

Desperation 161

Chapter 161

After the charity auction, there was a cocktail party and dinner.

The organizers prepared some wine and desserts, and the guests chatted with each other.

Miranda was a little hungry and asked Ashley to eat dessert together.

Ashley didn't have much appetite. She took out her phone and sent a message to Valentin, questioning him.

[How could you say those words on stage just now?]

After sending the message, Ashley looked around the noisy banquet hall and found Valentin in less than a second.

Valentin exuded extraordinary handsomeness with a superior physique. and a noble demeanor, easily standing out in the crowd.

Ashley looked over from a distance and noticed that many people surrounded Valentin.

They wanted to take this chance and talk to him.

But Valentin had no expression. His eyelashes were slightly lowered, and his eyes were cold. It made people feel that he was

very difficult to

approach.

Those who wanted to talk to him hesitated and didn't dare to get close when they saw him like this..

Only those with influential status or cooperating with the Kingsley Group dared to continue talking to him.

Ashley watched for a while and felt bored. She continued to scan the banquet hall and saw Brittany and Bryce in the corner.

Bryce looked very impatient, but Brittany didn't mind at all and followed him with a charming smile.

Sensing Ashley's gaze, Bryce approached her, saying, "Ashley, I have something to attend to and need to leave now. See you."

When Bryce walked over, Brittany had been following him the whole time.

Upon hearing that Bryce was leaving, Brittany frowned. She was

After Bryce finished speaking to Ashley, he left the banquet hall.

Brittany followed immediately.

But Bryce walked quickly and never looked back. Wearing high heels, Brittany couldn't catch up and lost sight of Bryce.

Ashley watched this scene with mixed feelings.

After a while, Lester and Jaden walked over.

Jaden squinted his eyes and asked suspiciously, "Where's Joseph? Isn't he with you?"

Ashley pointed not far away and said, "He's over there."

Joseph was surrounded by a group of people and looked helpless. These people didn't dare to strike up a conversation with

Valentin and came to ask him instead.

A chubby man couldn't believe it and asked, "Mr. Fox, is Valentin genuinely a fan of Ashley? Is he?"

Joseph rolled his eyes and said, "Of course, it's true!"

Upon hearing this affirmative answer, the crowd exploded.

"Ashley has indeed become famous recently. Even Valentin admires her so much. It's really surprising."

"Actually, it's not surprising. She looks young, but she's really talented. My brother and sister are her fans, too."

"That's true. Don't forget that Ashley is a talented composer and the founder and chief designer of Glory Youveile. This brand is a

globally renowned luxury brand. She is more impressive than many of us here! Especially since she is so young."

"No wonder she is favored by Valentin."

"The Ramos family cut off ties with Ashley. They must be regretting it now. I think Jessica, whom the Ramos family has always

cherished, can't compare to Ashley at all."

Not far away, Evan heard these words, and his smile disappeared. He thought, 'How could they say that Jessica couldn't

compare to Ashley?

Jessica is much better than Ashley!

'I am her father. I gave her life. Even though our relationship is not good, as my daughter, she should repay me and the Ramos

family.

'It is Ashley's duty to request investment from Valentin for the Ramos. family.'

Joseph finally got rid of the crowd and ran towards Ashley, saying, "I can finally take a breath. Those people are too nosy!"

Ashley handed him a glass of water and said, "Take a break."

Joseph said, "Ashley, you're so good. Only you care about me!"

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Jaden said unhappily, "How did you see that she cares about you? Don't daydream all the time."

Joseph raised his leg to kick him and said, "You don't understand. anything!"

Miranda saw them playing around and whispered to Ashley, saying that she needed to go to the restroom.

Ashley nodded and said she would wait there.

After Miranda left, Joseph and Jaden continued to argue. Just as Lester was about to talk to Ashley, Ashley's pursuer, Kevin,

approached.

"Ashley." Kevin walked straight towards Ashley with a warm smile on his face.

Joseph immediately stopped arguing with Jaden and stared at Kevi warily, wanting to see what he was up to.

Ashley felt a slight headache when facing him. She treated Kevin pol but distantly. "Do you need something?"

Kevin said gently, "During the auction just now, I wanted to bid for your bracelet, but Mr. Kingsley got it instead."

Ashley smiled politely and didn't say anything.

Kevin recollected and commented, "Mr. Kingsley stated on stage that he likes you and is your fan. I thought I misheard."

Ashley understood his mood. "I was surprised, too."

Kevin smiled, "Actually, I'm your fan, too."

Ashley could only say, "Uhm, thank you."

Just as she finished speaking, she sensed someone coldly staring at her from behind, with a strong sense of oppression in that

gaze.

Ashley's back tensed, and she immediately turned around. Unexpectedly, she saw Valentin's deep-set eyes.

Valentin was walking briskly towards this side.

Lester saw Valentin approaching and raised his eyebrows, waiting for the show to begin.

Kevin couldn't figure out why Valentin was coming over, but he still greeted him. "Mr. Kingsley, hello."

Valentin stopped beside Ashley and started scrutinizing Kevin. His tone was flat without any fluctuation. "Hello."

After speaking, he looked at Ashley beside him again.

Ashley inexplicably felt that the atmosphere was strange.

Kevin looked at Ashley and said, "We haven't been in contact much since high school graduation. Let's meet more in the future."

There are some design matters that I'd like to consult with you."

Upon hearing these words, Valentin narrowed his eyes, and his scrutinizing gaze became fierce.

Ashley didn't know how to respond.

Ever since Joseph said that Kevin liked her, she didn't want to have interaction with Kevin.

So when Kevin said he hoped they would meet more in the future, it made her very distressed.

After thinking for a while, Ashley decided she had to find a way to make Kevin give up on her once and for all.

Ashley looked around and saw that there weren't many people nearby, and no one could hear their specific conversation.

Ashley glanced at Valentin beside her and said to Kevin, "I'm afraid we can't."

Kevin was taken aback, not understanding why.

Ashley took a deep breath and suddenly held Valentin's hand. She said solemnly to Kevin, "Let me introduce my husband to you."

He's Valentin."

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When Ashley introduced Valentin as her husband, the whole scene fell silent.

Joseph was surprised. He had expected Ashley to keep her relationship with Valentin a secret until she admitted it to Kevin..

Ashley finally admitted her relationship with Valentin..

Joseph was moved to tears.

He even felt the day was especially memorable for Valentin.

The information that Lester found showed Ashley and Valentin had a secret marriage. He never expected Ashley to introduce

Valentin like this before her suitors.

This showed that Valentin was more important in Ashley's heart than Kevin.

But he denied his conjecture.

Lester glanced at Kevin with pity. Actually, Kevin had no place in Ashley's heart.

As for Jaden, he only thought Ashley and Valentin were perfect together and they were made for each other.

At this time, Valentin suddenly stiffened when he heard Ashley's introduction, and he only stood still blankly.

After a moment, his eyelashes trembled slowly, and he glanced at Ashley's hand holding his. Then, he raised his head and

looked up at her beautiful profile.

Ashley sensed Valentin's gaze, but she didn't look back at him.

She guessed Kevin could get her means.

Kevin was instantly surprised and astonished, and the shock couldn't dissipate for a while.

Did Ashley introduce Valentin as her husband?

Had she already married?

Had she married Valentin, the president of the Kingsley Group?

Kevin couldn't accept the incredible news for a while. He was even more shocked than hearing Valentin's confession as a fan to

Ashley.

No wonder Valentin purchased Ashley's bracelet just now.

But Kevin suddenly remembered something, and his lips trembled twice quickly. Then, he asked nervously, "Do you remember I

called you when you were hospitalized with allergies? I heard a male voice on the phone.”

At that time, he heard a male voice on the phone, and it sounded like Ashley had a close relationship with him.

Kevin now realized it was Valentin’s voice.

As if to confirm his guess, Ashley nodded and said calmly, “When I was hospitalized for allergies that day, he stayed with me all

the time.”

Kevin felt his nerves tighten and then ease slowly.

Finally, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Kevin said bitterly, “I didn’t expect you to be married to Mr. Kingsley. I haven’t congratulated you yet.”

Ashley smiled lightly, “It’s a secret marriage, so we haven’t made it public.”

Kevin’s mind fell into a mess at that moment, and he didn’t even know what he said. After expressing his blessings, he bid

farewell, turned around, and left.

Ashley breathed a sigh of relief and thought the matter should be settled.

Seeing Kevin leave, Joseph glanced at Ashley and Valentin holding hands. with a smile, and he pulled Jaden and Lester away.

“Come on. Let’s check. it out.”

Lester still wanted to stay there.

Although he didn’t know if he was related to Ashley, he still wanted to spend more time with Ashley.

Moreover, he intended to find a chance to get Ashley’s hair for a paternity test.

Joseph found Lester still there, so he dragged him forward. He couldn’t understand why Lester stayed there all the time.

He couldn’t allow anyone to disturb Ashley and Valentin alone.

Hence, Joseph pulled Jaden and Lester away together.

Ashley let go of Valentin’s hand and looked around first. She found

potted plants and flower baskets in their way, and their intimate behavior went unnoticed.

Ashley cleared her throat and said, “Well, I just had to tell Kevin about. our marriage in order to get away from him.

Valentin's brows furrowed, almost invisible. "Did you just tell the truth to reject him?"

Ashley nodded. "Yep."

Valentin suddenly fell silent, and his throbbing heart returned to calm.

He thought Ashley was finally willing to go public with their relationship but didn't expect it to be an excuse for her to reject Kevin.

However, she rejected Kevin decisively without hesitation.

If she ever had feelings for Kevin before, she disliked him now.

Thinking of it this way, Valentin smiled slightly, feeling indescribably pleased.

Actually, he felt delighted to be Ashley's excuse for rejecting Kevin.

Ashley noticed Valentin's silence and scratched her head strangely. "Cat got your tongue? I didn't lie or take advantage of you.

We indeed got married."

Valentin raised his eyebrows leisurely and said casually, "Well, we indeed got married."

Ashley grinned. "But we will get divorced soon."

Valentin widened his eyes in shock.

Ashley counted on her fingers. "We'll get divorced in less than two months."

Valentin was speechless.

Ashley's words echoed in his ears.

Valentin was distressed and asked meaningfully, "Are you troubled by others' pursuits?"

"Did you mention Kevin?" Ashley thought for a while and said, "Except for Kevin, it bothers me whenever someone I dislike

pursues me."

Valentin lowered his head and asked back, "Really?"

Ashley glanced at him. "Sure, you've had a lot of suitors since your childhood, and you might know better than I do."

Ashley suddenly recalled what had happened on the stage and said, "Why did you say you were a fan up there?"

Valentin seemed to think about it seriously and then said, "I really shouldn't have said that."

Ashley replied, "But it's too late to take your words back."

Valentin smiled, "I should just say you are my wife."

Ashley choked on his words.

She raised her hand and wanted to hit him.

But when she raised her hand halfway, she found the others in the ballroom glancing at them with gossip.

The others didn't find it strange with Joseph, Jaden, and Lester here.

After they left, the others in the ballroom paid attention to Ashley and Valentin and gossiped about them, and they even found

their relationship unusual.

Ashley immediately retracted her hand and coughed lightly. "I ha keep my distance from you now. I fear others will

misunderstand relationship. I'm off now."

Valentin was speechless.

He found Ashley's words ridiculous.

After speaking, Ashley noticed Evan and Charlie walking towards her sid in a hurry before she left.

Facing Valentin, Charlie was no longer as calm as before but a little nervous.

Evan grimmed in excitement, showing his wrinkles. He bowed and flattered. "Hello. Mr. Kingsley. I am Ashley's father. I never

expected you would appreciate Ashley so much. What an honor!"

Hearing this, Ashley immediately got furious.

She found Evan hypocritical.

How ridiculous it was! Evan had never treated her intimately at the Ramos family.

Now that she got Valentin's admiration. Evan flattered them.

Ashley looked at Evan's joyful expression and found it disgusting.

Valentin always paid attention to Ashley's expression. When he noticed her displeasure, he looked indifferently and stared

sternly at Evan.

Evan shivered in fear, and when Valentin neglected him, he smiled again. "I really didn't expect you to appreciate Ashley so

much, Mr. Kingsley. How lucky she is to have your favor!"

After speaking, Evan looked at Ashley and scolded seriously in a low voice, "Why don't you thank Mr. Kingsley?"

Ashley sneered, "You got the wrong one for you, Mr. Ramos. Where is your daughter?"

"Ashley!" Evan wanted to lash out at Ashley, but Valentin was still there and still admired Ashley.

If Ashley could convince Valentin to fund the Ramos Group, the Ramos Group's current critical situation could be settled, and it

could develop well under the Kingsley Group's support.

Evan suppressed his anger and said, "How can you say this, Ashley? Even family members have conflicts, and we should solve

the conflict in time instead of fighting outside."

Ashley easily got the implication of Evan's words. "Fighting outside? Are you ashamed of my behavior? But the Ramos family

has always been ashamed, so my behavior today shouldn't affect you."

"How dare you?" Evan's face and neck flushed in anger. He reached out to

point at Ashley, but when he noticed Valentin, who was indifferent, he had to restrain himself.

Ashley looked more determined as she spoke. "I had already broken off a relationship with the Ramos family and had no

affection for you anymore. Watch your words, Evan."

Evan's fingers even trembled in anger this time.

As his biological daughter, Ashley always disobeyed him, and he couldn't stand her temper anymore.

He hoped Ashley would be as sensible as Jessica.

He now needed Ashley to persuade Valentin to fund the Ramos Group. Otherwise, he had begun to teach Ashley a lesson.

Evan had no choice but to endure it, acting like he backed down for Ashley now.

“Don’t cut ties with us, Ashley. I always treat you as my biological daughter. As your father, I will dote on you.

“We may have had some misunderstandings before, but just put them behind us now. Go home, please, Ashley. We’ll get along

well with each other and live a happy life.”

Ashley couldn’t bear it. “Go home? Don’t gross me out.”

Charlie wanted to speak, but when he caught a glimpse of Valentin next to him, he moved his lips and finally stayed silent.

Evan took two deep breaths and added, “Your mother and I made our mistakes, but no parent is perfect in the world. We’ll reflect

on our behaviors. Go home with me, please.”

Valentin, who had been silent, finally spoke at this time.

Evan noticed Valentin’s reaction and felt extremely excited. He never expected he could meet Valentin and even talk to him,

which satisfied his vanity.

However, Evan fell into his excitement when Valentin’s cold voice. sounded. “Since you made a mistake, why don’t you apologize

to Ashley?”

Evan was startled and froze in place at a loss.

Didn’t Valentin ask him to apologize to Ashley?

Evan had never been so stunned before, but then he was lost in thought. He didn’t expect Valentin to value Ashley so much that

he even wanted to claim justice for Ashley.

If Ashley asked Valentin to fund the Ramos Group, he must agree with it.

Evan weighed the pros and cons and then forced a smile, which looked awkward.

“Your mother and I indeed ignored your feelings before. I solemnly apologize to you before Mr. Kingsley, and I hope you can

forgive us.”

Ashley felt sick. She glanced at Valentin, signaled to him, and walked away.

Evan immediately got furious and wondered how dare Ashley just leave. without any courtesy.

He had already apologized to her, but she still wouldn't forgive him.

Evan secretly cursed but still smiled before Valentin, "Sorry to bother you, Mr. Kingsley."

After speaking, Evan chased after Ashley with Charlie.

Ashley expected Evan to chase after her. Before Evan could speak, she stared at him indifferently. "I had already read your mind.

Now that I'm useful to you, so you're sucking up to me. But I would never fulfill your wish."

"Ashley," Evan cursed sternly without Valentin here, "Even if you verba sever ties with the Ramos family, you're still related to

me. I gave you li You should make it up for what you did to the Ramos family."

Charlie frowned slightly, "Please lower your voice, dad. Ashley will understand it."

At this time, Miranda came out of the bathroom and searched around the banquet hall. When she found Ashley and Evan

together, she

immediately ran over worriedly.

"Ashley!" Miranda ran to Ashley's side and asked, "Are you okay?"

Ashley felt touched and shook her head.

Then, Ashley looked at Evan and sneered with extremely indifferent sights.

"If I am still related to the Ramos family, then I will bankrupt it step by step until there is no chance of a comeback for you."

Ashley finished speaking coldly.

Evan raised his hands and pressed his chest in anger. He felt a pain in his heart and almost fainted.

Charlie hurriedly supported him in time.

After Ashley finished speaking, she left there with Miranda.

She wore a beautiful blue dress, showing her arrogance and determination. She even looked indifferent with her dedicated features.

Ashley felt disgusted again.

She wondered why she related to the Ramos family she hated the most.

Ashley felt depressed, and her long eyelashes trembled. In a daze, she found Lester standing not far away, walking towards her.

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Lester walked quickly to Ashley and asked protectively, "Did Evan bully you just now?"

Ashley felt touched secretly and shook her head. "They can't bully me now."

Lester felt relieved.

He had an inexplicable affinity for Ashley and would be particularly nervous about Ashley's affairs.

Even if it turned out Ashley was not related to him, he could treat Ashley as his family.

Outside the banquet hall, well-wrapped Jessica didn't want to be witnessed by others and intended to leave secretly after the auction.

When she walked out with her head lowered, she didn't watch out and bumped into a reporter who passed by in a hurry with a camera.

"Who are you? Mind your step when walking," the reporter complained. in anger as his chest hurt.

Jessica's hat fell off, but she didn't dare to pick it up. She feared being recognized, so she tilted her head and covered her face

with her hands. "I'm sorry."

After speaking, she intended to leave.

The reporter stopped her strangely. "Why are you leaving in a hurry Your hat has fallen off!"

The reporter kindly picked up the hat and handed it over.

Jessica had no choice but to pick it up with one hand while still covering her face with the other.

The reporter sensed her cover-up and suspected her of being a thief.

Many business elites and celebrities were in attendance at the charity, and the reporter speculated Jessica sneaked in to steal something.

Thinking of this, the reporter couldn't help but stare at Jessica. When she put on her hat, the reporter noticed her exposed eyes..

Although Jessica wore a mask, the perceptive reporter still recognized her. "Jessica! You are Jessica!"

The reporter was so surprised that he shouted loudly.

There were many reporters around outside the ballroom taking photos of the celebrities. At this moment, they heard Jessica's

name and immediately looked around curiously.

"Jessica? Really? Why would Jessica be at the charity dinner?"

"There she is! Have you found out? She wore a hat and a mask."

"She is so wrapped up."

The reporters spotted Jessica and immediately surrounded her.

Jessica subconsciously wanted to hide away, but the reporters gathered around her and blocked the way.

Jessica raised her hands to cover her face, not wanting to expose such an image to the camera. But all she did was in vain.

Reporters took photos and peppered her with questions.

"Why did you come to the charity dinner, Jessica? When did you come? Have you been hiding all the time?"

"At the auction just now, Evan said you couldn't come to the scene because you were ill. Can you explain the contradictory situation?"

"No one purchased the famous paintings you had prepared. But Valentin bought Ashley's bracelet for 10 million dollars. How do you think it?"

Hearing various questions, Jessica gritted her teeth in anger.

She detested Ashley the most now.

However, a bespectacled male reporter asked a sharp question.

"Jessica, you stole Ashley's design draft and slandered Ashley for stealing Attelia. Now you secretly come to the charity dinner.

Do you want to steal something from Ashley again?"

Hearing his words, Jessica had hit a nerve, and her face immediately turned pale.

She didn't expect this reporter to ask such a sharp question without mercy.

Jessica felt awkward and suffocated, but she couldn't utter a word to refute it.

Her reputation had been ruined, and any ordinary journalist could purposely make difficulties for her with such questions.

Jessica felt very resentful.

She couldn't tolerate her reputation being tarnished.

Jessica raised her hand and took off her hat and mask, accepting the reporters' interview. When she looked up at the camera,

tears filled with her eyes, and she seemed regretful and self-reproaching.

"I am indeed ill. I came to the charity dinner today just because I wanted to meet Ashley and apologize to her in person."

The reporters looked at each other after hearing this.

Had Jessica prepared to apologize in person?

Jessica raised her hand to wipe her tears, deliberately not wiping them

clean. Tears still hung on her eyelashes, and she even choked with sobs. "But Ashley doesn't want to meet me, and I have no

chance to apologize to her."

A keen reporter immediately asked, "Jessica, are you accusing Ashley of not being generous enough to give you a chance?"

Reporters could always read others' minds. After the reporter's reminder, everyone immediately sensed the hint of Jessica,

suddenly more disdain.

for her.

Jessica's mind was exposed, and she hurriedly cried and shook her head. "Nope, I just sincerely want to express my apology to

Ashley. If you don't believe it, I will solemnly apologize to Ashley now before reporters and cameras."

Reporters were still skeptical of Jessica's words.

Did Jessica really admit her mistake?

Jessica wiped away her tears again. Her nose turned red from crying, and she looked at the camera with tearful eyes.

“I made a lot of mistakes in the past, Ashley. How foolish I am! I realized my fault now. I don’t ask you to forgive me, but I hope

you give me a chance to make it up.

“I did something wrong, so I deserve to be blamed by netizens. I hope you’ll give me a chance to correct myself. I’m sorry,

Ashley. I’m so sorry.”

Jessica cried as she spoke. Her tears ran down and messed her makeup

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After apologizing. Jessica bowed solemnly to the cameras.

Seeing this situation, the reporters couldn’t react within a short period of time.

They found Jessica’s apology sincere.

She admitted her mistake and even bowed sincerely.

Reporters immediately posted the video online.

The news of Jessica publicly bowing to Ashley to apologize immediately spread online.

Inside the banquet hall, Ashley was chatting with Lester when she noticed that others looked at her from time to time.

She wondered what had happened again.

Miranda was on her phone in boredom when she suddenly exclaimed. She then raised her head in surprise. “Jessica publicly

apologized to you, Ashley.”

Ashley raised her eyebrows slightly and looked down.

Then, she watched the video of Jessica crying and apologizing before tl

camera.

She didn’t expect Jessica to attend the charity dinner.

Moreover, Jessica was outside the banquet hall.

Miranda looked confused. “Jessica cried hard. Did she apologize to you. sincerely? Netizens all discussed it online now. Jessica

had solemnly apologized, and they're waiting for your response to see if you could accept it."

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Lester glanced at the video and could easily see Jessica's hypocrisy. She even fooled netizens with her tears.

"Response?" Ashley smiled brightly, "Well, I will leave the netizens at satisfactory response later."

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"How do you plan to respond, Ashley? Miranda asked.

Ashley lowered her head and tidied her skirt up. Then, she walked out. "Jessica is still outside the banquet hall. I'll go meet her

first."

Miranda was worried. "I will go with you, Ashley. I fear Jessica will deliberately bully you."

Ashley chuckled when she heard this and pinched Miranda's cheeks with her fingers. "Don't worry. I'll protect myself well."

Ashley met Lester's worried eyes and smiled at him, too. Then, she walked out of the banquet hall.

When she walked outside the banquet hall, she found Jessica still surrounded by reporters.

Jessica wanted to leave a long time ago, but reporters kept blocking her.

In anxiety, she found Ashley wearing an elegant blue dress coming forward.

Jessica was jealous secretly. She felt that all the attention and wealth. should belong to her.

But Ashley owned it all.

Ashley took what had belonged to her,

As soon as Ashley came over, the reporters ignored Jessica and hurriedly ran towards Ashley.

Ashley responded with a few words, then asked the reporters to disperse and walked towards Jessica.

The reporters gathered in the distance and were reluctant to leave, but they did not get too close.

They believed Ashley had watched the apology video and came to meet. Jessica on purpose.

She must have something to talk to Jessica.

Did she want to forgive Jessica?

Chapter 165

Even though the reporters were too far away to hear what Ashley and Jessica said, they kept snapping photos.

Over here, Ashley looked at Jessica expressionlessly and asked, "You were publicly apologizing to me?"

Jessica knew the reporters were taking pictures and smiled politely, "Yes."

Ashley glanced down at her own nails and asked indifferently, "Did you just say that you want my forgiveness in front of the cameras?"

Jessica clenched her fingers, remaining silent.

This feeling of being inferior in front of Ashley was really irritating for her.

Ashley looked at her with a sneer. "I can't hear you if you apologize to the camera. If you want my forgiveness, apologize to me

again, right here, to my face."

Jessica glanced at the reporters in the distance, noting they were still picturing. She maintained a polite smile but spoke through

gritted teeth.. "Ashley, I don't need your forgiveness!"

Ashley sneered, "Then why bother apologizing to me on camera?"

Jessica's face turned sullen. However, she had to force another smile upon remembering the reporters, looking ridiculous as she

spat out.

"You think I really wanted to apologize to you? I had no choice! I did nothing wrong. Why should I apologize to you?"

"Ashley, I stole your design draft, and you knew from the start, right? You didn't expose me right away just to make me look

foolish. You revealed it in public only because you wanted to humiliate me! You should be sorry to me!"

Ashley had never heard something so ridiculous. "You stole my design draft, and I'm the one to blame?"

Jessica's eyes filled with hatred as she said, "Det too comfortable, Ashley. Just because you're doing well now doesn't mean it'll

last. One day, you'll be begging me for mercy!"

While they were talking, Evan hurried over. "Jessica, why are you here?"

He then turned to Ashley, his voice stern. "Don't you dare bully Jessica!"

Ashley scoffed, "Me, bully her?"

"Evan, it's your daughter who came crying to me with a fake apology and expected me to respond. Fine, I'll give her o Ma

As Ashley spoke, she took out her phone.

Jessica glanced over, curious to see how Ashley was going to do, but then. she realized that Ashley's phone had been recording

the whole time!

Jessica's face instantly turned deadly pale.

She had been so focused on the reporters in the distance and hadn't noticed Ashley was recording their conversation!

'Bitch!' Jessica panicked, trying to snatch Ashley's phone.

But Ashley had it coming. She dodged and shot Jessica a sharp glare.

That look from Ashley was like a blade pressed against her throat. Jessica shivered, her fear spreading in her soul.

Ashley posted the recording to Twitter along with a message.

At that moment, netizens were discussing the video of Jessica's apology.

[To be fair, I think Jessica's apology seems sincere. She was crying her eyes out. Look at her snot. She definitely knows she

messed up.]

[Can we not mention the snot, please? Now I can't stop looking at Jessica's runny nose.]

[Did you guys see Jessica's bow in that video? It looked really sincere. Just not sure if Ashley will accept it.]

When everyone was discussing, they noticed that Ashley had posted on Twitter.

Ashley said: [Seeing Jessica's apology video really touched me. But when I found Jessica and wanted to hear an apology from

her, things just...]

[Well, it's okay, I'm fine. If Jessica doesn't want to apologize, she doesn't have to. I really am okay. I won't make it hard for her.]

After reading this, the netizens were puzzled.

Ashley seemed to play innocent with that post. It was somewhat bitchy.

and didn't match her style. They started to wonder if Ashley's account was getting hacked.

There was also a voice recording with the tweet. Clicking on it with a mixture of confusion and curiosity, the listeners were

increasingly shocked as they listened.

[Holy cow! Jessica said what?]

"You think I really wanted to apologize to you? I had no choice! I did nothing wrong. Why should I apologize to you?"

"Ashley, I stole your design draft, and you knew from the start, right? You didn't expose me right away just to make me look

foolish. You revealed it in public only because you want to humiliate me! You should be sorry to me!

"Don't get too comfortable, Ashley. Just because you're doing well now doesn't mean it'll last. One day, you'll be begging me for

mercy!"

The Twitter community was aroused with shock.

[Damn it! Jessica's apology was a fake!]

[Stealing Ashley's designs and then blaming Ashley? Jessica, are you out of your mind? How can you even say that?]

[Man, I almost fell for Jessica's act! All that bowing and apologizing just to whitewash herself and salvage her reputation!]

[Jessica is rotten. She just won't regret it. She needs to be kicked out of the entertainment industry. I can't stand to even look at

her!]

[Such a hypocrisy! She's just so bitchy!]

[Hold on, now I get why Ashley's post was so bitchy. She was mocking Jessica by using her move!]

Meanwhile, the charity event came to an end.

Joseph browsed the internet and saw Ashley's response. He had only one thought, Ashley was just brilliant. Using Jessica's

move to get back to her.

Now, Jessica's fake apology had been exposed, and the backlash from the public reached its peak. Everyone online was demanding Jessica quit the entertainment industry.

In the hospital room, Bertha sat in her bed. Her face, already pale from illness, turned even grimmer as she watched the online uproar.

Jessica was crying hard. "Mom, do you think I did something wrong?"

Bertha was worried and wiped Jessica's tears. "Of course not, dear. It's all Ashley's fault. That wicked girl deliberately recorded you to trap you!"

Charlie glanced at Bertha, frowning, but remained silent.

Evan felt a headache as he watched the online uproar. "Jessica, maybe it's time for you to announce you are quitting the entertainment industry."

Jessica's eyes widened in shock. "Dad!"

She couldn't accept just being humiliated and kicked away from the industry while Ashley continued to shine, basking in everyone's adoration.

Jessica couldn't accept such an outcome. She wanted to take everything from Ashley!

Evan felt sympathetic but could only say, "Jessica, this is getting serious. The netizens are boycotting you. Even if you don't leave the industry, you'll be criticized wherever you go."

Ryan followed, advising, "Jessica, listen to Dad. There's no turning back. from this. You can only calm everyone's anger by announcing your retirement. Don't worry, I'll work hard to support you for life!"

Jessica didn't want to accept this outcome but found no better solution.

She tearfully posted a retirement announcement on Twitter.

Bertha hugged her. "Don't cry, Jessica. From now on, you'll just be apple of our family. Daddy, Mommy, Charlie, and Ryan will always be with you."

Jessica cried hard in Bertha's arms, but her face showed a hint of sinis

The Ramos family had fallen. She didn't want to be the apple of the family anymore.

She looked down on the fallen Ramos family

now.

The news of Jessica leaving the entertainment industry stirred the internet for three full days before calming down.

Netizens joyfully spread the word that this scum bag had finally left.

There would be no more polluting the public's view!

Recently, Laura secured a high-end perfume endorsement for Ashley and Bryce. The brand had both men's and women's

fragrances. Naturally, Ashley endorsed the women's line and Bryce the men

The advertisement required shooting abroad.

Upon seeing the location was Manditus in Yaloria for the shoot, Ashley felt a sudden twitch in her eyelid.

This place, Manditus, reminded her of someone.

His last name was Banks, with a pair of charming eyes.

His background wasn't normal, and he had once pursued her.

Recalling past events, Ashley suddenly felt reluctant to go to Manditus. But she had already committed to shooting the

advertisement. So, she had no choice but to fly to Manditus with Bryce.

As soon as they landed, Ashley received a message on her phone.

[It's been a long time, sweetheart.]

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[Sweetheart, long time no see.]

Ashley saw this message and frowned, feeling neither flattered nor disturbed by being called "Sweetheart, just a sense of

headache and fatigue.

The message had no contact name attached. It was from an unknown number.

But Ashley knew who sent it.

No one would call her that except that jerk, Andrew Banks.

Ashley was going to ignore it, pretend she hadn't seen it.

She thought about blocking the number but then realized it would be pointless. Even if she blocked this jerk, he always found a

way to contact her.

After pondering for a moment, Ashley decided to cut the knot and once again bring up the fact that she was married.

She typed indifferently: [I'm married, Andrew.]

Andrew replied quickly: [Hey, sweetheart. You finally decide to talk to me?]

Ashley was speechless. That wasn't the point at all.

Frustrated, Ashley typed fiercely: [I said I'm already married!]

Andrew didn't seem surprised, replying calmly: [I know, with Valentin.]

Ashley was startled. [You've been investigating me?]

Her marriage to Valentin was a secret, not announced to the public. Ordinary people wouldn't know about her marriage to

Valentin unless they investigated.

"This jerk! What have you uncovered about me?"

Seeming to know what she was thinking, Andrew said: [Are you cursing me?]

Ashley fell silent.

The message came through again: [Keep it up. I kind of like curse me.]

it when you

Ashley was utterly speechless. "You're crazy! Just as sick as before!"

Ashley typed furiously: [I'm already married, so stop calling me sweetheart and don't bother me anymore!]

Andrew replied nonchalantly: [So what if you're married? I don't mind being the other man.]

Ashley was frustrated. "Screw you! You nutcase! Who wants you to be the other man?"

Ashley had never encountered such a request. She took several deep breaths to suppress the urge to swear, regretting that she

had event responded to him earlier.

She was now full of regret.

While Ashley was annoyed, her phone chimed again with a new message.

Ashley thought it was Andrew again and looked over with irritation, only to find it was from Valentin.

Her irritation instantly subsided.

Valentin asked: [Landed yet?]

Ashley typed back joyfully: [Just did, heading to the hotel now.]

Valentin replied: [Text me when you get to the hotel.]

[Sure, will do.]

Just as she sent this message, Bryce squinted and asked, "Ashley, who are you chatting with? You've been holding the phone

since you got off the plane."

Ashley was so used to retort with him and said, "Someone cares about me, unlike you. No messages. Must be lonely, huh?"

Bryce, not to be outdone, smirked wildly. "Who says I don't have any!"

Ashley raised an eyebrow, gossiping. "Is it that Ms. Walsh? What's going on between you two?"

Bryce's face stiffened at this, glaring back with annoyance, clearly not wanting to mention Brittany. He said sternly, "Ashley, stop

gossiping."

They came to Manditus for a perfume advertisement shoot, including both Ashley and Bryce as the endorsers and Laura, their

agent, along with some bodyguards and assistants from their team.

The perfume brand had arranged their hotel in advance and even sent someone to pick them up from the airport.

After they met, they took a car to the hotel.

Their rooms were on the twelfth floor, offering a panoramic view of the river from the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Ashley walked around her room and settled her luggage in the corner.

She sent a message to Valentin: [Report. Arrived at the hotel!]

Just seconds after sending the message, Valentin's video call came through.

Ashley paused for a moment before answering the call.

Soon, Valentin's charming face showed up. The lines from his brow to his jaw were strikingly attractive and flawless.

Ashley was bewildered. "Why are we doing a video call?"

Valentin sat at his desk and casually unbuttoned the top of his shirt, saying with a magnetic voice, "I just wanted to see you."

Ashley blurted out, "See me for what?"

Valentin fell silent.

After a moment, he looked away, chuckling helplessly, "Alright then, just pretend I didn't miss you."

Ashley's eyes widened slightly, her voice trembling. "You missed me? Really?"

How long had it been since she left home?

From boarding the plane to landing, then checking into the hotel, it hadn't even been eight hours yet.

Valentin leaned his head on his hand and hummed in response, staring at Ashley. "When are you coming back?"

Ashley was speechless.

She had just arrived abroad. Her work hadn't even started yet.

"Valentin, are you alright? You seem off to me."

Valentin chuckled lowly, "What's off about me?"

Ashley replied, "It seems like you are whining."

Valentin fell silent again.

Seeing him at a loss for words, Ashley felt much better. She lifted her phone to give him a quick tour of her hotel room. "Look,

this is where I'm staying. It's pretty good."

Although it couldn't compare to Kingsley Villa, it was still quite nice.

After showing him around, Ashley set her phone on a stand. "I'm going to put down the phone and unpack my luggage."

Valentin nodded. "Okay."

Ashley figured she would be abroad for at least half a month, so she had to organize her luggage properly.

Valentin watched her intently as she packed her things, his eyes cast down.

Suddenly, he called her name seriously, “Ashley, is there something you’ve forgotten to tell me?”

Looking down at her open suitcase, Ashley glanced at her phone so upon hearing this. “What do you mean?”

Valentin tapped on the table, casually asking, “For instance, about someone who had pursued you?”

Ashley curled her lips. “What’s there to talk about that?”

Then she countered. “Why don’t you tell me about yours?”

Ashley smiled brightly, “Well, well, well, Valentin. You have always been. so handsome. You must have had a lot of pursuers

back then and can’t even list them all, right?”

Valentin raised an eyebrow, teasing, “You remember so much about me, Ashley.”

Ashley retorted, “Who said I remember it? I didn’t!”

She huffed and turned away, focusing on packing her luggage. She even casually took out her underwear and put them on the

bed.

Suddenly, Ashley realized Valentin could see from that angle.

She swiftly reached out and snatched them back.

Then, she heard Valentin’s teasing laugh coming through the video call. “It’s not like it’s the first time I’ve seen them.”

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Ashley blushed and glared at Valentin, her eyes bright and clear.

Of course, it wasn’t the first time he had seen it. Ever since they started. sharing a bed, such moments were inevitable.

But Ashley was still embarrassed when he mentioned it right away.

And now, separated by a phone screen, Ashley felt frustrated that she couldn’t hit him. She was completely at a loss with him.

Ashley grabbed her phone off its stand and said, “I’m hanging up!”

Valentin raised his eyebrows. “Getting busy?”

Ashley retorted, “No, just tired of looking at you. I want to find someone else.”

Valentin’s eyes narrowed, his voice deep and low. “Say that again, Ashley.”

Ashley took advantage of Valentin not being able to reach her through the phone and lifted her chin defiantly, boldly saying, "It's

the same even if I say it again. I don't want to see you, humph!".

Valentin chuckled ambiguously, "Then I'll have to find a way to make sure you see me every day."

Ashley was puzzled.

Suddenly, he lowered his voice and sounded intimate. "Babe."

Ashley's ears tingled, and a shiver ran down her spine. She rubbed her earlobe somewhat awkwardly. "What do you want?"

Valentin stared at her and said with a magnetic voice, "Don't go to anyone. else, okay? I can be with you every day."

Ashley felt her heart skip a beat. She bit her lips, which were red and moist, and after a moment's hesitation, she mumbled,

"Who needs you... I'm hanging up."

After ending the video call, Ashley stared at her phone for a while before she sent Valentin a message.

[So you were really being coy, huh?]

Valentin replied with a question mark

After Ashley packed her bags, Laura came to her. "Ashley, we'll have dinner with the brand team later and then discuss the

shooting details. I've notified Bryce about it."

Ashley nodded. "Okay."

The dinner was at a local restaurant with the brand team, the director of the shooting, and other staff. Together, they finalized the

specific plans. for the ad campaign.

It was nine o'clock when they finished.

Ashley returned to her room and decided to take a shower. After bathing, she heard her phone ringing.

Picking it up, she saw an unknown number calling.

Ashley looked closer but still couldn't find out who was calling. Andrew hadn't used this number when he texted her earlier.

She swiped the screen and answered, "Hello, who is this?"

There was silence on the other end.

Ashley's brows furrowed, feeling a sense of familiarity. Her face turned cold. "Frankie?"

The person on the other end paused his breathing but remained silent.

Ashley hung up with a frown, frustrated.

It was the same thing every time, a call without a word.

Ashley had just finished drying her hair and put down the hairdryer. When her phone rang again. This time, it was Miranda

calling.

Ashley's mood was completely different from before, and she answered cheerfully.

"Ashley, did I bother you?" Miranda asked immediately.

Ashley chuckled, "No, not at all."

Miranda's face lit up with joy, her cheeks dimpling with a smile. "That's great! Ashley, you're working in Manditus right now, right?"

"I'm going there in a few days! Can I come to see you?"

Ashley was thrilled and responded, "Sounds great. Are you coming to Manditus for a vacation?"

Miranda paused for a couple of seconds and shyly said, "Not exactly a

vacation. Remember I told you about that I almost had a car accident and the handsome race car driver I met?"

Ashley replied, "Yes, I remember."

Just the day at the charity dinner, Miranda nearly had a car accident on her way there. She met a handsome guy with a rugged

face, dressed in a black jacket, who turned out to be a race car driver.

Ashley laughed. "Do you know his name?"

"Yes, his name is Bradley!"

"Bradley... Ashley pondered momentarily and realized she had never heard this name before.

Over the phone, Miranda said, "In a few days, the world-class racing championship will be held in Manditus. Bradley is

participating, and he invited me to watch it live. He's even got a ticket for me."

Ashley

knew about the upcoming race in Manditus and was also planning to go watch.

She teased, "Looks like you've had quite the chat with Bradley these days. He's even inviting you to watch his race."

Miranda, shy as ever, blushed instantly. "Ashley, stop teasing me."

Ashley could sense that Miranda and Bradley seemed to like each other. They might actually get together.

Ashley casually asked, "How good is Bradley at racing?"

Miranda responded, "He said he's really good at it."

to

Ashley raised an eyebrow, intrigued by his confidence and getting more curious about him. "Alright, let me know when you're

coming Manditus. I was also planning to watch the race. We can go together and let me see this Bradley."

Miranda lit up. "That would be great. I'll call you when I'm going there! I'd feel scared going to Manditus alone."

Ashley reassured her, "Don't worry, I'll be there with you."

"Ashley, you're so kind. Thank you so much!"

Ashley chatted with Miranda for a few more words before ending the call.

Afterward, Ashley and Bryce worked together on the perfume.

commercial. Since they had already discussed the shooting plan in advance, the filming went smoothly and was finished in three

days.

During these three days, Valentin called her daily via video and texted her frequently.

Sometimes, Ashley was busy filming and couldn't see them right away, but she replied as soon as she could.

To Ashley's relief, Andrew didn't bother her again.

After the commercial shoot, they had dinner with the brand team to celebrate the shooting.

Ashley didn't return home immediately. The car race was just a few days away, and she planned to watch it before leaving.

Bryce also stayed, eager to experience the thrill of watching the race live.

Unexpectedly, Lester and Jaden also arrived in Manditus, wanting to see the game.

The day before the race, Joseph showed up too.

Ashley was utterly speechless. 'Is this a gathering now?'

She went to the airport to pick up Joseph.

As soon as they met, Joseph gave her a big hug. "Ashley, I've missed you so much!"

Ashley curled her lips. "You always say that."

Joseph winked and chuckled, "Valentine probably misses you even more!"

Ashley glanced at him. "Did Valentine tell you that himself?"

Joseph patted his chest confidently. "No need for words, I can tell it!"

Ashley just rolled her eyes.

Ashley had arranged a room for Joseph at her hotel.

As soon as Jaden saw Joseph, they started bickering again.

Ashley didn't bother with them.

In the evening, Miranda called to say she had landed.

Ashley went to the airport to pick her up and also met Bradley, the race car driver.

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Lester was worried about Ashley going to the airport alone, so he drove her there.

Although this was Yaloria, the Pliskin family owned properties there, so it wasn't surprising that Lester managed to get a car.

As soon as Ashley got into the car, Joseph ran over, smiling brightly, "Wait for me! I'm coming with you. Staying in the hotel is so

boring, I feel like I'm dying!"

Ashley quickly closed the car door and spoke through the window. "What do you need to come for? Stay in the hotel, and don't wander around."

After saying this, she turned to Jaden, instructing, "Keep an eye on Joseph, make sure he doesn't..."

Ashley paused mid-sentence, realizing that wasn't quite right. Joseph and Jaden were always bickering. The idea of Jaden

keeping an eye on Joseph was ridiculous.

With no better option, Ashley turned to Bryce. "You keep an eye on Joseph and Jaden."

Joseph immediately objected, raising his fists in protest, "Hey Ashley, I'm the boss here! If anyone's watching, it should be me

keeping an eye on

Bryce!"

"Sure, boss, whatever you say. I'll listen to you. Bye, boss!" Ashley casually responded, "Be good, and I'll bring you back some

treats, okay?"

"Do you think I'm a three-year-old? Bribing me with treats won't work anymore!" Joseph continued his protest. "I want something

fun, not just

treats!"

Ashley was left speechless. That didn't sound very grown-up.

On the way to the airport, Ashley received a message from Miranda.

[Ashley, I've just landed. Bradley came to pick me up at the airport, but I still want to stay with you.]

[You can meet Bradley when you are here.]

Ashley replied: [Okay, I'll be there soon.]

There was no traffic, and they were about five minutes away from the airport.

Sitting in the driver's seat, Lester glanced at Ashley in the passenger seat.

Ashley was looking down at her phone, her eyelashes casting a shadow, her skin delicate. The evening sun streamed through

the window, casting a soft glow on her face.

Lester couldn't help but say, "Leaving the Ramos family was the right. decision for you."

Ashley paused, then looked up, smiling warmly. Her eyes sparkled lively as she said, "Of course, it was the right decision!"

After leaving the Ramos family, she climbed out of the swamp of their influencegan to live freely, surrounded by a group

and of caring.

friends.

The desire for family and kinship in her heart seemed to fade gradually.

She also slowly freed herself from the choking bonds imposed by the Ramos family.

At a red light, Lester stopped the car.

Looking at Ashley, who was lively and shining, he blurted out, "Ashley, how about you be my sister?"

Lester was surprised by his own words. He had intended to wait until after the DNA test to discuss such matters.

But his fondness for Ashley, that urge to protect and cherish her as his own sister, was something even he couldn't control.

Ashley froze upon hearing this. Her eyes widened in surprise. There was also a hint of skepticism in her mind. 'Be his sister?'

Although she had a good impression of Lester and felt an unspeakable kinship with him, the idea of becoming his sister was

something else entirely....

Ashley suddenly thought about something. "Oh, I see! You mentioned that your little sister went missing when she was young

and hasn't been found yet. So... You want to think of me as your sister?"

Lester smiled, looking calm, but his fingers gripping the steering wheel tightened nervously.

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He said with a joking tone, "I don't know why, but I've always felt like you were the sister I lost."

As he said this, Ashley's eyes widened in shock.

The astonishment that had faded moments ago came back, filled with incredulity.

That was the first time she knew that Lester had felt that way.

Blinking, Ashley swallowed hard. "But, I am indeed a Ramos."

When she got back with the Ramos family, it wasn't something taken lightly. They had done a DNA test to confirm it.

Moreover, they did the test three times to avoid any mistakes.

Each time, the results showed that she was related to Evan.

Upon hearing this, Lester narrowed his eyes coldly. He knew that the likelihood of an error was very small after having done the

DNA test three times.

The fact that Ashley and Evan were biological father and daughter was almost certain.

Yet, Lester couldn't help but feel a hint of reluctance.

He needed to find a way soon to conduct a DNA test for Ashley and the Pliskin family.

At the airport, Miranda looked at the rugged-faced man in front of her, smiling, her dimples faintly visible, "Bradley, you really

didn't have to come all the way to the airport to pick me up. I'll be at your game tomorrow."

Bradley was dressed in a black jacket, tall and muscular, looking somewhat stern when he wasn't smiling.

However, his expression softened in front of Miranda. He looked at Miranda with a sense of tenderness and affection. "Miranda,

you came all the way abroad to watch my race. I had to pick you up from the airport. I've even arranged a hotel for your stay."

Miranda quickly waved her hands. "No need, really. I have a friend right here in Manditus. I'll stay with her."

Bradley furrowed his brows, probing. Your friend, is it...Ashley?"

Miranda's eyes lit up. She kept nodding. "Yes, it's her! She is quite impressive, very famous, with loads of fans! She's here to

shoot a commercial and also to watch tomorrow's car race!"

Miranda had once joined Ashley on a variety show. They even sat together at the charity dinner. Many journalists and fans knew

they were close friends.

Miranda smiled brightly, "Plus, she's coming to pick me up. from the

airport. She should be here any moment. Are you a fan of hers? If so, you might get to meet her in person! I can put in a good

word for you. Maybe she will take a photo with you!"

Upon hearing this, Bradley turned a bit awkward, and he coughed. "Since you're with your friend, I'm relieved. I'm not a fan of

Ashley, and there are some things I have to do with my racing team. I need to leave now."

“Really? You’re leaving?”

“Yeah, there’s a race tomorrow, and I’ve got some arrangements to make with my team.”

“Okay then. You better get going if you’re busy!” Miranda didn’t insist on him staying, waving at him instead.

“We’ll catch up on our phones tonight. Bradley had hoped to spend more time with Miranda, but it seemed impossible now.

After a brief chat with Miranda, he had to leave.

Arriving at the airport, Ashley got out of her car and saw Miranda gazing wistfully in a direction.

Ashley walked over and patted her shoulder. “What are you looking at?”

Seeing it was Ashley, Miranda quickly pointed. “Ashley, look over there, the guy in the black jacket, that’s Bradley!”

Ashley followed her gaze, and in the next moment, her

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“That man in the black jacket seems a bit like... Ryan?”

Ashley looked closely, but Bradley had got in the car, and she could not longer make out his features clearly.

Is it someone with a similar build?’ she wondered.

Miranda sighed regretfully, “I wanted to introduce you to Bradley, but his team had a sudden issue, and he had to leave.”

Pondering. Ashley raised her eyebrows and smiled, “No worries. He is in the game tomorrow, right? I’ll see him then.”

Miranda wrapped her arms around Ashley’s. “Right, we’ll catch him. tomorrow then!”

Then, they got into Lester’s car.

Seeing the man in the driver’s seat, Miranda greeted him awkwardly. “Hello, Mr. Pliskin.”

Lester’s hand rested casually on the steering wheel, strong and veined, exuding a sense of allure. He glanced at Miranda

through the rearview mirror. “Hello.”

Ashley was sitting in the backseat next to Miranda.

Miranda leaned close to Ashley and whispered, “Ashley, I forgot to mention at the charity dinner last time that your friend is so

handsome! He could be a star!”

Ashley couldn't help but laugh. "How does he compare to that race car driver, Bradley?"

After a moment of thought, Miranda replied, "Mr. Pliskin is still more handsome. Oh! And Mr. Kingsley could be a star as well.

He's like the definition of handsome!"

The image of Valentin's charming face flashed in Ashley's mind.

Miranda wasn't exaggerating. Valentin, indeed, was very attractive.

As they were quietly chatting, Ashley's phone suddenly rang. It was a call from Valentin.

As Ashley discussed him, he called, suddenly making her feel guilty..

After answering, she heard the man's deep, magnetic voice. "I've calculated the time difference. Is it dinner time there?"

With the sunset nearing the horizon, Ashley replied, "It's evening, yes, time for dinner."

Valentin said. "Remember to eat well."

Ashley was speechless. "I'm not a child. I know that."

After a brief chat, they hung up, and Ashley continued discussing with Miranda the topic of who was more handsome.

Lester saw the two girls in the back whispering and giggling about something.

Upon returning to the hotel, Ashley searched around and finally found the person she was looking for in Joseph's room.

The moment Ashley knocked and entered, she saw Bryce and Jaden with their faces covered in long, thin strips of paper, looking

utterly hilarious.

Joseph, on the other hand, had a clean face.

Noticing Miranda, Bryce waved his hand to her. But as he spoke, a strip of paper by his mouth was blown away, making the

scene even more. away, making the scene even more comical.

Ashley couldn't help but laugh. "What are you guys up to?"

Joseph was holding a deck of cards and waved it smugly. "Playing a game. Whoever loses gets a strip of paper stuck on their

face. These two just can't beat me!"

Ashley raised an eyebrow. "You're good at this game, right, Mr. Fox?"

Joseph looked proud. "Exactly, I was born to play! Come on, Ashley, join us. It's more fun with more people!"

Seeing his mischievously smiling face, Ashley felt her competitive spirit was instantly ignited..

With nothing much to do at the moment, she gathered Miranda and Lester to sit down, forming a circle.

Joseph brought over a plump, balloon-like toy and explained, "Let's go. over the rules. This thing will slowly inflate until it pops.

We'll pass it around, and whoever has it when it bursts must answer a truth question or take on a daring challenge."

Ashley quickly said, "Simple enough, let's get started."

"Then let the game begin!" Joseph announced, passing the balloon toy to Lester next to him.

Lester then passed it to Miranda, and Miranda handed it to Ashley. Miranda handed it to Ashley..

Then, Ashley passed it to the next person.

Finally, as the toy was on the verge of popping, Jaden deliberately slowed down, passing it in slow motion to Bryce.

Bryce was visibly annoyed upon seeing this. Just as he was about to pass. it on, the balloon burst in his hand.

Joseph immediately burst into laughter. "The balloon just passed from my hand, and now it's my turn to ask a question. You have

to tell the truth! Bryce, tell me, what's the deal with you and Brittany? Spill it!"

Everyone knew about the incident at the charity dinner, so as soon as Joseph asked, they all curiously turned to Bryce.

Ashley gave Joseph a thumbs-up. That was indeed a good question.

Bryce pinched the burst balloon and answered vaguely, "Brittany and I knew each other in the past."

Joseph was eager for gossip and quickly followed up. "You knew each other before, and then what?"

Bryce replied, "That's a second question."

Joseph was speechless. Just you wait. I'll get it out of you!"

Since the balloon had burst in Bryce's hands, it was his turn to pass.

it

next.

After being passed around a few times, the balloon burst in Joseph's hands by sheer coincidence.

Bryce smiled sinisterly, looking toward Joseph, obviously wanting revenge. "Come on, if you had to choose a guy here to kiss.

Who will it be?"

Joseph was taken aback. "Damn it. That's so out of line!"

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Ashley was stunned.

Joseph was even more anxious than Ashley, nearly spitting out his drink in surprise. "Jaden, what kind of
dare is that!"

It might work if said to Valentin. But it would be chaos if it were said to someone else.

Especially if the first contact happened to be one of Ashley's admirers, that would stir up even more
trouble.

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But Joseph's anxiety was pointless. The rules of the game were clear and had to be followed.

Ashley took out her phone while trying to recall whom she had recently. called and who was the first
contact on her list.

Seeing her take out her phone, Joseph couldn't sit still. He ran over, anxiously praying that Ashley's first
contact wasn't one of

her many admirers.

Noticing Joseph come over, Ashley didn't avoid him and checked her call history.

To her surprise, the first contact was Valentin.

Ashley was stunned.

Oh, right, she remembered. On the way back to the hotel, Valentin had called her, reminding her to eat
well.

Joseph instantly relaxed upon seeing it was Valentin. 'What a

coincidence! Ashley and Valentin sure are in close contact, he thought.

They had just talked on the phone an hour ago.

Standing a bit away from Ashley, Bryce couldn't see who was in the contact and asked curiously, "Who is it? Someone from our circle?"

Joseph chuckled, "I won't tell you! Go on, Ashley, call it!"

Seeing Joseph's eager and cheerful expression, Lester and Jaden instantly guessed it must be Ashley's husband.

Under Joseph's urging, Ashley bit the bullet and dialed Valentin.

Valentin always picked up her calls quickly.

Ashley wasn't quite prepared when the call connected immediately.

Caught off-guard, she blurted out, "I miss you."

Upon hearing this, Valentin was in a moment of bewilderment.

He felt a surge of emotion attacked him. His heart skipped a beat. 'Ashley said she missed me?'

He was just about to respond when Ashley hung up the phone at the next second.

Valentin was completely puzzled.

He dialed again, but Ashley didn't answer, cutting off his call and then sending a message: [Well, I'm playing a game right now.

I'll call you at 10 PM!]

Valentin fell silent. 'Play...a game?'

His eyes narrowed dangerously.

Ashley felt guilty after sending the message and glared at Jaden..

Jaden laughed fearlessly. "Isn't this great?"

Ashley made a false smile, "Great? Okay then."

In this round of the game, Ashley had completed a daring challenge. So, in the new round, the balloon passed from her hands,

and it was her turn to ask for a truth or dare.

After several rounds, Ashley had figured out the timing needed for the balloon to burst.

So, when passing it on, she deliberately slowed down, and just as the balloon reached Jaden's hands, it popped right on cue.

Ashley glanced over and sneered, "Come on, call the first person in your contacts and tell them you're missing them."

Jaden was speechless.

A few rounds later, the balloon burst again in Jaden's hands.

Ashley held her chin with one hand and smirked. "Keep going, call second person in your contacts, say you miss them."

Jaden was completely stunned. 'Man, I messed up!'

Joseph loved seeing Jaden defeated, laughing so hard he almost slumped on the floor. "Jaden, you've finally met your match!

Hey, where do you think you're running off to?"

Finally, the game ended with Jaden frantically fleeing.

Afterward, everyone gathered for dinner at the hotel's restaurant.

Having finished their meal, Ashley led Miranda to the room she had reserved.

The two chatted for a while, and Ashley advised Miranda to get a good rest for the car race they planned to see the next

morning.

Back in her own room, Ashley took a shower.

Feeling refreshed and comfortable in bed, she called Valentin.

As soon as the call connected, she heard Valentin's clear, slightly hoarse voice asking, "Ten o'clock?"

Ashley blinked, recalling her message during the game, saying she'd call him at ten.

Glancing at the clock, Ashley scratched her head and said proudly, "What's the matter? It's only 9:58, isn't it?"

There was a pause on Valentin's end.

He couldn't help but chuckle softly, "Go on, tell me."

Ashley instantly understood what he meant. She turned over in bed,

saying casually, "Nothing much, just playing Truth or Dare, and I had to call the first person on my call log."

Valentin raised his eyebrow and said cheerfully. "So I'm the first person on your call log, huh?"

Ta's because you had just called me"

Seems like I need to call you more often, then."

To prevent you from calling some other guy during a game, say miss him.

Ashley va uppbruptly. "No! We don't play that game often. Besides, wouldn't din ne several times a day be a hassle for you?"

Valentin raad disc eyebrows, his tone casual yet seductive. "That's no trouble er allt diihin my own wife.

Ashley's eyelashes ducere, gripping the bedsheets subconsciously. "Alright, call if you want but in going to sleep now."

"Wait a second""

"Is there something else?" Ashley asked, only to realize the call had ended.

When she was puzzled, a video call from Valentin came through.

Ashley answered with suspicion, "Weren't we just on a call? Why a video call now?"

Valentin scrutinized her, taking in every detail. "Nothing much, just wanted to see you. Haven't seen you all day, after all."

His voice was deep and magnetic, as if laced with a seductive hook.

Ashley's heart skipped a beat. Then, she seemed to remember something and leaned close to the camera, blinking. "Did you

see my dark circles?"

Valentin found her appearance cute and replied casually, "No, I didn't."

"Don't fool me." Ashley picked up a small mirror from her nightstand. "Look, the dark circles are showing. I haven't been resting

well these past few days."

"You haven't rested well?" he frowned.

"Yeah, that's why I'm feeling sleepy today," Ashley said, putting her mirror back on the bedside table and yawning. "Tomorrow

morning, I'm going to a car race. Maybe take a look at a handsome race car driver."

Valentin's face darkened immediately, his voice stern. "See what?"

Ashley thought he hadn't heard her and repeated, "The car race, and maybe a good-looking driver. I heard he's really handsome,

a friend of Miranda's. You know Miranda, right?"

Valentin almost laughed in annoyance, his expression far from pleased.

At this moment, he couldn't bother whether it was Miranda or anyone. else.

Ashley was genuinely tired, yawning again. "But according to Miranda, this race car driver isn't as handsome as you.

Without thinking, Ashley teased, her sleepy mind speaking freely, "Can't help it, Mr. Kingsley has always had good looks, not just

nice to look at, but also nice to touch."

Valentin froze, the coldness in his eyes melting away like spring snow, vanishing instantly. "Wait till you get back. You can touch it

every day."

Ashley suddenly realized what she had just said. "I'll...deal with it when I get back. Time to sleep!"

With that, she ended the video call, her sleepiness completely gone.

Really, what was she thinking?

The next morning, Ashley, along with Joseph, Miranda, and others, went to watch the car race.

Their seat was at the main grandstand, offering an excellent view. Plus, there were six large screens around them, broadcasting

the race live.

It was the pre-race preparation period.

Miranda scanned around and soon spotted Bradley in the driver's rest area. She immediately pointed him out to Ashley. "Ashley,

look over there, the guy in black, that's Bradley!"

Ashley followed her gaze.

However, her expression suddenly turned cold when she saw Bradley's face.