

Divorced Me 1071

Chapter 1071

Jolie felt a sudden tightness in her chest.

She glanced at the group of girls nearby. They looked anxious and uneasy but still glanced at Gavin with curiosity and anticipation.

She scoffed silently. "What's so special about him anyway?"

""You all can head back now."

Disappointment flashed across their faces in varying degrees as they turned and left.

Once they were gone, Jolie turned to Gavin. "Mr. Cooper, I think it would be better if you gave me a clear set of criteria. Searching blindly like this is unlikely to meet your expectations." "You don't need to go through all that trouble," Gavin replied, extinguishing his cigarette in the ashtray. His gaze remained calm as it settled on her.

Jolie seemed to anticipate what he was about to say and quickly added, "I don't find it troublesome. Just tell me your requirements."

Gavin said nothing, his eyes heavy as they lingered on her.

Here we go again," she thought.

That familiar oppressive aura washed over her.

She wasn't his subordinate, so why did he always look at her like that?

How frustrating!

Under the weight of his gaze, Jolie forced a smile.

"Come here," Gavin suddenly said.

There was still a table between them, and Jolie was standing quite a distance away.

Instead of moving closer, she maintained her smile and replied, "If you have instructions, Mr. Cooper, feel free to say them. I can hear you just fine." Gavin parted his lips and said something.

Instinctively, Jolie asked, "What?"

Gavin didn't repeat himself, simply fixing her with a look that seemed to say, "Didn't you say you could hear me?"

Jolie was speechless.

It took her a moment to realize his intention, and she couldn't help but think how utterly childish and ridiculous this man was.

But she owed him a favor, and there was no getting around that.

With a resigned sigh, she braced herself and started walking toward him.

When she was about two meters away, she stopped and asked, "Mr. Cooper, what are your instructions?"

Gavin stayed silent, his gaze steady and unreadable.

Jolie took a deep breath and stepped another meter closer. Now, if he extended his hand, he could almost touch her.

"Mr. Cooper, what would you like me to do?" she asked again.

At this point, she felt like a servant attending to a demanding noble.

Still, Gavin said nothing, his eyes dark and inscrutable as they bore into her.

Jolie's brow furrowed, and her patience was wearing thin.

This man had an uncanny ability to push her limits.

She didn't step closer but let her smile fade slightly.

"Mr. Cooper, if you're not going to say anything, how am I supposed to know what you're thinking? I'm not a mind reader," she said, her tone

UTA

composure was visibly crumpled

calm now, though her mask

Gavin looked at her with an amused expression, a rare sight on his otherwise cold and indifferent face.

However, Jolie felt a chill run down her spine.

"I was just thinking," he said, "how

you might try to weasel your way out of this. Do all women go back on their word so easily? That night, in my bed, you swore to repay me-whatever I asked. But now, the moment I name my price, you're doing everything you can to dodge it. Tell me, Miss Quin, doesn't that strike you as a little hypocritical?"

Jolie was speechless.

She could barely keep up the pretense.

Pressing her lips together, she replied, "Mr. Cooper, it shouldn't be hard to see that I don't want to have too much to do with you."

Gavin nodded. "I see that. And?"

Jolie frowned slightly. "So, can't you propose a different condition? One I'll do my best to fulfill."

"I did, but you didn't fulfil it."

His gaze remained calm and unyielding, like an ancient well devoid of ripples.

Jolie was left speechless.

Leaning back in his chair, Gavin continued watching her with a detached air. "You'd rather make things difficult for yourself than get entangled with me. But have you considered this? If I remain

unsatisfied, you'll have to keep seeing me."

Chapter 1072

Jolie clenched the hem of her dress, her gaze fixed on the man before her.

In the dim lighting, his sharp, handsome features seemed even more intimidating. He had an air of absolute control, effortlessly seeing through her every thought. Even with no expression on his face, it felt like he was silently mocking her for overestimating herself. Taking a deep breath, she asked, "Will one time be enough?"

Gavin's eyes were calm and unreadable as he replied evenly, "If it hadn't been for me that night, you would've been utterly humiliated in the Cooper estate. The Quin family's reputation would've been ruined."

Jolie's composure shattered. She frowned and glared at him, her tone laced with annoyance. "So, Mr. Cooper, are you just taking advantage of the situation?"

Still calm, Gavin said, "You're the one who offered to repay me."

That one sentence rendered her speechless.

With a sigh of defeat, she slumped onto the sofa, refusing to look at him. "Fine. Just tell me what will it take to settle this?"

"Ten times."

The man beside her uttered the words without a hint of hesitation.

Jolie snapped her head toward him, her expression one of utter disbelief.

"You..."

She opened her mouth, but no words came out. Her pale face flushed pink, a mix of anger and embarrassment.

Gavin watched her, his gaze flickering with faint amusement at her indignation, which she clearly had no way to vent.

""Well? You don't want to?"

Jolie gritted her teeth. "Five times."

"Ten," Gavin replied without missing a beat. "I don't negotiate."

Jolie's fists clenched tightly. She regretted ever getting involved with such a shameless man.

If she'd known it would come to this, she would never have asked for his help. Letting that spoiled brat have his way back then would've been far better than her current predicament.

The more Jolie tried to avoid entanglements with him, the deeper she found herself caught in his web.

"Fine," she said after a deep breath, agreeing in one decisive word.

Then, she added, "After ten times, we're done. Can you guarantee that, Mr. Cooper?"

"No problem," Gavin replied with a nod, agreeing without hesitation.

Jolie stood, ready to leave. "It's getting late. I'll head back now. Goodnight, Mr. Cooper."

With that, she turned and started toward the door.

"I want a woman tonight."

His voice came from behind her, low and steady.

Jolie froze mid-step, her entire body enveloped in a wave of intense shame. She bit her lip, her face heating.

He didn't need to elaborate. She understood his meaning.

Tonight would be their first time.

The room fell silent, so still that she could hear the faint rhythm of their breathing.

Gavin, like a skilled predator, showed no hurry.

Instead, he moved to the liquor cabinet, opened the glass door, and took out a bottle of expensive wine.

With unhurried precision, he poured

the wine into a glass, the amber liquid swirling as it caught the light,

reflecting an alluring kaleidoscope of colors.

Lifting the glass, he took a sip, savoring the taste.

A faint smile played on his lips as if he were pleased with the flavor.

Footsteps echoed behind him-hurried, agitated, yet tinged with the resignation of someone submitting to a fate they couldn't escape.

The next moment, soft hands

cradled his face as she leaned in, her delicate fragrance brushing against him, her lips finding his in a hesitant, clumsy kiss.

Her eyes were squeezed shut, her expression one of grim determination, as though she were facing some dire, unavoidable ordeal.

Gavin watched her calmly, making no move to respond, letting her fumble through the kiss.

Her movements were rushed and haphazard, desperate to get it over with as quickly as possible.

Yet no matter how hard she tried, he remained still, offering no reaction. Compared to that night a month ago, this was nothing-far from the wild, untamed passion of before.

Chapter 1073

Jolie's lashes trembled as she opened her eyes, her gaze locking with his. His dark, fathomless eyes were devoid of any emotion, like a still, bottomless lake. She froze, her movements coming to an abrupt halt.

Pulling back slightly, she stared at him in confusion. "Didn't you say you wanted a woman?"

Why was he so unresponsive, even when she had taken the initiative? What was this supposed to mean?

The more she tried to understand this man, the less she could. And the less she liked him. He was infuriating.

Gavin stood there, one hand holding a glass of wine, the other tucked casually into his trouser pocket. His dark gray shirt was impeccably buttoned all the way to the top, the tie perfectly knotted, exuding an air of restraint and self-discipline. Even with a woman practically draped over him, he maintained an aura of cold detachment, an unapproachable distance that only emphasized his indifference.

Jolie let go of him and stepped back, her lips now glistening slightly from the messy kiss. Frustration tinged her voice as she asked, "Do you enjoy toying with me, Mr. Cooper?"

Gavin's tone was cool and unaffected as he replied, "This should have been something pleasurable. But the way you approached it as if walking to the gallows, made it feel like a punishment. Do you really think being with me is such a torment?" His blunt words laid her thoughts bare, leaving her flustered and unsure of where to look.

"I didn't mean that."

"Didn't you?"

His gaze shifted to the wine in his hand. Taking another sip, his Adam's apple moved in a slow, enticing motion as he swallowed. His tone was calm, almost indifferent. "Then show me your best. Let me see who you really are." Jolie stared at him, stunned.

Wait-what? Was he raising the bar now?

Her frustration boiled over, a faint redness blooming at the corners of her eyes. She bit her lip and snapped, "Gavin Cooper, you know full well I don't want this, yet you're using guilt to push me into agreeing to your ridiculous demands.

"Do you really think I care whether you're satisfied or not? You've already had your fun before-so what if I back out now? I'm done playing your games!"

What could have been a straightforward matter had turned into an ordeal, thanks to his endless demands. Did he think she was some kind of wishing well, ready to grant his every whim? Dream on!

Furious, Jolie spun on her heel and stormed off.

But before she could take more than a step, a hand gripped her wrist, yanking her back with surprising force.

Her soft body collided with his chest-solid, muscular, and unyielding-knocking the breath out of her as she frowned in pain.

"What are you" she began angrily, but her words were abruptly silenced as the warm, intoxicating scent of wine filled the air between them.

His lips descended, capturing hers in a heated kiss that stopped her protests cold.

Gavin was irritated, his emotions unexpectedly stirred by her defiance. This little woman was insufferably stubborn. Promises meant nothing to her and that lack of commitment was something he wouldn't tolerate.

Jolie didn't stand a chance against his dominance. His kiss left her dizzy, her knees weak, and her body melting against his. Only the firm arm wrapped around her waist kept her from crumpling to the floor. His hands slid to her slender waist, gripping tightly. With one effortless motion, he lifted her off the ground and placed her on the chair.

The cool sensation of the fabric

brushing against her skin made her shiver, her dress hiked up enough to leave her exposed. Instinctively, she clamped her legs together-only to find them wrapping around his hips.

Her face flushed with embarrassment and fury. Balling her hands into fists, she pounded against his chest in protest, trying desperately to resist.

But Gavin's strength was overwhelming, easily overpowering her attempts. His kiss grew more intense, wild, and consuming, as he claimed her softness and stole the air from her lungs.

The room filled with the sound of ragged breathing, heavy and unsteady. A muffled, short cry escaped her lips, tinged with frustration and the faintest hint of tears.

Chapter 1074

"Scoundrel..." she thought.

This man was utterly despicable.

Jolie passed out, and before her consciousness faded completely, she bit him out of sheer frustration. But with no strength left, the effort was more symbolic than effective.

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The next morning.

The motorized curtains slid open automatically, and sunlight poured into the room, bright and unrelenting. Jolie stirred as the light hit her face, groaning softly before lifting an arm to shield her eyes. She slowly forced them open. This wasn't the private suite from last night.

The bedroom was large, its minimalist design starkly cold in shades of black, white, and gray.

She immediately knew where she was.

Only he would decorate a house in such lifeless, joyless tones.

Turning over, she let out an involuntary whimper. Her back ached, her legs were sore, and every movement sent tremors through the muscles of her thighs.

She bit her lip, her frustration mounting as tears pricked the corners of her eyes from the pain.

Just then, Gavin walked in.

He stopped at the sight of her fair skin wrapped in his deep-gray comforter, her arms exposed, and faint marks trailing over her shoulders. She was struggling to sit up, the delicate tear stains at

the edges of her eyes stirring something deep within him. Suppressing his thoughts, he asked calmly, "Do you need a massage?"

"No! I don't!" Jolie snapped, gritting her teeth as she refused to even look at him.

After an arduous effort, she managed to sit upright. She swung her legs over the side of the bed and tried to stand, but the moment her feet touched the floor, her body betrayed her with a visible tremble.

She couldn't even take a step.

Her anger surged as she turned and shot him a furious glare the very picture of indignation aimed squarely at the culprit of her current misery.

With a huff, Jolie flopped back onto the bed, pulling the comforter over her head.

"I'm not getting up!" she declared, her voice muffled by the fabric.

From beneath the covers, she suddenly heard a low, muted chuckle. Startled, she threw the blanket off and stared at him, wide-eyed. "You... you can laugh?" she asked in disbelief.

From the moment she'd met him, she'd never seen him crack a smile.

"Was he just someone who didn't like to laugh by nature?" she wondered.

Gavin's lips still curved slightly as he replied, "Why wouldn't I be able to laugh?"

Jolie scoffed lightly. "Who knows? Maybe you're just pretending to be all brooding and mysterious."

That would explain why he usually carried such a stern, unapproachable air, making it seem like he was impossible to deal with.

Gavin stepped closer, his expression

returning to its usual calm. "You can keep lying down. I have a meeting to attend soon. If you need anything call me if you're hungry, get up and eat. There's food in the kitchen."

His tone was casual as he gave her instructions.

Then, leaning down, he braced one hand on the bed beside her and kissed her without warning.

Jolie gasped, jerking her head to the side. His lips brushed against her cheek instead.

"What are you doing?!" she exclaimed, flustered.

What was with this sudden kiss?

Their relationship wasn't anywhere near intimate enough for him to kiss her whenever he felt like it!

She was just repaying a debt-nothing more.

Once her debt was cleared, they would be strangers again!

Gavin didn't leave immediately. His warm breath lingered on her cheek, brushing over her skin, which felt soft and seemed to carry a faint sweetness.

He pressed another kiss there, slow and deliberate, as if reluctant to part.

Jolie was completely thrown off.

"Gavin Cooper!"

"Yes, I'm here," he replied calmly, as though oblivious to the frustration in her tone.

She shoved his face away with her hand. "Stop kissing me!"

He stared at her intently for a moment, then said, "Alright."

Without hesitation, he straightened and walked out of the room, leaving without the slightest resistance or argument.

His abrupt compliance only made Jolie feel more exasperated, like she was being led around by the nose.

So annoying!

She hated how easily he seemed to take control of every situation.

Her body, still too drained from the

night before, refused to keep up with her indignation. Eventually, she drifted back to sleep.

When she woke again, it was already noon.

Reaching for her phone, she noticed several missed calls lighting up the screen.

Chapter 1075

All the missed calls were from Daisy.

A trace of mockery flickered in Jolie's eyes, quickly replaced by deep helplessness.

Her resistance was so obvious, yet in the end, things didn't go as she wished.

She still couldn't shake off Gavin.

And this was only the first time.

There were still nine more to come.

If promises weren't fulfilled immediately, the timeline would stretch indefinitely.

This meant their interactions would continue.

And the Quin family's goal would be achieved.

Resisting further would only make her look like a joke.

She closed her eyes briefly, choosing not to call Daisy but to send a message instead.

"Out with friends."

Dais replied, "Then why didn't you answer my call? I thought something happened to you."

Looking at the message, Jolie found it laughable.

She didn't think Daisy truly believed something had happened to her; she simply assumed she was with Gavin.

That was why, after a few calls, Daisy stopped trying.

If Daisy truly thought she was in danger, she would have turned the world upside down to find her.

Jolie wrote, "No, just stayed out late. My phone was on silent, so I didn't hear it."

Daisy replied, "Alright, come back early."

"Okay."

After putting her phone away, Jolie moved slightly, feeling a bit better, and got up to head to the bathroom to freshen up.

She noticed that new toiletries had been prepared, and neatly placed right next to Gavin's.

There was an inexplicable sense of intimacy.

Frowning, Jolie moved them aside.

She didn't like this kind of intimacy.

She and Gavin would never have that kind of intimate relationship.

Leaving the bedroom, she found breakfast on the dining table as expected-freshly baked croissants and a bowl of oatmeal, ready to be warmed and enjoyed. After finishing the meal, Jolie left directly.

She felt a strong aversion to this place and had no interest in even glancing around to see what Gavin's house looked like.

On her way, she stopped by a

pharmacy to buy a morning-after pill

and took it immediately. She was determined to avoid any ties to him,

especially involving a

The thought alone was terrifying.

As Selena drove past the area, she noticed Jolie coming out of the pharmacy and immediately pulled over. "Hey."

Hearing the voice, Jolie turned her head.

Seeing Selena, she looked surprised but quickly walked over, opened the car door, and got in.

"What's up?" Jolie asked, puzzled as she looked at her.

Selena glanced at her and asked directly, "Why were you coming out of there? Are you feeling unwell?"

Her concern was so straightforward that Jolie was momentarily taken aback, unsure how to respond.

A hint of surprise flashed in Jolie's eyes as she looked at Selena as if trying to confirm whether the person in front of her was really her.

"Why are you staring at me like that?"

Selena felt uncomfortable under Jolie's odd gaze and asked in confusion.

"It's nothing," Jolie replied. "I'm just not used to being cared for by my sister all of a sudden."

Her words left Selena momentarily speechless.

Looking away, Selena said stiffly, "Forget it if you don't want to talk. Get out of the car."

But Jolie fastened her seatbelt

instead. I'm not getting out. I don't want to go home, and I don't want to go to the Cooper estate. Take me somewhere to hang out."

Selena frowned and glanced at her but said nothing further, starting the car. Jolie asked, "Are you planning to stay in Larbor City permanently?" Selena responded with a simple "Yes."

Jolie smiled faintly. "That's nice."

She didn't elaborate on what she meant, and Selena didn't press for details.

Instead, she drove Jolie to the neighbourhood she was staying.

Jolie fell silent.

Looking at the familiar neighborhood, she realized she had just left this area earlier.

"You bought a house here?" Jolie asked.

Selena nodded. "Yes, I like the environment in this neighborhood."

Jolie sighed, rubbing her forehead. She suddenly regretted coming with her.

However, when Selena drove into the villa district, Jolie felt somewhat relieved.

Gavin's apartment was in a separate building, far from the villas. Staying here, she felt confident she wouldn't run into him.

Chapter 1076

Selena noticed something off about Jolie's expression and asked curiously, "You don't like this place?" "No."

Jolie shook her head, suppressing the thoughts swirling in her mind, and followed Selena into the villa. "Madam, you're back."

The villa's butler greeted Selena respectfully upon seeing her.

"Yes," Selena acknowledged with a nod before saying, "Prepare a room."

"Understood," the butler replied promptly and signaled to the staff to head upstairs.

Selena glanced at Jolie. "This is where I usually stay. Feel free to explore."

Jolie nodded and asked, "Is it alright to stay as long as I want?"

"Stay as long as you like," Selena replied, her expression indifferent.

Jolie smiled, taking a couple of steps forward. "Will my brother-in-law come here?"

Selena gave her a peculiar look. "Why do you ask?"

Jolie said, "I hope he doesn't come."

"Don't worry. He won't. He's busy in Cloudflare City," Selena replied flatly.

Though he did video call her daily, he would only come over if he really couldn't help himself.

Jolie nodded, feeling reassured. In truth, she preferred staying alone with Selena; having another person around made her uncomfortable. Selena turned to leave, but Jolie grabbed her arm abruptly and asked, "Where are you going?"

Selena's brows furrowed immediately. "Let go."

Jolie flinched, startled by Selena's sudden harshness. She immediately let go, a hint of caution flashing in her eyes. "I... I was just asking." Selena pressed her lips together and said, "I'm heading out. You stay here."

Jolie didn't reply, simply staring at her.

Selena felt unnerved by the look in Jolie's eyes and frowned. "What exactly do you want?"

Jolie lowered her gaze slightly and murmured, "Sister."

She didn't say anything more.

Selena's heart skipped a beat as she instinctively looked at her with heightened vigilance.

Jolie seemed hurt. She forced a bitter smile and said softly, "It's nothing. Go ahead, you're busy."

Selena turned and walked away.

It was strange.

She had never enjoyed being too close to Jolie. It had always been that way.

After all, she grew up watching Jolie bask in affection while she was the one constantly overlooked. What had started as a longing to be loved turned into a desperate hope for a sliver of attention, and finally utter disillusionment. She had long felt nothing for her family.

The only reason she had taken Jolie in was because she was her sister.

"Miss, the room is ready. You can go upstairs and rest," the butler said, walking down the stairs with a polite smile.

"Thank you." Jolie nodded slightly at the butler and began walking upstairs.

After just a couple of steps, she suddenly stopped and said, "My last name is Quin. I'm Selena's sister."

The butler was momentarily stunned before responding, "Oh, so you're Miss Quin. If there's anything you need, just let me know." "Alright."

Jolie nodded and followed the staff into the room.

She couldn't quite explain why she

felt the need to emphasize that. Perhaps it was because she didn't want to feel too distant from Selena or anyone associated with her.

During this time, Daisy called her again, but Jolie hung up without answering.

Right now, she didn't want any contact with the Quin family.

Especially when she thought about her complicated relationship with Gavin. The more she dwelled on it, the more she wanted to hide away in some corner and never come out.

Jolie napped in the guest room for a while, and when she woke up, she headed downstairs to see if Selena had returned.

What she didn't expect was to run into Gavin instead.

Chapter 1077

Jolie froze in place, standing on the second floor with her hands gripping the stair railing, her fingers tightening slightly.

The man downstairs seemed to sense her gaze and looked up.

Startled, Jolie instinctively turned her head away. However, there was nowhere to hide on the second floor, making her attempt to avoid him somewhat comical. "What are you hiding from?"

The man's deep, magnetic voice rose from downstairs, his tone casual but carrying a faint sharpness that echoed in her ears.

Jolie pressed her lips together, taking a deep breath before forcing a smile onto her face. She turned around and said, "Mr. Cooper, you must be joking. Why would I be hiding? I just remembered I left something in my room. I'll go get it." Without waiting for a reply, she spun on her heel and headed back to her room.

She had decided to stay locked inside until he left. Surely, he wouldn't stick around forever.

But what puzzled her even more was why he was here in the first place.

Was he here to see Selena?

The thought of him liking her sister made her expression darken.

Being tangled up with a man who had feelings for her sister-how utterly miserable.

She silently hoped he would hurry up and use the remaining nine requests, ending this maddeningly complicated relationship as soon as possible.

After staying in her room for a while, Jolie glanced at the time. It was nearly dinner.

Knock, knock!

Just then, a knock came at her door.

"Who is it?"

She asked, confused, as she walked toward the door. Opening it, she found herself meeting the gaze of the man standing outside.

He was dressed in a perfectly

tailored black suit, his tall,

commanding figure exuding an

imposing, sharp aura. His dark eyes, as deep and piercing as obsidian, locked onto her face with an

intensity that left her feeling trapped.

"Mr. Cooper?"

Jolie tightened her grip on the doorknob, her heart tensing with unease. Why had he come upstairs so suddenly?

Was he deliberately waiting for her?

How utterly childish.

Couldn't he tell she didn't want anything to do with him?

Gavin didn't miss the swirl of emotions in her eyes but chose not to call her out on it this time. In a calm and indifferent tone, he said, "Dinner's ready." Hearing that, Jolie felt a wave of relief. So, he was just here to let her know about dinner.

She smiled politely and nodded. "Got it. I'll be right down."

She stepped out of the room, closing the door behind her, and turned to head downstairs. But the next moment, Gavin's hand suddenly pressed against her waist, pinning her back against the door.

"Mr. Cooper, what are you doing?"

Jolie gasped instinctively, lowering her voice to avoid drawing attention. Her eyes were filled with wariness.

The two of them were now impossibly close.

The faint scent of cedar from his body enveloped her, dense and suffocating, sending a wave of danger rippling through her.

Gavin looked down at her, his voice low and steady as he asked, "Are you avoiding me?"

Though phrased as a question, his tone left no room for doubt he was certain she was.

Jolie forced a stiff smile. "Mr. Cooper, you must be joking. Why would I-"

Gavin's hand moved lazily along her waist, his tone measured and deliberate. "You are avoiding me, Miss Quin. Do you really think you can hide from me?"

Jolie's composed expression finally

cracked. She pushed his hand away

and said coldly, "If you've already figured it out, why bother asking? We're not close enough for you to act this way whenever and wherever you please, are we?"

Chapter 1078

She stopped pretending, and her eyes clearly reflected her dislike for him.

Gavin glanced at her expressionless face, withdrew his hand, and turned away. "I've always preferred your honesty."

Jolie watched his tall figure retreat, rolling her eyes so hard it practically hurt.

"Who cares what you prefer!" she thought.

Downstairs.

Selena walked in through the front door, spotting Gavin and Jolie descending the staircase one after the other. A hint of surprise crossed her face. "You two... what's this about?"

Gavin replied, "I went to call her down for dinner."

"Oh..."

Selena deliberately drew out the word, her gaze turning slightly mischievous.

Jolie's grip on the railing tightened. She asked, "When did you get back, Selena?"

"Just now," Selena answered.

Jolie nodded and headed straight toward the dining room.

Selena glanced at Gavin and said, "Aaron didn't come. I'll relay what you told me, but I can't guarantee he'll go along with it."

Gavin replied indifferently, "Understood."

"Let's eat first," Selena suggested.

"Alright," he agreed without hesitation.

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In the dining room, the atmosphere was stiff and tense.

Jolie focused on the food in front of her, refusing to spare even a glance at the man sitting across from her.

Selena glanced between the two of them, her curiosity growing.

"You two... know each other well?" she asked hesitantly.

"Not at all," Jolie replied immediately.

Selena raised an eyebrow. "Oh, I thought you two were close."

Jolie didn't see the point in explaining further; the last thing she wanted was any association with Gavin.

After dinner, Gavin glanced at his watch and said casually, "I'll head out now."

Selena smiled warmly. "Goodbye, Gavin."

"Goodbye."

He nodded, his gaze lingering briefly on Jolie's face before he turned and strode out the door.

The moment he left, Jolie let out a breath

She hadn't realized she'd

en holding. Without him around, felt a lot more at

Selena glanced at her and opened her mouth as if to say something, but ultimately said nothing and walked away.

Jolie returned to the guest room, planning to stay there for the rest of the evening.

Just then, her phone began to ring. She picked it up and saw it was Daisy calling.

She couldn't ignore it. Otherwise, Daisy would undoubtedly blow up, and the one who'd suffer would be her.

Jolie hesitated briefly before answering.

"Hello?"

Daisy's voice was gentle. "Jolie, why haven't you come home yet?"

"I'm staying at a friend's place," Jolie replied flatly. "I won't be back for the next few days."

Daisy sighed. "It's not good to impose on your friends for too long. You should come home, or at least stay in your apartment. And try to spend more time with Mr. Cooper. You young people must have plenty to talk about."

Jolie's tone remained emotionless. "Alright, I understand."

"That's my good girl," Daisy said with satisfaction. "Come home soon."

With that, she ended the call.

Jolie stood still, her gaze lowering slightly as her long lashes quivered. A deep exhaustion clouded her eyes.

She truly didn't want to keep dealing with this kind of situation.

But she had no choice.

Stepping outside, she approached Selena and said, "I'm heading back."

Selena looked at her in surprise. "Why?"

Didn't she hate going back?

Jolie met her gaze, her expression softening despite herself. "Selena, I can't fight against it."

Selena fell silent.

After a moment, she said, "I'll have the driver take you."

"No need," Jolie replied, shaking her head. "I'm not going home. I'll my apartment. It's not far from here."

So Stay

Chapter 1079

"Alright," Selena said, not pressing further. Jolie turned and left without another word.

As she walked outside, her mind churned, contemplating her next move.

How could she escape her current predicament?

Her fate seemed sealed. She had to go through with an arranged marriage she couldn't avoid. The only variable was the kind of man she'd end up with.

When she saw Gavin at the Quin family's banquet, she knew their target was him. They'd stop at nothing to push her toward him, hoping she could win him over.

But she despised him.

She wanted nothing to do with him.

If that was the case, her best option was to find someone she could tolerate someone the Quin family would deem acceptable for an alliance. If she started dating such a person, it would put an end to their schemes. At least then, her life wouldn't be entirely unbearable.

By the time she stepped out of the neighborhood, her plan had solidified. Pulling out her phone, she sent a message to a friend.

The friend called her immediately.

"Wait, Jolie, are you serious?"

"Yes," she replied calmly. "If it's going to be an arranged marriage anyway, I might as well choose someone I like. It's a form of rebellion, isn't it?"

It felt like she was in the midst of some personal rebellion. The more her family pushed her to do something, the less she wanted to comply.

Her friend hesitated for a moment before responding. "Alright, I'll help you look around. I'll send you some photos, and if anyone catches your eye, you can meet for dinner and see how it goes."

"Sounds good. Thanks."

Jolie smiled, a spark of determination lighting her face.

Her friend sighed. "I admire your courage to push back. I don't even have that much fight in me. I can't stand the person my family picked for me."

Jolie replied, "Don't overthink it. I'm almost home now."

"Alright. Talk later."

After hanging up, Jolie exhaled deeply, feeling a weight lift off her shoulders.

Just then, a car slowed to a stop beside her. The rear window rolled down, revealing Gavin's sharp, chiseled features.

He glanced at her casually and said, "Get in."

The smile on Jolie's face vanished instantly. She shook her head and replied curtly, "No need, Mr. Cooper."

Without waiting for his response, she turned and walked away.

She wasn't pretending anymore. There wasn't even a trace of courtesy left as she avoided looking back at him.

Gavin's dark gaze lingered on her

retreating figure. Her slender frame swayed slightly as she walked, her every step deliberate, exuding quiet defiance.

Resting his hand on his knee, Gavin tapped his fingers lightly before closing the window.

He had plenty of time to deal with her.

...

Back at her apartment, Jolie finally relaxed and gave herself a proper rest.

Three days later, her friend sent her a few photos to review.

The men were all young heirs from prominent families in Larbor City. None were on the level of the Cooper family, but they far outclassed the Quin family.

Jolie studied the photos one by one before selecting one and sending it back with a brief message:

""This one."

Moments later, her friend sent over the man's details.

His name was Ian Moore, and his

family ran a stable business in medical equipment. Recently returned from studying abroad, was about to join the family company. Reliable and free of bad habits, he seemed like a solid

choice.

Jolie's friend quickly arranged for them to meet the next afternoon.

The following day, Jolie headed out and arrived at the café, where her friend and Ian were already engaged in conversation.

As soon as Jolie walked in, her friend waved her over.

"Jolie, over here!"

A smile appeared on Jolie's face as she made her way to the table.

Ian stood up as she approached. Tall and well-built, he had refined features and wore frameless

glasses that gave him an air of quiet elegance and sophistication

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"Hello."

Ian extended his hand with a polite smile.

Jolie shook his hand. "Hello."

Ian introduced himself, still smiling. "My last name is Moore, but you can just call me Ian."

"I'm Jolie Quin."

Ian's smile deepened. "I've heard a lot about you from Dolly. It's a pleasure to finally meet you, Miss Quin. Please, have a seat."

Jolie nodded and took a seat.

Dolly Rich signaled the server over and started browsing the menu.

"Alright, order whatever you like. It's on me."

Jolie teased, "It's not often you offer to treat. I'll have to make sure you spend big today."

"Go for it," Dolly said with a dramatic wave.

Ian chuckled. "You're too kind. But as the host, this meal should naturally be on me."

Dolly winked at Jolie and added, "Ian's just returned from overseas, and everyone's been taking him out for meals. This is his first time hosting. We should definitely take advantage of it!" Jolie smiled but didn't comment further.

After ordering, the three of them chatted casually. However, since Ian and Jolie didn't know each other well, their conversation remained surface-level.

Midway through the meal, Dolly received a phone call. Returning to the table afterward, she announced, "Something urgent came up, and I need to leave. You two enjoy the rest of your lunch." Jolie nodded. "Alright, next time's on me."

Dolly patted her shoulder with a knowing grin before leaving.

With Dolly gone, the atmosphere grew subtly more awkward.

Ian glanced at Jolie and broke the silence. "Miss Quin, what do you do for work?"

Jolie replied, "I don't have a job right now, but I really enjoy photography. I'm planning to organize a photo exhibition."

"That sounds wonderful," Ian said with an approving nod. "I'm a photography enthusiast myself. When I was abroad, I often went on photo excursions with friends." Jolie's interest piqued. "Where have you been?"

Ian mentioned a few locations. "The landscapes there are breathtaking. The black sand beaches are especially unique. If you're interested, we could go there sometime." Jolie nodded. "That does sound amazing."

She studied Ian for a moment before speaking bluntly. "Mr. Moore, I'm not one to beat around the bush. I have a purpose for being here."

"I know," Ian replied calmly.

Jolie was surprised. "You know?"

Ian gave a slight nod. "Yes. We're in similar situations. Both of us are dealing with arranged marriages set up by our families. To be honest, I'm not interested in going along with their plans. I'd much rather pursue love on my own terms."

Jolie's gaze sharpened slightly. "So, does that mean you already have a girlfriend?"

Ian adjusted his glasses. "I do. But I can't offer her marriage. Her family background doesn't align with what mine expects. Still, I love her deeply and don't want to leave her. When Dolly told me about your situation, I thought... maybe we could work together."

Jolie felt a flicker of distaste but stayed seated, letting him finish.

Ian continued, "Miss Quin, if we got married, it would take the pressure off both our families. I'd promise not to interfere with your personal life, and of course, you wouldn't interfere with mine. We'd maintain a polite, outward relationship as partners. What do you think?"

Jolie asked, "Does your girlfriend know about this brilliant plan of yours?"

Ian's tone remained calm. "That's between her and me. My focus is on whether you'd consider my proposal." "I'll need to think about it."