components, he reckoned Sonia was going to solve it with money. He could make a vague guess of how she was going to get enough money for it.

“Miss Reed, you’ve sought help from Toby, right?” A glint flashed across his eyes as he tested the waters.

If that was really the case, the big sum of money could prove how important she was to Toby, which was beyond Connor’s expectation and all the more reason for him to use her for his advantage.

Still, her answer had ruined his plans again.

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Sonia snorted coldly. “I can solve this problem on my own. I don’t need his help.”

“What?” Connor had been sitting on the couch with crossed legs, but he jumped to his feet abruptly when he heard that. “You didn’t seek help from Toby?”

“So what if I didn’t receive any help from him? What’s with the surprised reaction, Mr. Salzburg? Are you perhaps hoping that he will help me?” She rolled her eyes in contemplation.

He had grabbed the dragon ferrule of the walking stick so tightly that veins were protruding on the back of his hand. “That’s not it. I’m just surprised that you don’t need Toby’s help to handle the situation. It seems like I’ve underestimated you, Miss Reed. You’re more capable than I thought.”

Sonia bit her lips. “I’m flattered, Mr. Salzburg.”

Listening to her sarcastic remarks, Connor displayed a fearsome expression on his dimmed face. Now, he was certain that she had not sought help from Toby at all. So, the plan of using her to go against Toby had to be put on hold.

“Miss Reed.” He shut his eyes and sat on the couch while attempting to smother the fury boiling in him. “I’ve given you two days to think about it, but I think that there’s no need for us to meet up today anymore.”

“There’s no need to do so from the first start.” Sonia retaliated straightforwardly.

Connor’s face contorted in sinister grim. “That sharp tongue of yours. I wonder if you have the capability to compensate for your ill behavior, Miss Reed.”

Her eyes wavered at that. “What do you mean by that, Mr. Salzburg? Are you going to hurt me if you don’t achieve your goals?”

“Who knows? That’s it, Miss Reed. I’ve called you just to know your decision and I know now. It is not necessary for this conversation to continue any further.” He gave an implicit answer.

“Hold on!” She suddenly stopped him.

Connor was a little surprised. “Is there anything else, Miss Reed?”

“Mr. Salzburg, have you forgotten something?” Ire began to burn in her eyes.

His brows knitted tightly. “What?”

“The components. Shouldn’t you return them to me? I’ve paid for them and yet, you snatched all of them without any compensation. That’s stealing! You could return me the money at the very least. How could you steal someone else’s things without paying? That’s ridiculous!” she exclaimed with clenched fists.

He was stunned as he had not expected to hear such words and he could not believe his ears. “What? Are you asking me to either return the components or pay back the money?”

He was stunned as he had not expected to hear such words and he could not believe his ears. “What? Are you asking me to either return the components or pay back the money?”

“What else then?” Sonia pursed her lips. “As I’ve said earlier, it is considered as stealing if you take my components without paying any money. So, choose either one.”

Connor laughed speechless. “You’ve gotta be kidding me. Who gives you the guts to demand such a request from me? I, Connor Slazburg, have stayed in Westsashire for so many years and I’ve done similar things many times, but never once did anyone ask me for money. You’re the first, Miss Reed.”

"It's my honor." Sonia's expression turned into a sarcastic one. "But it seems that stealing is something you're proud of, Mr. Salzburg. If so, I have no comments in regards to your character."

It was almost a blunt statement that implied Connor had an improper behavior of a bandit. Despite the long years being held high in repute, no one had ever said such bold words to him.

He was aware that many disapproved of him and talked badly behind him, yet no one had ever had the audacity to throw criticism to his face. Well, well. Look at her manners.

"Miss Reed, you're the bravest person I've ever seen so far. How dare you speak to me that way! I don't care if you have Toby on your side, but I will never forget about today. You better watch out." He let out an ominous smile before hanging up the phone.

Sonia placed the phone down and frowned in dismay instead of feeling triumph after chewing him out. It was rash of her to do that.

Her initial plan was to give it a shot to salvage the components or to get compensation at the very least.

Still, she had underestimated Connor's shamelessness as stealing had become a habit of his. To him, it did not matter if he was at fault for stealing things, but it was wrong for others to retrieve them or ask for money from him.

He deemed it as their honor to have their belongings stolen by him; so, they should not ask him to return the items, let alone a compensation. Otherwise, it would become the victim's fault.

So, she was disgusted yet infuriated and thus the reprimands under the impulsion.

It did feel refreshing when she hinted it at Connor at that moment, but she realized that it was a rash move afterward. Due to the gap in terms of status and capability between them, the offense had undeniably formed a bad blood in between.

Besides, he was a petty and vengeful bad man. It was likely that he would come up with something to get back at Sonia in future.

Still, she did not regret her actions one bit. Instead of an implicit mockery, she used the bluntest possible words to build the grudge in him.

As an afterthought, she raked her fingers through her hair in frustration as her bad temper did her no good. If she continued acting in this manner, she would definitely have more to lose.

All and still, what was done had been done, so it was useless to think about it. It was best for her to think of how to confront Connor's revenge in the future.

"Little Leaf." Toby's voice could be heard from the door.

Sonia's eyes lit up. She quickly regained her composure before raising her head to him with a smile. "You're back. What took you so long?"

"I received a call from Tom midway," he explained while entering the office.

"Oh," she responded before falling into silence.

He looked at her gorgeous face and his gaze landed on her hair in the end. With a frown, he asked, "Your hair is a mess."

"Huh?" She reached out to touch her hair, which was indeed in a mess like a bird nest. She recalled the moment she messed her hair up due to frustration. It must be because of that.

While Sonia was busy primping her hair, her downcast eyes hid the glint in her eyes. She then reciprocated with a smile. "It's probably because I kept leaning against the armrest. I lied down on the sofa when you were out."

Toby nodded without a shadow of suspicion before taking over her bag from her shoulder. "Alright. Time to go home."

"Hmm." She stared at him with a smile and nodded. "Let's go home."

She took the initiative to hold his hand, at which he was stunned momentarily before squeezing her hand tighter, as though he was afraid that he was going to lose her.

Joy filled her instantly because of that. "Oh, right. You should have a full medical check-up once you're free."

"Me?" His footsteps stopped before regaining its pace as he led her toward the elevator.

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Sonia nodded without hesitation. "Yeah, you've asked me to do a full medical check-up in concern of my health. It's just the same for you because I'm worried about your health as well. I shouldn't be the only one doing it, right? That will be so unfair."

She shot Toby a glance in resentment as the medical check-up had never been easy, especially the gastroscopy, which was pure torture in her opinion.

Gazing at her protesting look, he fell into silence because he knew that she would think so if she was to do it alone. Besides, it would be suspicious to her and hence, he compromised.

He cleared his throat before saying, "Okay. I'll do it too."

Sonia broke into a smile when she heard that. "That's great! I'll accompany you here a few days later."

Staring at her crescent-like eyes, he shook his head in helplessness. "Alright."

It was already 2.00AM when they arrived at Bayside Residence. Sonia had lost the fight against drowsiness and fell asleep along the way home.

Still, Toby could not bring himself to wake her up when they reached her place. So, he carried her in bridal style to the elevator to bring her back to her apartment.

Then, he helped to remove her make-up and washed her face, as well as brushing her teeth, treating her like a queen. The time struck three once he had finished all of those. Even if he had a strong and healthy physique, he felt tired.

When he joined her in bed, he looked down at the woman who cuddled into his embrace instinctively as she sensed something warm. Letting out a silent chuckle, he whispered 'goodnight' before hugging her and closing his eyes.

It was 6.00AM when Toby's ringing phone woke him up. He opened his eyes to see the dark sky. One could still see the moon in the gray sky outside the half-covered window.

He then averted his gaze and grabbed his phone to pick up the call. Instead of placing the phone next to his ear, he turned to stare at the sleeping woman in his arms.

Seeing that Sonia was still fast asleep, he deemed it alright to speak over the phone, but lowered his voice nevertheless. "What's the matter?"

"President Fuller, we managed to contact the codger and catch him," reported Tom solemnly.

Toby's eyes narrowed at the news. "Got it. I'll be on my way there. Just keep an eye on him."

"Okay," responded Tom.

Toby put down the phone as the call had ended. The so-called codger was the boss of the factory, Sonia's business partner.

After Tom caught the wind of Connor's assistant dropping in at Dwells and Rentoor, Toby asked him to look into the fellow's purpose of going there in order to find out if they were scheming something against Sonia.

After all, both the companies had worked with her before.

After all, both the companies had worked with her before.

Tom went to Rentoor yesterday, but that company was acquitted by Ryan and they were not collaborating with Sonia at the moment. Ryan mentioned that an assistant named 'Mr. Little' did look for him to inquire about him and Paradigm Co.. The assistant left after being told that it had been two months since Rentoor worked with Sonia.

Then, Tom went to Dwells, only to discover that the boss had run away two days ago, causing the company to be sold to others in urgency.

Therefore, he was one step too late and failed to find out the reason for Connor's subordinate's visit there. Fortunately, the former boss of Dwells was still nearby and was caught by Tom's underlings.

Now, all Toby had to do was to interrogate the codger about the deal he had with Connor, which made him go lengths by escaping. If he was reluctant to level with him, Toby would pluck his teeth out by force one by one!

With hindsight, a cold glint flashed through his eyes for a fleeting second as they were smitten with warmth the moment he looked at Sonia. Stretching out his arm, he caressed her face with the back of his hand.

Due to the subtle tickle, she shrank her head and frowned before muttering, "Stop it."

Toby chuckled lightly and withdrew his hand. Hearing the laughter, she thought she was dreaming until she opened her eyes into a narrow slit, only to see the man sitting on the bed. It was not until then did she realize that he was really chuckling and that it was actually not a dream.

"Are you... already waking up?" She yawned while asking.

He hummed. "Tom called just now. There's something I gotta deal with."

"But the sky isn't even bright yet." Sonia raised her head and looked out of the French window to see the moon that was hanging high up in the sky.

He stroked her cheeks affectionately. "I know, but it's urgent. I gotta go now."

"I see." She blinked her eyes. "Okay, go ahead."

Toby nodded lightly. "You should sleep more. I think you're not fully awake yet. It's still six something, so you should lie in. I'll have someone bringing breakfast over for you. Remember to take it."

"Hmm." Sonia yawned again.

Looking at the tears glittering at the corner of her eyes, he let out a gentle smile before kissing her forehead. "Sleep tight. I'll go now."

He lifted the blanket and got out of the bed, after which he stood next to it without his flip-flops to cover her with the blanket so that she would not catch a cold.

She was still sleepy at that moment. Not only her eyelids felt heavy, her voice was all mushy, which could easily melt one's heart. "Alright. Have a safe trip. Drive safely."

"Okay." He lowered his head, giving her another light kiss on the lips before rising to his feet. He stared at her for a while to make sure she was fast asleep before sneaking out of the room and leaving the place so early in the morning.

Two hours had passed when Sonia was finally awake. She propped up on bed and zoned out, kneading her forehead while staring blankly. Did I wake up once just now and talk to Toby?

She looked at where Toby had slept. She fumbled her hand across the fabric to feel the cold sensation, which indicated the man had gone for a while now. As an afterthought, she felt that her hunch was right—she did wake up and bid him goodbye before he left.

Thinking that it was her first time bidding him goodbye so early in the morning, she smiled. Previously, she was oblivious of his early departure so many times that it became a regret for her. Still, her wish had been granted and there was nothing to regret about anymore.

Ruffling her hair, she got out of the bed and left the room to take the breakfast that was left at the entrance. She took some rest after the meal before changing clothes and putting make-up on. Then, she drove herself to Paradigm Co. by car.

Daphne had been waiting for her at the door that led to the office. Noticing her arrival, Daphne wore a smile. "Good morning, President."

"Morning." Sonia returned the smile and her footsteps came to a halt as her gaze landed onto her assistant's belly. "When's the next visit?"

Daphne looked down with a faint smile. "This weekend."

Sonia hummed in reply. "That's good. You should recover soon."

"You're right." Daphne opened the door for her and she entered the office with Daphne trailing behind her.

"Oh, right. President Reed, you've mentioned that you needed to go for a check-up in the hospital yesterday. Are you alright?" Daphne questioned in concern.

Feeling the warmth crept into her heart, Sonia pulled the chair and took a seat. "Don't worry. I'm fine. It's just a normal check-up."

"That's a relief, then." Daphne nodded and handed her the schedule for today without further questions.

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Sonia had just taken the folder and was about to review it when someone knocked the door. "Come in," she replied while flicking through the schedule.

"President Reed." When the door was opened, an assistant stood at the door frame with one hand holding a blue file and the other hand rested on the doorknob as he announced, "President Lane has arrived to meet with you."

"Charles is here?" Sonia was taken aback.

What brings him here at this time?

"President Reed." Standing in front of her desk, Daphne started to get nervous.

She glanced at Daphne and knew why Daphne was anxious, after which she gestured at Daphne to calm down. "Don't worry or stress about it, Miss Daphne. I know what you're going to say, so rest in my private lounge first."

At that, Sonia indicated at the private lounge in the front. Then, Daphne wrung her hands as she gave a quick smile and sprinted to the said location. As she watched Daphne leaving, Sonia let out a soft sigh because Daphne and Charles had been the ideal working partners in the past. Yet, it was now a dream to watch them interact normally.

Sonia massaged her temples before turning to look at the assistant standing at the door. "Where is Charles right now?"

“President Lane is currently downstairs. He intended to come up, but President Dafoe stopped him as he passed by the area. They’re currently having a conversation,” the assistant replied.

Sonia frowned.

Asher stopped Charles? What is he trying to achieve by stopping Charles?

Her eyes dimmed momentarily, but she quickly regained her composure as she smiled at the assistant. “Okay, I understand. In that case, invite Charles to come up.”

“Understood,” the assistant answered before closing the door.

Soon after, the door reopened to reveal Charles stepping in casually. He was wearing a maroon shirt underneath his white casual suit, but he didn’t complement it with a tie. As two of the buttons of his outer attire were undone, it exposed his fair chest. Matching the top half of his attire was a pair of white ankle pants that fit his beautiful, slender ankles. To top things off, he even wore pointed leather shoes in the color of white.

As a result, it made him look both showy and trashy.

Even though Sonia was accustomed to his fashion sense, Sonia still found it repulsive.

“Why are you dressed like this? Aren’t you cold?” She rubbed her temples again as she could already feel the chill from his exposed chest and ankles.

However, Charles sensually approached her with his chin slightly raised. “No, of course not. I’m not feeling anything. Don’t you think that my outfit today is perfect?”

However, Charles sensually approached her with his chin slightly raised. “No, of course not. I’m not feeling anything. Don’t you think that my outfit today is perfect?”

His footsteps came to a rest in front of her desk. He then spun on his heels and completed his antics with Michael Jackson’s classic movement.

Sonia restrained her smile. “Absolutely not. I just think you’re feeling cold right now. The corners of your mouth and your ankle are turning purple.”

The corner of his mouth twitched. “Please stop being so specific. The cold is meaningless when being cool is more important.”

“Dude, I’m worried you’re going to get sick.” A helpless Sonia rubbed her temples for the third time.

Charles gave a dismissive wave of his hand to indicate his disagreement. “I am, after all, the company president. How is it possible that I would get sick?”

He then lifted his head arrogantly as though nothing could ever drag him down.

His actions caused her to laugh and she remarked, "President? Sadly, your outfit does not match the image. You look more like a playboy. I've never seen a president dressed as trashy as you."

His fashion style had already been trashy during the summer, what more with his floral shirts and showy pants. She had never expected him to maintain fashion style even during the winter, but she would nonetheless become alarmed if he suddenly changed his entire image.

"Of course, you've never seen anything like it. Those presidents you've met are mostly older men. How can they possibly compare with me?" Charles mocked as he drew a chair in front of her and sat.

She rolled her eyes in return. "They are not all old. Tob—"

Sonia paused in the middle of her sentence as if she had realized something. No, I cannot mention Toby in his presence. Even if he's claimed he's given up on me and offered us his blessing, I shouldn't bring up Toby so casually in front of him. It'll hurt him.

"Sorry, Charles. I—"

"It's all right." Charles waved his hand again, his smile still on his face. "You don't have to be that way. I know you want to talk about Toby, so just be yourself and say it. I'm not bothered at all. He's your boyfriend, and you may speak openly about him. I shouldn't restrict you from talking about him for some reason, should I? That would be far too selfish of me."

Charles smiled widely at her. He was slightly upset when she brought up Toby, but he soon overcame it. He had already said that it would be selfish of him to stop Sonia from talking about her boyfriend just because he still loved her. Being selfish was the last thing on his mind. Moreover, he had made up his mind from the start to make the one whom he loved happy.

If Toby was the one who could offer Sonia happiness, then Charles would gladly give her up. So, if she was upset because it made him sad that her boyfriend's name was being mentioned, wouldn't that break the promise he made when he decided to let her go?

Sonia moved her lips, but she said nothing in response to his nonchalant expression. Apart from his parents, she was the only one who understood her childhood companion after knowing him for almost twenty years.

Charles might look cheery at the time, but it was all an act; he was clearly upset beneath that smiling facade.

“Charles...” She looked at the man with guilt.

He sighed, knowing she blamed herself for owing him too much again. “Sonia, let’s not bring it up again. Let’s get back to the main point. The components are due today. It will be a major problem if it is not resolved by today. Do you have any ideas on how to address it?”

She was focused again when it related to business. She nodded, dismissing her conflicting feelings. “Yeah. I will follow your earlier recommendations.”

“You’re going to mortgage the company building?” His eyes widened in shock.

Sonia shook her head. “No, nope, I’m not mortgaging this building.”

“Not this building?” When he heard the response, he felt relieved. Charles almost jumped up in surprise, but he sat up and patted his chest in relief. “That’s a big relief. Despite my suggestion, I didn’t want it to be Paradigm Co., which your father built twenty years ago. Although the value of this old building cannot be compared to that of new office towers, the cost of its location in the city center is unquantifiable. Using it as a mortgage for a single opportunity to get out of business trouble is not worth the risk. Furthermore, the bank may be unwilling to release the building’s deed to you in the future.”

Due to its strategic location, its value will never depreciate. Because of this, the bank will try everything in its power to get its hands on it.

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Sonia rubbed her forehead as she closed her eyes. “You have thought about it, and so have I. I’m very concerned about this, so I’m not planning to mortgage this building.”

“That’s good.” Charles nodded, but his concerns remained. “What are you going to mortgage with if it’s not Paradigm Co.’s building?”

As Sonia opened her eyes, she uttered, “The Reed Residence.”

He was slightly taken aback. “Are you planning to give—”

“Yeah.” She nodded. “That’s right.”

“But it’s the house your mother left behind. Are you... sure about it?” Charles looked at her.

Sonia tucked her hair behind her ears. "To be honest, I didn't want to do it at first, but after giving it some thought, I don't think there's anything to be sad about parting with. It's the house my mother left behind. I spent my childhood there, and my memories are also tarnished by rats."

Charles noticed that she had narrowed her eyes in disdain and quickly knew what she meant. As he sighed, his heart ached. "Jessica and Sandra."

"Yeah." She gripped the pen tighter. "You are correct. It's them. That house is supposed to be a cozy home for me, my mother, and my father. Ultimately, the space was filled with their vile atmosphere, which had ruined it. Because of this, I moved out to the Bayside Residence. I no longer feel anything that makes me think of my mother. I detest the Reed Residence now that it is solely filled with memories of their worst kind."

"You have a valid point." He sipped the water in front of him. "If I were you, I would have felt the same way. Because the house is an eyesore, I would have put it up for sale a long time ago. I'm impressed that you've kept the house for years."

Sonia's lips twitched. "It's because that's the house my mother bought before she passed away. And this is where she lived and where we previously stayed. Nothing else. Now that I think about it, I think my opinion was wrong because Mom might not want to keep it. After all, it is already tainted."

"There's no doubt about it." He nodded and looked at her. "You're her daughter, and she loved you so much that she gave you the house before she left. I'm sure she wasn't expecting Jessica and Sandra to show up after that. In that same house, they bullied you and poisoned your father! So, what makes her want to keep it? Sonia, I agree with your decision. It's not the same place it used to be. That way, you can also forget about the unpleasant memories."

"Yeah," she responded gently.

"Yeah," she responded gently.

"Oh, have you had the house appraised?" Charles was keen to know.

Sonia sipped her coffee before responding, "Yes, I've contacted an appraiser a couple of days ago. Although it is an old building, its location, like this one, is very strategic. When she purchased this house, my mother used Grandpa's connections to invite the most famous master to view the property. There should not be a significant price difference compared to new homes. It should be worth at least 1 billion." She raised a finger.

He let out a chuckle. "Great. That will be more than necessary to solve the problem. Have you set up an appointment with the bank?"

"Yeah, I have. I will submit a loan application this afternoon." She placed her cup down.

"I'll accompany you. Instead of just one person going there, it would be better for two people to go." Charles checked his watch.

Sonia shrugged her shoulders. "I'm fine with it, but I heard from your mother that Lane Corporation is going through a transition. Shouldn't you be busy then? Do you have the time?"

"It is nearly completed. I could even celebrate the new year." He was beaming with a broad grin.

"Okay. Let's go together." There was no reason for Sonia to refuse. Suddenly, she thought of something as she looked at him. "Charles, my assistant, informed me that Asher has stopped you downstairs. What exactly is going on? Why did he stop you?"

When Charles heard that, he frowned and slammed his cup onto the table with a grumble. "I'm not sure what's wrong with the old git. As soon as he saw me, he pulled me into his office and told me something strange. I didn't understand him at first, but I soon realized he was trying to create tension between us."

"Creating tension between us?" Her expression changed from surprise to one of gloom in an instant.

He concurred. "Yeah, but I just walked away and ignored him."

She didn't say anything, and her frown deepened because she couldn't understand why Asher was acting this way. Charles was not employed by Paradigm Co.; he was merely in the higher management with that title and played no role in management or production. Therefore, his existence posed no threat to Asher.

But why is Asher attempting to sever our relationships? What is he planning?

"Is there something on your mind, Sonia?" Charles waved his hand in her direction.

Sonia regained her composure and smiled as she shook her head. "Nothing. I'm just curious as to why he's doing it."

He sulked. "Don't fret. This old git cannot endure our presence, likewise for us. No matter what he does, we will ultimately fight each other. Since we are rivals, there is no point in considering what he is doing. Simply confront him when the time is right."

She grinned. "You are right. Although your language is somewhat harsh, you make a good point. When the circumstances are set, there is no need to overthink the process. Instead, we should concentrate on the results. You are more positive than I am. I'd get irritated from overthinking."

“See? I am brilliant.” Charles arched an eyebrow at her in amusement.

Sonia smiled and lowered her head, feeling more at ease. It looked like their relationship was back to how it was before. Today was the Charles that she remembered, so it would be for the best if everything remained this way.

On the other side, Toby came out of a dark room with an aloof face and Tom had the same expression.

“President Fuller, here’s a handkerchief.” Tom handed a wet handkerchief, whose footsteps came to a halt before he turned to take it. After wiping his hands, Toby continued walking.

At the same time, Tom was wiping his hands and said in disgust, “That old git is so stubborn. He didn’t say anything until we had to use the pliers. We overestimated him. But, President Fuller, you could have let us pull out his teeth. Why did you do it on your own?”

Toby, who was walking in front and threw the filthy handkerchief and stomped on it, reacted bitterly, “When it comes to my lover, I’ll do it myself.”

Tom was speechless when he heard the word lover because he felt a knot in his throat and wanted to smack himself in the face.

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I should have known better; President Fuller behaves oddly whenever Miss Reed is involved. So, why do I seem to forget this and have to ask him about it? Now, I have to bear all of these sappy moments.

At this very moment, Tom was feeling queasy as a direct result of his boss excessive display of regard for love. It was as though he needed to ingrain it in his memory to keep from asking questions that he should not be asking in the future. If not, he would suffer emotional harm nonetheless.

I am still a single man. What if I eventually lost interest in the process of looking for a girlfriend for myself? When that day finally arrived, I would be miserable.

While pondering this, he rubbed his cheeks while simultaneously preventing a series of profanities from exiting his mouth. To preserve his professional demeanor, he smiled and asked, “President Fuller, what should we do with that old git now?”

When Toby opened the door, he was met with the sight of a large parking lot. Keeping his eyes on a nearby car, he walked toward it and said, "Keep him in for now. We will have more use for him in the future."

"Noted," Tom said calmly.

Toby hopped in as Tom walked to the driver's side to take over. "Are we going to Paradigm Co. to see Miss Reed, President Fuller?"

"No." Toby narrowed his menacing eyes. "To Connor's hotel."

Tom's hand froze as he heard that, just as he was about to start the engine. He turned his head in astonishment. "To Connor's hotel? Are you going to meet him, President Fuller?"

Toby's rage was overlooked due to his downcast gaze. "Isn't it appropriate for me to pay my guest a visit after he's been here for so long? Furthermore, he has no right to exploit Sonia after his actions."

Even though he nodded his head in agreement, Tom was annoyed. "It is inappropriate of him to steal components from the Paradigm Co. to blackmail Miss Reed into releasing Anya. Even smaller companies do not employ such petty practices. If he weren't the head of the Salzburg Family, he could easily be mistaken for a lowly underling. How could he use such horrible measures to threaten a woman? He disgusts me."

Indeed, it was repulsive. Even though business people often resort to deceit and conspiracies, it is highly uncommon for someone to sink to the lowest of the low to take advantage of some smaller companies. Despite their superior resources and might, they reject the idea of resorting to this dishonorable solution. On the other hand, Connor does not appear to be the least bit embarrassed by his actions.

Hearing his assistant's critics, Toby slightly raised his gaze. "It's not surprising for him to do that. The fact that he shares a past with my mother is enough to tell that he is a complete jerk."

Hearing his assistant's critics, Toby slightly raised his gaze. "It's not surprising for him to do that. The fact that he shares a past with my mother is enough to tell that he is a complete jerk."

Tom smiled sheepishly. "You're right, President Fuller. As I've expected, you're the best at criticizing a scumbag. I have more to learn from you."

Toby ignored his flattering words while looking down. "Regarding Little Leaf's components, have you found out where Connor moved them to?"

Tom kept his eyes on the road and shook his head. “Nope. Although I haven’t looked into it thoroughly, I believe it is still in Seafield. The old git from the underground reports that Miss Reed cooperated with him to purchase twenty tons of components. With such a significant quantity, it would be impossible to transport it out of the city in three days owing to the sheer number of procedures required. After discovering that Connor had taken Miss Reed’s company components, I made a personnel inquiry with the various checkpoints. They informed me that no such components were being transferred out of the city, indicating that the parts are still within the city.”

Toby’s brows relaxed as he heard this. “That’s good to hear.”

“Don’t worry, President Fuller.” Tom turned the steering wheel. “Since we know what Connor did to Miss Reed, we will try to loosen his tongue until he reveals the location of the components.”

Toby glared at him. “Are you telling me what to do?”

How could he sit idly by while Sonia was bullied and her belongings were stolen when she was his girlfriend? It was logical for him to act to retrieve what she had lost.

Tom grinned as he adjusted his glasses. “I just wanted to let you know, President Fuller, that I’m worried you will be upset. The bullying of Miss Reed has put you in a bad mood, and I only mean to cheer you up a little. It’s been three days and she still hasn’t informed you about it. We wouldn’t have discovered Connor stole the components from her company if we hadn’t tracked his assistant to the two companies she cooperated with. I’m curious about what she’s thinking. I thought you two had reconciled. Why hasn’t she asked you for help? Is it because she can solve the problem on her own?”

Toby’s thin lips pursed as he maintained his silence, making it impossible to decipher his thoughts. Despite this, it was not difficult to ascertain that he was in a foul mood due to the gloomy air around him. Yes, he is in a bad mood.

As Tom had said, they wouldn’t know what was happening at Paradigm Co. if they didn’t find out where Connor’s assistant was going that day.

When Toby spoke with Sonia over the phone three days earlier, he became concerned when he observed a change in her tone and questioned her about it. However, she assured him nothing had transpired and that it was only a misunderstanding with Asher.

Now, he knew it wasn’t Asher’s fault; Connor had stolen the components, which had set off her bad mood. She used Asher as an excuse to keep him in the dark about what was happening.

Toby took her word for it because nothing significant was happening. It was only now that he realized the depth of the panic and anguish she’d been hiding behind her grin.

Without a doubt, Paradigm Co. would suffer a devastating loss if she could not retrieve the components.

Having realized this, he rubbed his forehead while experiencing conflicting emotions of sadness and rage. He couldn't believe Sonia had kept it a secret from him, and he was furious about it. Toby was well aware the entire time that she wanted to handle some issues on her own without depending on him to help her. He supported her decision by limiting his interference in her business and personal concerns. This would prevent her from becoming angered and turned off by him.

In many conversations with Sonia, he emphasized that she should not feel bad about asking for help from him, as though doing so would indicate an unbalanced dynamic between them.

After all, Toby was her man and naturally wanted to assist her. Moreover, she was still fragile and needed his support behind the scenes.

He knew, though, that she would never listen because of her stubbornness, which came from her strong desire to prove that she was capable and could do well without his help.

As it turned out, she was still too naive to see through a lot of things. That was the reason why things were not going according to plans. But when he saw her dazzling eyes light up with confidence as she said she could do it, his heart softened, and he let her do everything she wanted.

The facts made it clear to him that his actions were wrong because Connor had exploited the situation to his advantage.

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While driving, Tom reflected on the incident and said, "President Fuller, you said it's been three days since the incident. Has Miss Reed come up with a solution?"

When he heard Tom's words, Toby frowned.

Do I have a solution? Judging from my understanding of Sonia, she might have already found a solution. After all, I haven't seen any signs of worry or anxiety in the last three days and it's definitely not because of how well she acted. It is highly likely that she already has a solution, which explains why she is able to regularly continue our conversation. If she did not, she would definitely have been distracted and I'd have noticed it, sooner or later. So, she definitely has a plan, but will this solution resolve all her problems?"

Tom was not surprised when Toby remained silent; instead, he turned the steering wheel and continued, "I guess Miss Reed didn't come up with any solution because according to what we know about Paradigm Co., those components are crucial for them. We'll be in a serious problem if we can't recover them. The consequences are devastating and there are only two viable options right now. The first option is to get the components back whereas the second is to use the money to compensate for the missing components. However, Miss Reed may not be able to obtain that much money, or is she prepared to reimburse it?"

After speaking, Tom glanced in the rearview mirror to check on Toby seated in the backseat. I know that President Fuller had already given his supplementary credit card to Miss Reed and told her that she could use it at any time she wanted. As a result, her hesitating to use it is not crucial, but the question remains as to whether she is willing to withdraw the money. On the other hand, I feel that Miss Reed will be unwilling to spend President Fuller's money. How could she be willing to do so when she did not inform him about the incident?

Tom's hypothesis was verified by Toby's reply.

Toby lowered his gaze and muttered quietly, "She's not going to swipe my card."

"I knew it." Tom exclaimed, "I'm confused about why Miss Reed is so adamant, though. Even though it is clear that she has your support, she insists on taking responsibility for everything alone. However, she lacks the ability and strength to satisfactorily address many situations now; why does she even bother?"

If I were Miss Reed, I'd be ecstatic to learn that President Fuller is on my side and will provide me with resources to spend so that I won't be as helpless. Miss Reed's thoughts and actions are baffling me.

"Do you still think Miss Reed doesn't fully trust you, President Fuller?" Tom made a guess as he turned back to look at Toby.

"Shut up," Toby hissed as his eyes narrowed. What does he mean when he says Sonia doesn't trust me completely? No way. She has to have total confidence in me. Perhaps, she just didn't want to depend too much on me.

"Shut up," Toby hissed as his eyes narrowed. What does he mean when he says Sonia doesn't trust me completely? No way. She has to have total confidence in me. Perhaps, she just didn't want to depend too much on me.

However, Tom's statements made Toby uneasy.

Tom lowered his head and kept driving in silence after he realized he had said something inappropriate.

Toby took out his phone, opened Messenger, and looked for Sonia's contact. He then clicked in, intending to send her a message but didn't type anything, despite his fingers hovering over the typing bar for a long time. After a while, Toby removed his finger from the screen and quit Messenger.

He couldn't think of anything to say and had no idea how to approach or ask her for the reason why she hadn't informed him about the incident. Nonetheless, there was no use in asking again because he already knew the answer. Let's hear her out once I return the components to her.

Also, Toby realized he needed to get the record straight with her instead of lowering his guard down in response to her confident demeanor. It was vital for him to be forthright with her about his generosity being inappropriate. Not for her, at least not right now.

Meanwhile, after completing a document processing task, Sonia was a little unsettled and disturbed. It was akin to being caught with one's hand in the cookie jar.

"What's the matter?" Charles asked with concern as he watched Sonia's expression change while seated across her and playing games on his phone.

Sonia sipped her coffee and shook her head before responding, "It's alright. I'm a little anxious, but I'm fine right now."

"Are you feeling sick? Do you want me to call the doctor?" He grew anxious upon hearing her reply. He turned off the game and kept his phone away. In an instant, he stood up and extended his arm in an attempt to touch her forehead.

Daphne, who was in the lounge across from them, could see this scene through a crack in the open door as her eyes were filled with sadness and anger. She had known that President Lane was a kind and caring man, who was deliberately arrogant and pretentious to those who were not acquainted with him. Being one of those outsiders, she would never be the one whom he cared for.

A resigned Daphne closed the door and stopped looking at them. She had made up her mind to forget about him. If I continue to look, doesn't it mean I'm just asking for trouble? What's the point? After letting go of the door handle, she turned around and sat by the bed in the lounge where she lowered her head and said nothing.

After Sonia smacked Charles' hand away, he appeared to sense something and turned to check the closed door to the lounge across the office.

She was in the middle of fixing her hair when she was startled by Charles' reaction and stopped abruptly. It was enough to make her instantaneously worried and with concern, she said, "What's the matter, Charles? What exactly are you staring at?"

"I was staring at your lounge, and I felt like someone was looking at me earlier," Charles said as he still glanced at the lounge door.

"Uhm... Is someone staring at you?" Sonia's eyes widened in surprise. How, oh, how did he manage to find out?

"Yes, I did feel someone watching me just now." He nodded, confirming his suspicion.

At that, he turned his head and narrowed his eyes at her as he spoke.

The unexpected expression in his eyes startled Sonia and the corners of her mouth twitched. "W-what?"

"You look quite terrified right now, Sonny. Are you... hiding someone inside?" Charles' eyes narrowed again as he leaned his head over.

"No!" She was full of fear and it was immediately apparent in her tone.

Sonia's overreaction validated Charles' claim that she was hiding someone in the lounge. Moreover, that person was looking at them earlier.

Sonia regained her composure and recognized that her behavior was giving the appearance of guilt. She was betraying her innocence by consciously denying it. She was upset and annoyed. It's over!

In the lounge, Daphne sprang to her feet in a state of terror and anxiety when she heard noises outside at that very moment. What should I do? President Lane noticed I was staring at him just now! Will he barge into the room and grab me? Her face paled as she paced the lounge, unsure what to do. She was terrified that Charles would come in any time, drag her out, and find out that she was pregnant.

Then...

The fear in Daphne's eyes grew as her face paled even more. Her eyes turned red as she clasped her hand and silently prayed that Sonia would be able to stop Charles from finding her.

Standing outside, Sonia was aware of the consequences of Charles discovering Daphne. She was prepared to do whatever it took to prevent it from happening.

After confirming that there was, in fact, someone in the lounge, he went to the room to conduct an investigation.

Sonia jumped to her feet and went around the desk in a flash as she trotted to Charles with outstretched arms. "What are you doing, Charles?"

He came to a stop and replied, "What am I doing? Obviously, I'll find out who you've been hiding in the lounge."

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"No way!" A look of disapproval crossed Sonia's face as she hastily kept refusing.

Daphne was visibly shaken as she stood anxiously behind the lounge door and firmly grasped the door handle with both hands. It was obvious that she was resisting. So, she had to quickly stop Charles from entering the room by blocking the door while thinking that Sonia should give it her all and prevent Charles from entering.

Sonia's rejection had only fueled Charles' suspicions as he eventually asked, "Sonny, are you keeping a lover inside, which is why you won't let me look?"

"What?" Sonia's lips quivered into a questioning twitch as she answered, "A lover? Am I the kind of person that does that?"

"Explain why you're blocking my entry if that's the case." He rolled his eyes.

"It makes no difference why. I said no." Sonia's arm was still outstretched to block his way.

"Could you be anxious because Toby is in the room? That's not right. If he's your man, there's no need to keep him from me. To top it all off, he is a jealous man. If I'm here now, he'll be out in an instant. So, Sonny, who are you hiding behind closed doors? Are you doing something that might upset Toby?"

"Do you believe it is possible?" She rolled her eyes and let out a long sigh.

"It's impossible," he replied as he shook his head.

"That's it," Sonia stated flatly.

"Why won't you let me in if you aren't trying to keep a lover hidden inside and haven't done anything that would cause Toby any harm? Who is it that you have hidden inside? Why are you acting so suspiciously?" Charles asked while pointing to the lounge that was located behind her.

"I won't reveal who's inside, but I can tell you she's a girl. She felt uncomfortable, so I invited her to take a break in my lounge. She was ready to come out after her nap, but

she's too embarrassed to leave my office while I have a visitor. She is pretty shy," she said as she lowered her arms.

"Oh, really?" He arched his brow.

Sonia looked at him coldly and responded, "Yes, without a doubt. How could I possibly betray Toby?"

"No, of course not! I believe you, then. It would be disrespectful and inappropriate for me to have a look given that the person in question is a girl," Charles chuckled as he spoke.

"You shouldn't be seeing in the first place." Sonia sneered before continuing, "It's almost lunchtime now. Let me buy your lunch, okay?" she said this as she looked at the watch on her wrist.

Such words were said to hold Charles at bay to allow Daphne to leave the lounge room. Otherwise, he would be endlessly curious about who was in the lounge, causing her to fear being discovered at any moment. Sonia was also anxious about the potential outcome of the encounter between the two. For this reason alone, Sonia knew that both she and Charles should leave the office.

After hearing Sonia's words, he felt compelled to lower his head and rub his tummy.

"Okay, I'll admit it: I'm starting to get hungry. Where do you suggest we eat? Should we eat at the cafeteria or go to a nearby restaurant?"

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"Okay, I'll admit it: I'm starting to get hungry. Where do you suggest we eat? Should we eat at the cafeteria or go to a nearby restaurant?"

Sonia flashed a grin as she reached the shelf where her purse was kept inside. "I lack the courage to ask you to the cafeteria because you are such a distinguished guest. Of course, we should eat at the restaurant. What kind of food are you craving right now?"

"On this cold day, let's have a spicy dish. It'll be delicious," Charles answered as he licked the edge of his mouth.

Sonia nodded and said, "Of course, but I suppose you favor it because you fear the cold."

Her eyes wandered down his bare chest and ankles as she spoke and she let out a mischievous laugh.

"What? Do I, Charles Lane, seem like the kind of man afraid of the cold?" His eyes widened in surprise and he swiftly shot back, "To be completely honest, all I care about

is satisfying my craving for a spicy dish. As you have inferred, I do not suffer from a fear of the cold.”

After seeing the stubborn look on his face, she found it impossible to contain her laughter. “Well then. You don’t fear the cold because you’re the best? I was wrong.”

“Hmph! You’re right!” Charles proudly raised his chin.

“Okay.” Seeing him responding in such a manner, Sonia rolled her eyes. “Please wait for me outside. I’ll be there as soon as I change.”

“Alright.” He nodded and strolled away, hands in his pockets as he hummed.

Sonia shook her head in surprise as she gazed at his back. After making sure he was gone, she ran straight to the lounge.

She knocked on the lounge door with a hand, saying, “Daphne, please open the door. It’s me.”

Daphne turned the door handle and then pushed it open. When she realized it was Sonia and not Charles, she let out a sigh of relief and greeted, “Miss Reed.”

Daphne could not resist craning her neck to look around while welcoming Sonia as if she was searching for something.

“You don’t need to look,” Sonia reassured her, knowing who she was seeking. “Don’t worry; Charles has left.”

As soon as Daphne heard Sonia’s words, she quickly averted her gaze and smiled while pursing her lips. “I am very grateful to you, Miss Reed, for keeping President Lane from entering the lounge and coming over to find me. If not, the consequences will be severe. It’s my fault; I shouldn’t have peeked through the door in the first place, or else he wouldn’t have noticed that I was staring at him. I apologize for giving him the impression that you harbored a man inside and acted inappropriately against President Fuller. My sincere apologies to you, Miss Reed.”

“It’s alright. It’s not your fault, and you shouldn’t blame yourself either. Moreover, you are on my turf, so I’ll help you. I have just sent Charles out and I will take him to lunch. You are welcome to stay here until we leave Paradigm Co., at which point you are free to leave.”

Daphne was aware that Sonia’s aim was to keep her from being discovered by Charles by leaving the lounge earlier with him. “Okay, I understand. Miss Reed, thank you so much.”

A grateful Daphne nodded.

“There’s no need to thank me.” While removing her hand from Daphne’s shoulder, Sonia said, “All right, take a little break and relax. I should be going; if I am late, Charles will be suspicious, and that will cause problems down the road.”

“Goodbye, Miss Reed.” Daphne waved her hand.

Sonia returned the gesture before turning around to pack her belongings from the desk.

However, when Charles was done with his smoking, he had an idea that made him narrow his eyes as he glanced at the assistants and secretaries working at the office next to the chairman’s room. He threw the stubs of his cigarettes and opened the assistant secretary’s door. It was still early; Sonia’s assistants and the secretary were still working hard. As soon as they heard the door open, several heads swiveled to observe who was there.

When they saw Charles, they immediately greeted him. “Greetings, President Lane.”

He nodded, but his eyes darted about the room as if trying to locate someone.

Despite this, he could not locate the person he was seeking, so he pursed his lips and asked, “Where is Daphne?”

The other secretaries in the workplace knew that Daphne had been in a relationship with Charles before she started working for Paradigm Co. as Chairman Reed’s secretary. However, they were unaware that Charles and Daphne had ended their relationship and thought those two were in a superior-subordinate relationship.

When they heard his question, the assistant secretaries said without hesitation, “President Lane, Daphne is with Miss Reed. Didn’t you see her when you were looking for Miss Reed?”