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Lucas pursed his lips as tears welled in his eyes.

He whisked her into his arms and hugged her tight.

“Honey, thank you... The moment that I have been waiting for has finally arrived,” he said hoarsely.

Is he crazy?

Ashlyn gritted her teeth. She was struggling to breathe from his bear hug.

Nonetheless, he continued excitedly, “I never thought you would be jealous and pissed off because of me... I thought that this long-awaited moment would never come true in my whole life.”

Although Ashlyn was irritated, she eventually calmed down when she heard the man’s pitiful voice.

His reaction shocked her.

Why would a prominent figure like Lucas behave in such a manner due to my little action?

She had to admit it touched her.

How is it possible?

As Ashlyn was at a loss, she was clueless about how she should respond.

Hence, she stayed in his arms.

I mean, is he a masochist?

Lucas hugged Ashlyn tight and didn’t move an inch, even though she tried to push him away gently.

Frowning, she said, “Lucas, let go of me. I can’t breathe.”

Lucas let go of her right after he heard it.

However, he still looked emotional.

“Honey, I love you.” He slowly lifted Ashlyn’s pretty face with his fingers and continued, “Promise me you will rely on me whenever you have any trouble. You don’t have to be a heroine all the time. I’m here. I always have your back.”

As soon as he finished, he lowered his head and kissed her forehead.

Ashlyn was confused.

Rely on him... Have my back... These were the words she never thought she would hear.

She didn't utter a word and slowly closed her eyes.

It was drizzling the next morning, a stark difference from the previous day's humid weather.

As Ashlyn stood by the window, she sensed someone was moving behind her.

A masculine man wrapped his arms around her waist and asked, "What are you looking at?"

"The rain."

Meanwhile, Lucas immersed himself in the fragrance from Ashlyn's body.

I would give everything to wake up with her in my arms every morning.

"Are you going to the hospital later? I can give you a lift."

"Yes. I'll check up on Mr. Chapman and see if he's awake." Ashlyn nodded in response. Deep in her heart, she believed it wasn't a simple accident.

After washing up, they went downstairs together.

Meanwhile, Harrison and Anderson, who were sitting in the dining area, saw Ashlyn and Lucas came down together.

Even though the siblings were a little shocked, they kept their curiosity in check. After all, they were men of few words.

Harrison reported to Ashlyn, "The driver was drunk. Besides, the police didn't get any useful information after interrogating him. The driver claimed he drove under the influence and couldn't maneuver his truck because he was tipsy."

Once his brother paused, Anderson continued, "However, the security camera footage shows he parked his car earlier as if he were waiting for Mr. Chapman's car. Once the car passed by, he immediately sped off and crashed into it."

"In that case, does he have a motive to commit the crime?" Ashlyn interrupted the siblings' report, "Take the newly invented polygraph to the police station and play mind games with him. Also, investigate the background of this family."

“Understood.”

The siblings ate their breakfast in silence after they received their orders.

On the other hand, Lucas frowned as he looked at the two men.

He was disgruntled with the fact that Ashlyn lived with a bunch of men.

After listening to their conversation, a seemingly bizarre thought occurred to him.

These men... Are they Ashlyn's underlings?

The way they spoke to her reminded Lucas of one of his many meetings.

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Is Honey still hiding some of her identities from me?

Lucas sized up Ashlyn secretly. She looked perfectly calm as she ate her breakfast gracefully.

He thought the meeting was a normal occurrence for them.

“Why are you staring at me? Is the breakfast not to your liking?” Ashlyn suddenly looked up and glanced at Lucas.

He relaxed and flashed her a smile. “I’m looking at you because you’re beautiful.”

Ashlyn blushed and glared at him. She picked up a slice of toast for him rudely and said, “Eat!”

Lucas chuckled at her awkwardness.

On the other hand, Harrison and Anderson looked at each other in disbelief. They felt this couple was deliberately showing off their love.

After breakfast, Ashlyn and Lucas departed in their Bentley even though it was still raining.

She stared out the window, lost in her own thought.

After quite some time, the car pulled over at the entrance of the hospital. Ashlyn could feel the breeze once she opened the door.

When Ashlyn was about to leave the car, she felt a hand grabbed her wrist firmly and dragged her back into the car. She landed right on his lap.

"I'm flying to Paris tonight and will only be back at midnight tomorrow. Don't you want to give me a goodbye kiss?"

He breathed in her ear flirtatiously.

Ashlyn couldn't help but blush again and bite her lips. She knew Lucas was deliberately flirting with her.

She awkwardly turned around and kissed his cheek.

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Since Ashlyn was used to being a cold and strong woman, she was embarrassed to do such things.

The last time she did this, it was on their wedding day and she had been reluctant.

Apparently unsatisfied, Lucas shook his head and said, "Honey, it's not correct."

"I have kissed you. Now, let go of me!" Ashlyn lowered her head and tried to wriggle herself free from his grip.

"Wrong spot. Kiss again." Lucas pointed at his pouted lips.

Ashlyn blushed even more once she heard it. Nevertheless, she didn't want to waste her time flirting with the man here.

Besides, this wasn't the usual way she conducted herself.

Therefore, she closed her eyes and kissed his lips quickly.

Lucas wanted to tease her again because she looked too adorable.

He dreaded not seeing her for the next two days.

He was displeased that this heartless lady didn't seem to feel his dread.

Nonetheless, he didn't want to push her to the wall.

Besides, he had other matters to attend to in Paris this time.

After a while, Lucas finally let her go as his lips quirked with a hint of excitement. "Wait for me."

"Take care of yourself," Ashlyn replied and nodded in response. She was finally freed and could hop out.

Unexpectedly, when Lucas was about to close the door and asked Spencer to drive, Ashlyn suddenly turned around and kissed his lips again. This time, she parted her lips and bit his lips with her pearly white teeth.

Before he could react, she said gleefully, "I have left you a mark. Bye."

Lucas' heart thumped wildly.

When he looked up at her, Ashlyn was standing smilingly next to the car. As she looked so adorable and gorgeous, he wished badly to pounce on her.

I don't want to go or fly anywhere. I only wish to stay by her side forever!

Bang!

Once Ashlyn quickly closed the door, Spencer started the car and left the place.

Meanwhile, Lucas was immersed in the memory.

The beautiful moment was imprinted on his mind.

How can she be so beautiful? She is breathtakingly gorgeous!

At the Chapman family's home.

A nervous Hera opened the door to Sisley's room. The latter was putting on makeup. "Mom, do you have anything to do with Grandpa's accident?"

The eyeliner pencil in Sisley's hand shook, and she accidentally drew a thick, overly black, and ugly eyeliner.

She stared at Hera and asked grumpily, "Are you blind? Can't you see that I'm putting on makeup?"

"Mom... Grandpa's accident is too strange." Hera sat on the side of the bed and continued, "If Dad knows, it will infuriate him. Mom, you really didn't do it?"

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"I mean it when I said no. What's wrong? Don't you believe me?" As Sisley spoke, she grabbed a cleansing sheet to wipe away the eyeliner and continued to put on makeup.

Even though Hera was suspicious of Sisley, she didn't have any proof.

Her mother's answer put her at ease.

We have depended on each other for so many years. Mom won't lie to me. Why would she?

She has nothing to do with Grandpa's accident.

That's great... If Mom really did it, she will be in deep trouble once the police find out.

She couldn't imagine the severity of the consequences.

As much as she wanted to be the Chapman family's successor, she never thought about hurting her grandpa.

How can I take someone's life to achieve my goal?

"Okay, put on your makeup quickly. Once you're done, we will go to the hospital to visit Grandpa." Hera calmed herself down and told her mother.

Meanwhile, Sisley continued to put on makeup seriously and said, "Since he is in the ICU now, we can't do anything even if we are there."

"If we don't go to the hospital, I'm sure my uncle and the rest will complain about us," Hera still wished to stay by Mr. Chapman's side to show that she cared for him.

They wasted quite some time and finally arrived at the hospital at noon.

Much to their surprise, Ashlyn was already waiting in front of the ICU.

"She's shedding crocodile tears," Sisley's twitched as she muttered in disdain. She couldn't help but feel angry once she recalled Ashlyn was Fiona's daughter.

Nevertheless, she wouldn't tell Ashlyn about it.

Nevertheless, she wouldn't tell Ashlyn about it.

Even though the other Chapmans guessed the same thing, none wished to reveal Ashlyn's identity.

Since Fiona caused outrage in the family before, they wanted to avoid anyone related to her.

As such, they kept the secret to themselves.

On the other hand, Ashlyn didn't glance at Sisley but continued to discuss with the doctor beside her.

"Doctor, you said his condition is stable, but there are numerous bone fractures in his body. Does he have a brain injury?" Ashlyn asked softly.

After all, the situation could deteriorate in no time if he had a brain injury.

Mr. Chapman could have a concussion or remain in a coma from a brain hemorrhage.

Ashlyn felt that the doctor couldn't afford to overlook the risk.

"We have conducted three CT scans for the patient from yesterday until today. All results show that his brain functions normally." The doctor handed the medical report to Ashlyn politely.

Meanwhile, the doctor couldn't help but think to himself. Are the members of the Chapman family idiots?

Dr. Berry is a reputable physician in the industry and even had her public lecture at the University of Toronto a while back.

I can't imagine why the family would taunt and say nasty things to her. I mean, are they out of their mind?

If it weren't for Ashlyn's concern for Mr. Chapman's situation, the doctor wished he could beat the hell out of their family.

"Please keep the patient under observation. If there isn't any abnormality after twenty-four hours, you can transfer him out of the ICU," Ashlyn said while handing over the report back to the doctor.

After that, she sat on the bench facing the Chapman family.

"The Peacock is a nice place. We should go."

"For Hera's sake, we must. I heard that man loves the food from The Peacock."

"Okay, we'll choose The Peacock. Anthony, isn't the reception manager your friend? Why don't you make a reservation now before the restaurant is fully booked," Sisley asked Anthony impatiently.

The latter reluctantly took out his phone and made a call.

Meanwhile, Ashlyn pretended she didn't hear the conversation. At this moment, her phone suddenly rang.

After reading the message, she frowned and kept her phone back silently.

Once Anthony reserved a room, the Chapman family left the hospital together.

"Since we are not allowed to enter the ICU, it's a waste of time to be here. Besides, the nurses will call us if there is an emergency."

The Peacock was a large and quaint restaurant.

Once Ashlyn entered the restaurant, she looked for the Heavenly Waterfall Room.

“Ashlyn?”

When she was about to ask the reception manager for directions, she suddenly heard someone called her name in a familiar voice.

Ashlyn looked up and noticed a group of people whom she knew and not far from her.

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Ashlyn recognized that they were the Chapmans, who left the hospital not long ago.

Apart from them, there was also a middle-aged couple. The man was wearing a black suit. He had an arm wrapped around the woman in a red dress.

Even though he was middle-aged, he still looked graceful and wasn't as plump as other men his age. The woman beside him looked gorgeous with a bun and a necklace. Besides, the dark red dress matched her perfectly.

Both of them came up to her slowly, as if they wanted to ask who she was.

The Chapman family seemed surprised to see Ashlyn at The Peacock.

Meanwhile, Sisley raised her eyebrows and asked in disdain, “Are you here to get a free meal from us because you overheard our conversation?”

Ashlyn gave Sisley a cold-eyed stare in response.

Before she was about to reply, the lobby manager came up to them. Immediately, Anthony flashed him a passionate smile and greeted, “Manager Walker.”

The latter ignored him and went to Ashlyn. “You must be Ms. Berry. Heavenly Waterfall Room is right in front. Please, allow me to show you the way.”

“Thank you,” Ashlyn replied blandly and followed the lobby manager.

She didn't waste a minute to talk to the Chapman family ever since she arrived here.

On the other hand, Anthony's smile became stiff as he felt embarrassed.

Humph, Ashlyn is indeed Fiona's daughter! She is as arrogant and annoying as her mother!

The Chapman family watched as she entered the Heavenly Waterfall Room, which was the premium private room in The Peacock.

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Under normal circumstances, customers had to make a booking early if they wished to reserve the Heavenly Waterfall Room. Besides, they even had to depend on connections and pay a lot of money to secure the room.

Since Anthony had connections at the Peacock, they managed to reserve a cubicle. Nonetheless, it was not even close to the Heavenly Waterfall Room, the most luxurious private room.

The difference between the two rooms was indeed a vast gap.

Meanwhile, Hera wrapped her arms around Sisley's firmly. She stared at the Heavenly Waterfall Room jealously and asked, "Mom, Ashlyn is merely a doctor. How could she afford to have lunch in the Heavenly Waterfall Room? Is she dating some rich tycoon?"

However, she quickly apologized, "I'm sorry. It was a slip of the tongue. Why would anyone be interested in her?"

If Ashlyn is here, I will definitely pour some green tea on her head! A b*tch like her deserves it.

The members of the Chapman family felt uncomfortable and looked displeased too.

However, in the presence of their distinguished guests, they had to plaster a smile on their faces to keep up with the pretenses.

On the other hand, Ashlyn arrived at the Heavenly Waterfall Room.

Once she opened the door, she saw several men sitting at the round table.

The man who sat at the center looked particularly imposing and handsome with a pair of Asian eyes.

"Brother, you're back?"

Ashlyn stood in the private room and stared at Richard Shaw.

The last they met was four years ago. Although the man looked more mature and charismatic, the air of depression surrounding him got even tenser.

"Ashlyn, will you never contact me if I don't look for you?" After flashing her an evil smile, Richard

patted the empty chair next to him. "Come and sit here."

Ashlyn obeyed and sat beside him.

However, when she was about to put down her handbag, Richard suddenly clapped his hands.

The next moment, a group of men in black suits opened the door and entered the private room.

Each of them stood neatly in front of Ashlyn and held a beautifully wrapped gift in the spacious room.

Ashlyn felt her head throb as she looked at Richard.

Why am I afraid to see Richard? It is because he is too overbearing?

Every time they met, Richard would shower her with gifts like an emperor giving a luxurious dowry to his princess in a TV drama.

"Richard, you don't have to give me a swanky party every time."

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Ashlyn wasn't sure how she should react.

"These are all for you." Richard crossed his legs comfortably, like a leopard taking a rest under the sun.

Once he finished, the men in black suits opened the gifts in unison.

There were diamond rings, gems, necklaces, bracelets, antiques, drawings, legendary swords, and so on.

All the items were worth a hell of a lot of money if she sold them.

After a while, Ashlyn heaved a sigh and said, "You surely want something from me in exchange for the gifts. Tell me, how can I help you this time?"

"Ashlyn is indeed smart." Richard couldn't help but chuckle.

Then he whispered in her ears, "Take it easy. My secretary will email you later."

Ashlyn smacked her lips in response.

Richard picked up a big shrimp for her and said, "Let's enjoy the meal. The food here is delicious."

After he started eating, his underlings, who sat near him at the table, grabbed their forks and spoons to eat.

As Richard's underlings who worked for him for years, they knew he doted on Ashlyn very much.

Hence, they dared not to eat without their boss' permission.

As they enjoyed the meal, Richard picked up some food for Ashlyn and asked if she was doing great.

His series of questions did not annoy her.

Given that they hadn't met for many years, she still felt awkward when they had nothing to talk about over the phone.

Now that they finally met in person, she realized time did nothing to diminish her respect for him.

Now that they finally met in person, she realized time did nothing to diminish her respect for him.

"Are you married?" Suddenly, Richard turned grumpy and asked her in a crisp voice.

Through an investigation, he was informed that she was married but got a divorce later. However, it still pained him to hear from her mouth.

He felt indignant on her behalf.

"I got a divorce." Ashlyn glanced at him curiously and continued, "Richard, are you upset because I didn't tell you?"

"Of course! We're sworn siblings. Anyone who bullies you is bullying me too!" Richard said coldly.

No matter what, they were married for four years. His pure and innocent girl was tainted.

He had an impulse to kill the man.

"Calm down, Richard." Ashlyn patted him on his back and changed the subject naturally. "How long do you plan to stay here?"

"How long do you want me to stay?" Even though Richard looked at Ashlyn smilingly, she couldn't ascertain his inner thoughts.

After a while, she raised her eyebrows and said, "How do I know? Stay as long as you wish."

At the same time, the Chapman family was seated in the cubicle.

When they were having lunch, Hera was preoccupied thinking about Ashlyn.

She didn't even notice it when Sisley talked to her a few times.

Fortunately, because Bob Chapman was a good friend of Mr. and Mrs. Hunt, she had basically secured her entry into the International Piano Competition.

Even though Hera wasn't qualified to participate in this competition, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt sympathized with her because Bob's life was hanging by a thread.

Mr. Hunt said, "We'll visit Bob in the hospital after lunch."

"It's still early to be there now. Besides, we are not allowed to enter the ICU," Sisley replied while wiping her tears away. "Why does my dad have to suffer all these things?"

The Chapman family saw Mr. and Mrs. Hunt to the door after lunch. Coincidentally, they met Ashlyn, who was coming out of the Heavenly Waterfall Room at the same time.

She was wearing a simple black and white shirt with black pencil pants.

Even though her clothes were ordinary, she still looked gorgeous, cold, and eye-catching.

When Hera noticed Ashlyn, she couldn't help but exclaim, "Ashlyn?"

Several men also left the private room with her. One of them, who walked next to Ashlyn, wore gold frame glasses. He looked imposing, graceful, and handsome like a nobleman.

As soon as Hera said her name, the Chapman family turned around and glanced at Ashlyn.

Mrs. Hunt was chatting with Sisley. However, she stopped talking right away as soon as she looked up at the man.

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Surprised, she immediately dragged her husband to greet Richard, "Mr. Shaw, why are you here?"

Mr. Shaw?

It stunned the Chapman family at once.

There seems to be only one Shaw family in Lake City. Is he who we think he is?

The Shaw family, like the Haddocks and the Nolans, was one of the most prominent families in Lake City.

The lack of competent successors led to the decline of the Chapman family.

Old Mr. Shaw was a respected figure, yet he basically stayed out of public sight. Nevertheless, he had a

son who worked as the sole distributor of luxurious goods in the fashion industry.

In fact, the Shaws distributed all the luxury goods in H Nation.

Although Mr. and Mrs. Hunt were influential in the music industry, they were modest in front of the Shaws for the resources in the fashion circles.

After all, out of the five prominent fashion magazines, the Shaws owned three of them.

Therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt would not want to see their music artists blacklisted by the Shaws.

Speaking of which, isn't Hera Chapman, the lady of the Chapman family, blacklisted by the Shaw family before? It became a sensational story when all brands in H Nation blacklisted her.

Hence, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt looked conflicted.

Since we had lunch with the person who Mr. Shaw hates, what will he think about us?

However, Richard actually wasn't aware of their thoughts and only felt that they looked familiar somehow. He had many acquaintances, he could hardly recognize everybody.

However, Richard actually wasn't aware of their thoughts and only felt that they looked familiar somehow. He had many acquaintances, he could hardly recognize everybody.

Despite that, he responded politely, "I was having lunch with my sister."

"Sister?" Once Mrs. Hunt glanced at Ashlyn, who looked remarkably graceful.

She immediately added smilingly, "Your sister is indeed beautiful. She has the looks of a lady from a prominent family."

However, she mistook Ashlyn for Teresa Shaw, the young lady of the Shaw family.

Ashlyn didn't utter a word but merely smiled in response.

Mrs. Hunt grabbed a box from her bag. It was a jade necklace that the Chapman family just gave her.

She put it in Ashlyn's hands and said smilingly, "This is the first time we met. By the way, I have a jade necklace, and I think it suits you well. Please accept our gift."

Although the gift was luxurious, she only wished that Richard wouldn't be pissed because she was close to the Chapman family.

Even though it was awkward to hand the Chapman's gift to someone else before them, Mrs. Hunt's

biggest concern right now was not to offend the Shaws.

Ashlyn refused to accept her gift. "I'm sorry, I can't accept your gift. It's too much."

"It's just a necklace," Richard said blandly. He looked at the Hunts and asked seriously, "Are you, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt?"

It appeared that he recalled them only now.

Mr. Hunt was embarrassed because Richard didn't seem to respect him as an elder.

Nonetheless, he could do nothing about it because the man standing in front of him was Richard Shaw, the young master of the Shaw family.

"Yes, Mr. Shaw."

"I heard the upcoming International Piano Competition will be held in the opera of Lake City this year." Richard paused for a while and continued, "The Shaws will sponsor all the expenses."

"Really?" Mr. Hunt was too excited for words.

"My assistant will discuss the details with you." Richard left with Ashlyn as soon as he finished.

Meanwhile, the Chapman family was dumbfounded.

In particular, Sisley and Hera had ghastly expressions on their faces, as if lightning struck them.

Hera clenched her fists in anger until her nails dug in her flesh.

I can't believe it! How is this possible? Isn't Ashlyn merely a doctor and a social media influencer who plays the piano? How could she be friends with a prominent person such as Mr. Shaw?

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Mr. and Mrs. Hunt kept bowing and scraping at Mr. Shaw.

After seeing Richard and Ashlyn off, they finally asked the Chapman family, "Do you know who Ms. Shaw is?"

"Is he The Shaws'..." Anthony couldn't hold back his curiosity and ask.

"Indeed, he is Richard Shaw." Mrs. Hunt rested her gaze upon Hera and continued, "Ms. Chapman, it was Mr. Shaw who instructed all fashion brands to blacklist you."

As soon as Hera heard it, she looked pale and stared at Mrs. Hunt in disbelief.

I became the laughingstock in fashion circles and showbiz because of Ashlyn! She must have told tales about me before Richard Shaw!

Hera believed Ashlyn orchestrated her ordeal.

Initially, the Chapman family wanted to question Mrs. Hunt for giving the jade necklace worth almost a million to Ashlyn as a gift. Nevertheless, they were shocked now and could hardly utter a word.

Mrs. Hunt's revelation was a slap to their faces, rendering them speechless.

Even Anthony's wife blamed Hera for embarrassing them in front of the Hunts.

Initially, Sisley's heart bled because she spent nearly one million on the jade necklace.

Although it pissed her off when Mrs. Hunt handed it to Ashlyn as a gift, she dared not grumble.

"For now, I only wish we didn't upset Mr. Shaw. Allow me to reconsider your entry for the International Piano Competition," Mrs. Hunter said bluntly.

"For now, I only wish we didn't upset Mr. Shaw. Allow me to reconsider your entry for the International Piano Competition," Mrs. Hunter said bluntly.

As soon as she finished, she wrapped her arm around Mr. Hunt's and left.

Hera's eyes were burning with anger and envy.

She clenched her fists so tightly she drew blood. However, she didn't feel any pain.

Because of her notorious reputation, the selection committee rejected her application to participate in the competition.

It was why the Chapman family had to invite Mr. and Mrs. Hunt to lunch today.

Their plan was foiled after Ashlyn's unexpected appearance. Even Sisley's gift that was worth a million was given to her.

Hera couldn't help but gnash her teeth as she held deep grudges against Ashlyn.

We drove Fiona out of the family in the past. Why must Ashlyn be her daughter? Who is she to fight for the family's wealth and destroy everything that is rightfully mine?

She even robbed my only chance to become the top international pianist. Hera knew she would shine in the international arena if she won the International Piano Competition.

When she achieved that, the Chapman family, the socialites, and the world would respect and admire her.

No way! I can't just sit and wait. I must strike back!

Paris, France.

After the plane landed, Lucas didn't go to the hotel with the crew.

Several black sedans were waiting for him outside the airport.

Meanwhile, a well-dressed middle-aged man came up to him. He bowed politely and said, "Mr. Nolan, Old Master and Madam are waiting for you."

Since Lucas was tall and sturdy, the pilot's uniform fitted him nicely and showed his perfect body shape.

He nodded at the man coldly and greeted, "It's been a long time, Mr. Haiden."

"Yes, Mr. Nolan. Please get into the car." The butler opened the car door.

After Lucas got into the car, the rest of the cars left the airport in unison.

Mr. Haiden had always been the butler of the manor in France. Franklin and Livia were Lucas' father and mother, respectively. They lived and worked in France for many years and rarely went home.

After a thirty-minute drive, they finally arrived at the manor.

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Even though the manor sat in a large area, it lacked a family's warmth.

It resembled a castle or even an invisible jail from afar.

When the gate slowly opened slowly, Lucas felt like the darkness devoured them.

He was reluctant to visit this place, yet he had no choice but to be here.

He held back his emotions and followed the butler to the lobby.

Meanwhile, nearly a hundred sturdy men had gathered in the dimly lit lobby.

A graceful man in a maroon shirt was sitting in the middle of the couch. He had the demeanor of a university professor or an academician.

His imposing aura and cold and sinister eyes made him look like a devil from hell.

The black-suited men in the lobby remained silent. The atmosphere was so depressing that they were gasping for breath.

The graceful man sitting on the couch was none other than Franklin Nolan, Lucas' father. Franklin was a prominent figure because he owned Nolan Research Institute, a private research institution in France.

Because Livia ran the research institute with him, they lived in France for many years and rarely went home.

They didn't even attend the funeral of Charles Nolan.

Lucas perceived them as the most unfeeling and coldest parents on earth.

"Mr. Nolan, Lucas has returned."

"Come in," Franklin replied blandly.

He put a hand on the armrest of the couch and caressed the black cat with the other.

The black cat meowed uncomfortably, probably because Franklin stroked it too hard.

Crack! The next moment, he broke the black cat's neck.

Although the men witnessed Franklin killed the cat and threw it to the floor, none of them dared to pick up the dead body to bury it.

He was indeed terrifying when he was pissed off.

"Lucas."

When Lucas heard the familiar voice, he gave the man a cold-eyed stare and replied, "Father."

"Do you still treat me as your father?" Once Lucas finished, the man continued coldly.

"Father..."

"You have never come to the manor to visit your mom and me for the past two years. Do you think you can abandon your parents now because you have grown up?"

"I'm sorry."

"I heard that you got a divorce," Franklin asked sternly. He was aware that his son didn't really love him as a father.

To be more accurate, his son couldn't wait to sever all ties with him.

"Father, you didn't care about me when I was married. But why are you concerned about it because I got a divorce?" Lucas looked at Franklin emotionlessly.

"Mr. Nolan, Lucas has returned."

"Come in," Franklin replied blandly.

He felt that he was estranged from his parents, so much so that they were even worse than strangers.

"Humph! Why do I have to care about you? You don't deserve it! Don't you know the reason? There is no man crueller than you! You killed your own sister! She was sweet and innocent, yet she died because of you!"

While Franklin was scolding him, Lucas lowered his head and closed his eyes.

"If you purposely summoned me here to irritate me using my sister, save it."

As much as Lucas tried to remain calm, the burning rage in his eyes betrayed him.

He felt that someone was flinging rocks at his chest as a punishment.

"A heartless man like you don't deserve to be loved. That's why you got a divorce in the end. Look at you! You're a good-for-nothing. You couldn't even keep a woman by your side. You might have wealth and power, yet what happened in the end? Even your wife abandoned you because you are a piece of trash! You're nothing but a murderer who killed your sister!"

When Franklin spoke, Lucas stared at him emotionlessly. Suddenly, he approached his son menacingly.

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"Lucas, you're a piece of trash! Your wife was bound to leave you. You're undeserving of anyone's love. All you deserve is to live in hell for the rest of your life as compensation to your sister!"

"No! Stop it! Shut up!"

Lucas slammed his fist onto the stone pillar at the side.

Instantly, blood gushed out of his knuckles like the water from a broken dam.

Franklin sneered, his devil-like voice echoing in the hall. Grabbing Lucas' hand, he uttered, "Look at you.

You bleed. My daughter—when she bled to death because of you! It must have been much more painful than what you're feeling now."

"Why are you wasting your breath on a piece of trash like him?"

Suddenly, an equally cruel voice sounded.

Lucas turned his bloodshot eyes in the direction of the voice to see a glamorous woman walking down the stairs. She was the epitome of beauty in a vintage dress with flowers decorating the edges of the hem. She looked divine.

Yet, her appearance did not match with the cruel words that came from her lips.

She slowly walked toward Lucas.

The look in her eyes as she stared at him was frigid.

Slap!

A loud slap landed on the man's face. By now, the numbness had overtaken Lucas' pain. His heart felt dead as it lay silent in his chest. "Do you know why we told you to come back?" Livia glared at Lucas. "It's your sister's death anniversary tomorrow, you ungrateful b*stard. You've forgotten, haven't you?"

"I didn't..." Lucas looked around wildly with unfocused eyes.

It hurts... My heart hurts, and my head hurts.

It feels like I'm going to explode.

It hurts so much. Honey... Honey, where are you? I feel terrible. It hurts so badly. I can barely breathe.

His defined features were twisted into a look of despair as the pain crushed his soul.

No... No. I felt guilty and hurt. I think about her all the time. I'm sorry, Grace. I'm sorry...

This is my fault.

This is all my fault.

"Argh!" Lucas abruptly roared as he crashed himself continuously at the pillar like a mindless beast.

Franklin glanced at him before instructing the men in black in the hall. "Lock him in the cage. Don't give him any water."

Dozens of men in black swarmed Lucas. However, a maniac man had immense strength at his disposal; the men in black could not restrain him at all.

Lucas' bloodshot eyes reddened even more. He wanted to let loose; he wanted to scream.

"I didn't..." Lucas looked around wildly with unfocused eyes.

He wanted to vent out the indescribable pain in him.

Rationality fled his mind, and it left only frustration behind.

Countless men swarmed forward again, only to be pushed away by Lucas.

They kept repeating the process.

It was as if Lucas had endless energy in his body.

Finally, someone grabbed a tranquilizer gun and shot him. Only then did he slowly weaken and went lifeless.

Livia watched with indifferent eyes as they dragged Lucas away. She smiled at Franklin. "Dear, why are you still keeping this useless boy here?"

"Isn't it interesting to torment him every year?" Franklin reached out to circle his arm around the woman's waist. "Moreover, he's quite useful. Where else would we get our money from?"

With that said, he turned to kiss her neck.

"Cheeky!" Livia reached out to slap him.

Right then, Claire skipped her way into the villa while she held tight onto her limited-edition purse.

She was a pretty young woman with big eyes, fair skin, and wavy long hair.

Livia gestured for her to go closer.

Claire walked toward her mother and put on a cute smile. "Mom, where's Lucas?"

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Livia took in a deep breath and lost the air of cruelty she had when Lucas was around. Now, she was looking at Claire with a loving and gentle gaze. She sighed, "He's had another attack. You can look for him when he clears his mind tomorrow."

"Was Lucas missing Grace again?" Claire hugged her mother's waist and kissed her cheek. "Mom, Dad,

don't be too upset."

Claire only knew that Grace and she were twins. Back then, when they went to the countryside, Grace and Lucas had gotten lost and her sister died when she fell off a cliff.

Lucas had been plagued with guilt. He was even diagnosed with mania after the incident. His attacks happened every year and lasted several days.

Claire was upset that Grace had passed away, but she was equally upset that her brother had been so affected by their sister's death that he was diagnosed with a mental disorder.

With reddened eyes, Claire mumbled, "I'll go back to my room first."

It had been an entire day.

Lucas told her he had a night flight, but he neither messaged nor called her before boarding his flight.

When she called him, a mechanical voice told her he was unreachable, and her messages were unread.

Frustration seeped into her as a sense of impending doom rose in her heart.

It'll be fine.

He's an excellent pilot. Nothing has ever happened during his flights.

Nothing will happen to him.

She had been observing his flight details. Even after the plane took off, she was still worried as she waited for his flight to land.

The breeze at four in the morning was cold. There was a thin cloud of mist in the distance.

Ashlyn tossed and turned in her bed. Finally, she put on her clothes and drove herself to pick Lucas up from the airport.

After the passengers had left the airport, the flight crew came out. Without wasting a moment, she rushed forward, looking for him.

However, when she noticed the pilot had an unfamiliar face, the smile on her lips vanished.

He's not Lucas?

Where's Lucas?

Panic poured into her heart when she heard Nancy. "Ms. Berry, are you here for Captain Nolan?"

"Ms. Jesson, where's Lucas?" Ashlyn frowned as she tamped down her panic.

"He had some matters to deal with at the last minute, so another captain took over. Didn't you know about it?" Nancy sensed something amiss about the situation.

Matters to deal with?

What is so important?

Ashlyn carefully breathed out. "I don't. I can't contact him. Thank you."

At that, she jogged to the Land Rover.

Behind her, Jenny had a smug look on her face as she scoffed, "Look at how anxious she is. Is she afraid that she won't be able to keep her status as his beloved? Ha. Captain Nolan must have finally found out about her true colors. He must be leaving her. That's why she's so anxious."

Nancy could not help but roll her eyes.

God, this woman is annoying.

The breeze at four in the morning was cold. There was a thin cloud of mist in the distance.

What does someone else's business have to do with her?

"Jenny, do you nothing better to do?"

"Purser, what are you trying to say?" Jenny looked at her, baffled.

"You're nosy." With that said, Nancy walked away.

It hurts... It hurts.

It's so painful.

I feel like vomiting.

Lucas pressed down hard on his stomach.

Slowly, he opened his eyes.

He was enveloped in darkness; there was no hint of light anywhere.

He carefully climbed to his feet but came into contact with cold steel.

A cage.

He was all too familiar with it.

Every time he came to this place, he was locked in this cage. This was not his first time here.

His towering body was crammed into this steel cage.

The suffocating darkness was like lava on his nerves.

The wound on his hand was untreated, but the blood had already stopped flowing.

However, it had yet to clot.

The skin and flesh were turned outward. Carefully, he reached out to touch the wound as numbness wrapped around his heart.

He did not know how long he had been in this cage, nor how long he had been unconscious.

The plane must have taken off long ago.

I wonder if Ashlyn is looking for me.

His rationality returned to its place in his mind, but the only thing he could think of was the despair he felt toward his own family.