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“Yes, she’s here.” Eloise pulled Renee to the balcony. She wasn’t worried that Renee would try to escape or expose her true identity to Jovan; she would have done that long ago if she really wanted to.

“Where is she?” Jovan asked Eloise eagerly.

“She’s sitting in front of you. Just take your time and talk to her...” Eloise patiently explained.

There were two lounge chairs and a small tea table on the balcony. Both Jovan and Renee sat across from each other, tea and fruits on the table between them.

“Please leave us alone, Elly,” Jovan ordered Eloise, who was standing nearby.

“Just ignore me, Mr. Hunt. I won’t disturb you.” Eloise wasn’t worried about Renee, but she was scared Jovan might realize something, given how smart he was. Letting them meet was already very risky.

“It’s not about whether you’ll disturb me or not, I’m just not used to having a third person around if I’m going to chat

with someone.”

“But...”

“Are you going to disobey me?” Jovan’s tone was calm but menacing.

“Okay, I... I’ll go make tea for you both.” Naturally, Eloise

didn’t dare to disobey Jovan. She retreated obediently but shot Renee a desperate look before leaving.

Renee nodded slightly to reassure Eloise.

After Eloise left, Jovan and Renee were the only ones on the spacious balcony. The sunlight was warm because they were on the rooftop of the manor, and the occasional breeze was somewhat soothing.

“What’s your name?” Jovan asked softly as he faced her.

The breeze toyed with Renee’s hair as she looked at him and replied, “Brisa Stone. My name is... Brisa Stone.” During her time as a special agent, she’d learned how to change her voice, so she altered her tone to sound like an innocent female student so Jovan wouldn’t find her out.

“Brisa Stone...” Jovan said slowly, then smiled. “It’s a rather refreshing name. I’m sure you’re a bright person. Have you ever considered what you’ll face after you give your eyes to me?”

“Yes, of course.” Renee felt relaxed as she stared at the mountains in the distance. They said the eyes were the windows of the soul, so would her soul be trapped forever when she lost hers? “I’m a person who’s very curious about the world, and I want to see every part of it. If I lose my eyes, I’ll spend the rest of my life in darkness. It’s... it’s a horrible thought.”

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Renee’s tone was melancholy.

“Why do you want to sell your most important organ then? You can earn money through other ways, you know. You don’t have to do something like this that will ruin your life.”¹ Jovan frowned, looking confused.

Renee smiled then said solemnly, “It’s because I think poverty is more horrible than having one’s soul trapped. The worst that could happen if I lose my sight is that I’d feel bored, but poverty can actually kill people!”

“How much do you need? I can give you the money, then you don’t have to sell your eyes to me,” Jovan said suddenly.

“Huh?” Renee’s smile froze on her face, and she was caught off guard by his offer.

“Are you surprised?” Jovan clasped his hands together and said honestly, “I know how it feels since I’m experiencing it. I know how devastating it is to lose your sight, so I don’t want anyone to suffer such agony unless they have no other option.”

Renee cleared her throat and said awkwardly, “I heard that you’re pretty aloof, so why would you rather stay in hell than have someone else suffer?”

“Don’t get me wrong; I just don’t want you to go down the wrong path since you’re so young.”

“Then I won’t,” Renee said firmly, then added, “I want money, and I can get that money by selling my eyes. I won’t turn down such an offer.”

“I told you I can give you the money,” Jovan said seriously.

“No, that won’t do!” Renee felt anxious, wondering if Jovan had sensed something. Stubbornly, she continued, “I might be poor, but I don’t need others’ charity. I’d feel guilty if I took your money without giving you something in return. I hate owing others.”

“You hate owing others...” Jovan murmured, sadness tainting his tone. “An old friend of mine she was forced to owe me a big favor. If it’s possible, I hope it’ll stay that way.”

“Umm... Why?” Renee blinked in confusion.

“It’s a lifelong shackle if she owes me a favor.” Jovan laughed at himself for being such a fool. “At least she’ll never forget me that way.”

“I see. Well, that’s what you think.” Renee felt uneasy. She didn’t understand why Jovan loved her so deeply, and why he was willing to sacrifice so much just for the sake of having a connection to her.

“You think I’m stupid, don’t you?” Jovan’s gaze was complicated. “I had a lot of ways to make her mine, and I was by no means a gentleman, but... I don’t know why I couldn’t do it when it came to her. I couldn’t bear to see her sad or desperate; I would be sad too if she were. It was so strange.” Jovan shook his head in agitation, then reached

for his cup of coffee. He felt around, not knowing where Eloise had put it.

“Here.” Renee took his cup and handed it to him kindly, and their fingers brushed.

Jovan's body jolted like he had been struck by electricity, and his eyes grew wide in disbelief. "It's... you?"

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Panicked, Renee pulled her hand back and accidentally knocked over Jovan's cup of coffee.

"I'm sorry!" Renee hurriedly used a handkerchief to wipe up the spilled coffee, but in her panic, she forgot to modify her voice.

Jovan immediately became suspicious and grabbed Renee's wrist. "Who are you?"

"Didn't I tell you, Mr. Hunt? I'm Brisa Stone! Don't get handsy with me—I'm just selling my eyes, not my body!" Renee said teasingly as she tried to pull away, knowing she had to stay calm. If she panicked, she would give herself away.

"Brisa Stone?" Jovan's gaze was void but his expression was alert. "Is that a name you just made up? Are you really... not my old friend?"

"Which old friend of yours do you think I am, Mr. Hunt?" Renee calmly asked him.

"You feel like her..." Jovan frowned contemplatively, then shook his head. "But it's impossible. She should be spending happy days with the one she cares about now. She wouldn't remember a useless man like me."

"Don't say that." Renee felt sorry for Jovan, and said earnestly, "I don't think she'll feel that way since she's so important to you. Maybe she's not being lovey-dovey with someone else, and you're always on her mind."

"I'm always on her mind?" Shaking his head, Jovan chuckled bitterly. "I know my place well—there's no way she'd think about me. It doesn't matter anyway; I'm just happy that I could have half a year with her in exchange for my eyes and health."

An unusually tender expression softened his icy features as he thought about his time with Renee.

"Though it was brief, the time we spent together was so precious. I used to lie to myself and pretend we were a married couple back then." He let out a soft sigh, then continued forlornly, "Unfortunately, I was useless back then because I couldn't see or walk. There were even days when I wanted to kill myself, but her support and company made me realize how wonderful it was to be alive."

"You..." Renee exhaled deeply and said, "You love her so much, but I don't think she deserves it." Jovan's passionate love scared her because she knew that she had only stayed with him out of guilt. Sometimes, she became impatient and wanted to leave, but unexpectedly, even those days were unforgettable memories for Jovan.

The thought filled her with shame and guilt, and she grew even more determined to donate her eyes to Jovan.

"It's getting late. We're going to have the surgery the day after tomorrow. You should rest well, and I'll... do the same." Renee wiped away her tears and got up to leave.

Sensing the direction of where she was standing, Jovan reached out and grabbed her wrist. “Are you really not my old friend?” He knew that the possibility was slim, but she felt so familiar. The girl clearly had a different voice, but Jovan didn’t know why he felt like he was talking to Renee.

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“I would have come to you ages ago if I was, Mr. Hunt. I don’t think your friend would hide her identity,” Renee lied, her heart pounding in her chest.

“No, she might. That’s why I dare to hope that... maybe you’re her.”

“You’re overthinking—I’m not her. Plus, I’m willing to give up my eyes for money. What would your old friend want if she gave up her eyes for you?”

“She...” Jovan trailed off, not knowing how to respond. Renee had children, a successful business, as well as countless possibilities with Stefan. There was no way she would give up her wonderful life to save a villain like Jovan. His expression turned cold again, and he muttered, “Go then; well meet again the day after tomorrow. After the surgery, you can tell me how much you want. I’ll be responsible for you and your family.”

“Thank you, Mr. Hunt. I won’t have to worry anymore thanks to you.” Renee casually patted Jovan’s chest and left the balcony.

Meanwhile, Eloise was wringing her hands and pacing worriedly downstairs. When she saw Renee descend the stairs, she immediately went to her. “How did it go? Did he figure out who you were?”

“Almost.”

“And then?”

“I managed to fool him.” Renee looked at the balcony and sighed. “He’s a really loyal man, and I don’t deserve his love. I’ll always feel guilty if I don’t return his eyes to him.”

“Well... thank you then.” Eloise’s eyes glistened with tears.

“I’ll return to the basement if there’s nothing else for me to do,” Renee said softly.

“I’m sorry...” Eloise said, feeling ashamed. She had used extreme means to kidnap Renee because she thought that Renee would be difficult and ungrateful, but it seemed like the woman Jovan fell in love with was no ordinary person. She had been overly critical and judgmental of Renee, who didn’t deserve it. Eloise sighed and said, “By the way, I think you should take your phone back. You have a lot of missed calls. You can either reply to them or not... You can always leave if you don’t want to do this.” After thinking it through, she felt that Renee had to do this willingly. If not, Jovan would dig his eyes out instead of enjoying his sight.

“Sure.” Renee felt that her friends and family might get suspicious if she didn’t speak to them. She had to let them know that she was safe so everything could run smoothly. Eloise returned Renee’s phone to her, and it started beeping the moment she turned it on. Renee’s eyes widened at the amount of missed calls and texts she received. There were missed calls from Margaret, Quinton, and Leia, but the person who had called her the most was... Stefan.

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Renee felt her heart skip a beat, and then her phone suddenly started to ring. It was Stefan calling, and after hesitating briefly, she answered the phone.

“Finally! I thought you were dead!” Stefan bellowed through the phone, seething with anger.

Renee winced and put her phone away from her ear. “Why did you call me? Are we that close?”

“No, we’re not close...” Stefan chuckled, then said smugly, “We’re just friends who slept with each other once. You’re right, I shouldn’t be acting like a busybody.”

“Clearly, you have nothing else better to do.” Blushing, Renee snapped, “Tell me why you called, or I’m going to hang up.”

“Wait!” Stefan blurted out, then quickly asked, “Where are you now? Who are you with? Are you safe?”

“How is that any of your business? All you need to know is that I’m safe. If I wasn’t, I wouldn’t have the time to speak to you on the phone, would I?” Renee tried to speak calmly to eliminate Stefan’s doubts.

“Really?” Stefan was naturally cautious, so he didn’t trust Renee. “No, I won’t believe you... unless you have a video call with me.”

“What? No way! We’re not even friends, so what right do you have to check up on me?”

“I’m not checking up on you, I’m just worried about you.” Stefan sighed, then said urgently, “Just tell me where you are. Do you need my help?”

“Listen, I’ll tell you one last time-I’m at my old friend’s house. We have a good relationship, and I have a very good life. You don’t have to worry about me. If you have that much time on your hands... you’d better worry about yourself.” At first, Renee wanted to end the call, but she soon remembered what Adie had said to her the other day.

“What do you mean? Do you know something?” Stefan immediately asked, sensing that something was wrong.

“No, I don’t, but... I can tell you from experience that one’s partner can be the one that hurts them the most. Master Hunt, I heard that you’re a loyal and loving man. You love Miss Seraphina wholeheartedly, but I heard that she might not be the person you think she is. You’d better be careful.” Renee felt that was the best she could do. If something went wrong with Stefan’s brain surgery, it would be a result of his deliberate ignorance, and he would just reap what he had sown.

“Seraphina?” Frowning, Stefan asked, “When did you meet her?”

“We didn’t meet; this is just a reminder. Just forget what I said if you don’t want to know.” Renee felt like she was getting too involved, so she said indifferently, “Okay, I’m going to have tea with my friend now. Bye.” She quickly ended the call and sighed deeply, feeling ashamed at how she had reacted to him.

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Renee wondered why she had poked her nose into Stefan's business. Stefan and Seraphina were childhood sweethearts who loved each other and were going to get married soon, and if they started fighting because of Renee's call, Renee would be a certified homewrecker. She didn't want to ruin someone else's marriage. Meanwhile, Stefan was staring at his phone with a complicated expression. Sitting beside him in the CEO's office of Hunt Enterprise was an expert hacker Elijah had spent a fortune to hire, and Elijah himself. "Did you find her?" Stefan asked the young man who was typing vigorously on his laptop. "Yes!" The young man adjusted his glasses, his face alight with excitement. "Ms. Everheart's current location is in a forest eighty kilometers away from Beach City based on the signal transmitted by her phone." He quickly gave Stefan the specific coordinates, including the latitude and longitude of her location. Elijah looked up the coordinates online, but when the search results came in, his eyes widened. He cleared his throat and said to Stefan hesitantly, "The coordinates belong to a manor, Mr. Hunt... and it seems to be in Jovan's name. Is she with Jovan now?" "You don't have to explain it to me. I'm not blind!" Stefan snarled and punched the table. He chuckled coldly, then sneered, "Well, well! I was worried that something had happened to her, but she was just having a reunion with an old friend. I should really mind my own business." "Please calm down, Mr. Hunt. Ms. Everheart is single now, so she can meet whoever she wants. It's a bit inappropriate that you care about this so much." Elijah knew that Stefan had lost his memories, but his concern for Renee seemed to be ingrained into him. Stefan would always lose control when it came

to Renee, and Elijah felt sorry for him. If things between Stefan and Renee truly had ended, Elijah hoped that Stefan would forget about Renee and start a new life with his new partner instead of dwelling on the past and exhausting his mind. "Ms. Murphy called earlier. She was worried about your health because you've been working overtime ever since you recovered. She made some soup for you," Elijah informed Stefan calmly. Stefan massaged his temples and said impatiently, "Tell her I don't need it." "But she's already downstairs, and it took her a few hours to make the soup. She even burned her hands making it, so it'll be quite sad if you make her leave now..." Elijah threw in a good word for Seraphina. To be honest, Elijah didn't really like Seraphina much because she was scheming and two-faced, but right now, it seemed like she was the most suitable partner for Stefan. Besides, she and Stefan had grown up together and felt deeply for each other, so Elijah hoped that Seraphina would be Stefan's new partner if he was destined to be separated from Renee. Seraphina seemed to love Stefan as much as Renee did, which was a good thing for the arrogant Stefan. "She burned her hands making it?" Touched, Stefan put his phone down and forced himself to stop thinking about Renee. He raised his hand and said, "Let her in." Instantly, Seraphina excitedly opened the door and rushed into the office. "Stefan!"

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Seraphina skipped to Stefan cheerfully, carrying a thermos. She unscrewed the thermos, filling the office with the rich smell of the soup, and said, "I made you chicken soup. It'll be good for your stomach, since you have gastritis. You should hurry up and drink it."

"Wow, it smells so nice, Ms. Murphy! I didn't expect you to be so good at cooking," Elijah praised Seraphina from where he was.

Stefan flipped through a contract aloofly as he sat at his desk. Without lifting his head, he said to Elijah coolly, "Drink it yourself if you think it smells so good."

Seraphina gritted her teeth at Stefan's cold tone as she poured the soup for him.

However, Elijah was no fool. He immediately waved his hand and refused, “No, I wouldn’t dare to. This is what Ms. Murphy made for you, Mr. Hunt, so who am I to drink it? I’ll just have some water.”

Seraphina inhaled deeply to calm herself, then turned to Elijah with a fake smile. “It’s alright; I can pour you a bowl if you want, Mr. Young.”

“You’re so nice, Ms. Murphy, but I was just kidding. Please let Mr. Hunt have it—he needs nutritious meals like this. You should help take care of him if you have the time...” Elijah said, then smiled nostalgically. “When Mr. Hunt was still married, his wife always came to deliver soup to him, but she was different from you. She gave soup to everyone under the name of the company; she was really a kind and humble person.”

“Really?” Seraphina’s cheeks turned red in embarrassment. Elijah was quite a thorn in her side, and she had to get rid of him as soon as possible.

At first, Stefan was absorbed in his work and wasn’t paying attention to their conversation, but he immediately looked up at the mention of marriage and his wife. “What did you say, Elijah? I was married before?” Frowning, he demanded, “Was I married before? Who was my wife?” After he lost his memories of Renee, he had forgotten about many things, including his marriage and children.

“Umm...” Elijah swallowed nervously. He had wanted to tell Stefan the truth many times, but always stopped himself. “My mistake, Mr. Hunt. It was a woman who tried to win you over in the past, and she used to do things like that to please you. As for the details... I’m sure you’ll remember everything after your brain surgery this Wednesday.”

Stefan’s brain surgery would be held at eight o’clock in the morning on Wednesday, and the head surgeon was Owen. Owen said that Stefan would regain his lost memories after the surgery, and that he would recall a lot of things on his own. Elijah felt that if he told Stefan about his marriage and children now, his damaged brain might have trouble processing everything. Like everyone else who had hid the truth from Stefan, he didn’t want to make Stefan’s brain injury worse.

“Didn’t you just say it?” However, Stefan couldn’t be fooled that easily. He glared at Elijah fiercely and snapped, “I might have lost some memories, but I’m not stupid. You’re lying to me.”

“Mr. Hunt, that’s not what I meant! Ah, it’s very complicated...” Elijah clenched his fists, looking conflicted.

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Stefan raised his brows but didn’t persist. “Forget it—I’m sure I’ll find out whatever you all are hiding from me eventually. I believe in Owen’s skills.”

Clang! The thermos suddenly fell from Seraphina’s hand, and she screamed as the hot soup splashed onto her hand. “Ah, it hurts!”

“Are you okay?” Stefan immediately put down the document in his hands and went to Seraphina.

“It’s okay, it’s just a slight burn.” Seraphina tried to brush it off, but she looked like she was in pain.

“Let me have a look.” Stefan took Seraphina’s hand and leaned down to study it. When he saw hand was red and burned, he frowned deeply. “Take her to the medical room and tend to this, Elijah.”

“No, it’s fine. I’m really okay...” Seraphina trailed off as she looked at the soup that had spilled all over the floor. “But it’s a pity... I spent the whole afternoon making this soup for you, and now the carpet’s dirty too.”

“The soup can be made again and the carpet can be cleaned, but I’d feel guilty if you got hurt. Be good —go get your wound checked,” Stefan said softly as he patted Seraphina’s shoulders.

“Oh... okay.” Seraphina was overjoyed at Stefan’s gentleness, but at the same time, she was terrified that she would never feel this warmth from him again if the surgery went

smoothly. Stefan would be furious if he found out that she had bribed the previous doctor to do something to his brain.

“Come with me, Ms. Murphy.” Elijah led Seraphina to the exclusive medical room of Hunt Enterprise. The medical staff tended to Seraphina’s burn while Elijah watched her from nearby, his arms crossed. He tilted his head as he observed her, then asked thoughtfully, “Don’t you think it’s hard to win Mr. Hunt over?”

Seraphina turned to him, her eyes narrowed. “Do you find me relentless and annoying too, Mr. Young?”

“Not if you sincerely like Mr. Hunt.” Inevitably, Elijah recalled how Renee was in the past. “Ms. Everheart was the same as you—she took great care of Mr. Hunt, but he only rolled his eyes at her and ignored her. In comparison, you have it better since you’re close to him and have been with him for half a year. He relies on you.”

Seraphina sighed and admitted, “But I feel like he’s growing more distant, and his feelings for me seem to have lessened too. Even you can see that he doesn’t want to be with me... Plus, it looks like he’s going to get back together with Renee. If he does... what happens to me?”

“Do you believe you’re that replaceable, Ms. Murphy? Do you think you’re just something Mr. Hunt is passing the time with? An accident, or perhaps an interlude?” Elijah asked teasingly.

“Mr. Young!” Seraphina snapped, glaring at Elijah.

Elijah raised his hands hurriedly in surrender. “I was just kidding, Ms. Murphy—don’t take it to heart. I just wanted to tell you that the way to win his heart is by being sincere, just like what Ms. Everheart did. Her true love moved Mr. Hunt, which was why they were so madly in love with each other in the end. But I have to say... I’m curious about how sincere you really are, Ms. Murphy.”

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Instantly, Seraphina’s features twisted into a hideous snarl. She glared at Elijah and sneered icily, “What exactly are you trying to say, Mr. Young? Do you doubt my feelings for Stefan?”

“I’m not doubting your sincerity towards him, but I just want to know how deep it runs... How much would you be willing to sacrifice for Mr. Hunt?” Elijah asked bluntly. He didn’t care if Seraphina thought him selfish or overbearing; he just wanted to be sure of Seraphina before he tried to help her get closer

to Stefan. After all, Renee had almost killed Stefan, so he had to make sure Seraphina didn't have any ulterior motives.

"I'm willing to do anything for Stefan, including giving up my life..." Seraphina bit her lip as she recalled what happened in the past, her eyes watery. "I'm sure you don't know this, but... When that woman's brother went mad and kidnapped Stefan, I suffered a lot so Stefan could come back safely."

Elijah frowned, staring at her curiously. "What happened?"

"I'm sure you know how much Renee's brother hates Stefan, right?"

"Yeah, I do. They'd been fighting for a long time, but now, they've let bygones be bygones and made peace with each other." Elijah didn't meddle in Stefan's grudge against Quinton, and only occasionally gave Stefan opinions. He always felt that it was best that they put an end to their feud,

but some of the Hunt Enterprise executives encouraged them to fight so that Quinton could be defeated once and for all. In the end, Stefan had chosen to put a stop to the fighting, which was why he had gone through all that trouble to hire Owen for Quinton's surgery. Luckily for Stefan, his kindness was rewarded when Owen was willing to help him get back his memories.

"Well, they made peace, but what about me? Have they ever thought about making it up to me?" Seraphina snarled, clenching her fists as her eyes burned with hatred. The doctor who was tending to her wound looked at her in surprise.

Elijah asked the doctor to leave, then carefully asked, "Can you tell me what happened?"

"You should ask Stefan about it..." Seraphina's body trembled as she sobbed, "I used my body in exchange for Stefan's freedom... That crazy Quinton ordered his men to defile me. I've scrubbed my body countless times, but that disgusting sensation still haunts me. An ordinary person might have gone mad and started killing people, but I'm stronger than that. Not many people would be as selfless as me!"

"What?" Elijah was speechless, completely shocked by Seraphina's words. However, he didn't doubt her because no woman would willingly admit to having gone through something like that.

"I think you should know how sincere I am towards Stefan now. No one loves him as much as I do," Seraphina confessed, wiping the tears running down her face.

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The fact that Seraphina, a rich young lady from a noble family, had been sullied by a group of criminals was something she should have kept a secret, but she revealed it to Elijah to win his support. If Elijah saw her sincerity and helped get her and Stefan closer, things would be much simpler. "Yeah, I didn't imagine you loved Mr. Hunt that much..." Elijah stared at Seraphina, feeling conflicted. If Renee's love for Stefan glowed steadily and brightly like the Moon, then Seraphina's love for Stefan burned fervently and madly like the Sun. It was really hard to choose which love was more suitable for Stefan. "Your relationship with Mr. Hunt has been good lately. Although he's busy with work and doesn't spend much time with you, I guarantee that he still cares about you. Don't worry, you both will have more time together once he settles his work." Elijah tried to reassure Seraphina, who was glaring daggers at him. "Do you think I'm a kid? I don't need to be coaxed!" Seraphina scoffed, "I'm sure you know better than me who Stefan thinks about now. He just sees me as her temporary substitute. When he gets his

memories back after the surgery, he'll leave me and go after that woman. As for my fate... You might be right. I'll just be an accident or interlude." "Nobody can say what will happen after the surgery. What if Mr. Hunt remembers his lovey-dovey moments with you and picks you?" "No, he won't. His entanglement with that woman is too strong. Him and I will be over once he regains his memory!" Seraphina cried. "What are you trying to say, Ms. Murphy?" Elijah asked carefully. "I'm saying that Stefan hasn't recovered completely yet, and his former doctor suggested we don't do anything to his brain. Why don't we just forget about the recovery surgery? Everything can be as it is, and I'll take care of him!" Seraphina finally blurted out, looking anxious.

"Forget about the surgery?" Elijah fell silent. Logically, it was quite dangerous for Stefan to do the surgery, especially since there was only a fifty percent chance of recovery. If the surgeon made a mistake, the consequences would be dire. Besides, Stefan might remember everything if the surgery was successful, and if he chose to pursue Renee again, he might get into more trouble. Since Seraphina loved Stefan so deeply, Elijah felt that it might not be a bad idea for Stefan to keep living in this ignorant bliss. "I've said what I wanted to, Mr. Young. I hope you'll reconsider whether this surgery is the right choice for Stefan. After all, there are two days left, and many things could happen in that time," Seraphina said cryptically, then left the medical room.