

Extraordinary 751

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Ryan halted in his tracks momentarily, but he did not respond and continued on his way.

In a private room in The Peacock, Lucas was seated beside Caleb, while James and his wife took seats beside Caleb.

I can't believe Linnie is sitting next to Mrs. Field! This is ridiculous.

Caleb shot Lucas a disgruntled look. He might be handsome and imposing, but most importantly, he has a sharp tongue. Look at how he's being wary of me. How upsetting!

He got even more upset when he recalled that Ashlyn was now Lucas' wife.

Ha! Did he get my approval beforehand?

He gave Lucas the once-over haughtily.

Lucas did not bother hiding his displeasure as well. How could Ashlyn sit between Charlotte and Mrs. Field? She abandoned me!

He could feel his frustration building and did his best to tamp it down.

However, it did not stop him from staring at Ashlyn intently.

Despite sensing his gaze, Ashlyn chose to ignore him.

She was busy talking to Charlotte. Afraid of scaring the little girl, she spoke in a soothing manner.

"How did your treatment abroad go? Does your face still hurt?" she asked gently.

Charlotte glanced at her earnestly. "Joseph was there with me, so I wasn't afraid at all."

She flashed Joseph, who was sitting beside Lucas, a sweet smile.

Joseph forced a smile awkwardly. Oh, that was so adorable!

Fae took Charlotte's hand. "Be a good girl, Lottie. You'll be pretty after you recover. If that brat treats you badly, just let me know."

"Mum, Joseph treats me well." Charlotte started counting with her fingers. "He buys breakfast and pours me a glass of water every morning. He also chats with me and plays games with me."

“Oh, he's just doing his job and fulfilling his responsibility. That isn't his strength,” Fae told her cheerfully.

Charlotte was still young, so she trusted Fae completely. Blinking her huge eyes, she asked, “Then what is his strength?”

“Well...” A mischievous smile flitted across Fae's lips. She looked like a witch trying to persuade children to eat sweets. “For example, is Joseph handsome? Is he attentive? Is he gentle?”

“Huh?” Charlotte blushed instantly.

Um...

“Also, do you like his abs?” Ashlyn chimed in to tease Charlotte.

She chuckled out loud. It was rare to see her laughing this happily.

At that, Lucas' breath hitched, and Joseph was speechless.

Did she just flirt with me? Did Ashlyn seriously mention my abs?

Lucas swept his gaze over Joseph's white shirt. Are his abs as hard as mine? Ha! Women!

James coughed twice. “Fae, Ashlyn, stop it.”

“Dad, it's fine. I'm thick-skinned, and I have strong abs,” Joseph responded nonchalantly. He braved a look at Charlotte and realized she was blushing so furiously that he could see it through her bandage.

Her ears, especially, were so red and seemed as if they were about to burn any minute.

James glared at him, but Caleb chuckled and said, “This is fun. I feel better now that I know she has a bunch of lively and interesting family and friends by her side.”

Everyone else fell silent.

Lively? Most of them were influential and respected beings in Lake City. Jared, Lucas, Winsor, and Joseph were known for being indifferent individuals.

They could not believe Caleb described them as lively and interesting.

Right then, someone knocked on the door.

Those who were supposed to be here had shown up, and they told the server not to disturb them.

Thus, they could not help but wonder who would knock on the door to their private room.

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Lucas' brows scrunched up. "Come in."

After hearing his response, a tall figure pushed the door open and came in.

It was Ryan. The diamond stud on his ear sparkled under the light, and the streak of dyed hair on his head was especially eye-catching.

Caleb was rather annoyed with the Yates family by now.

"Mr. Yates, why are you here? If you're here for a free meal, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. There are no more seats left," he scoffed.

Ryan did not grow impatient or furious despite Caleb's mocking words.

His lips curled. "Mr. Powell, I'm here to talk to Ms. Berry."

He then strode toward Ashlyn's seat.

Lucas' frown deepened at that. Another man who's here for her! D*mn it! His chest felt tight.

He watched as the flirty Ryan went over to Ashlyn and gave her a polite bow. Being the gentleman he was, he said politely, "I'm sorry. I really am. I'm offering an apology on behalf of Mary. Her actions must've caused you harm. It was the Yates family—"

Before he could finish, Ashlyn interjected, "Mr. Yates, it was Mary and Penelope who did something wrong, so they should be the ones to apologize to me. You shouldn't apologize on behalf of them. If they kill you one day, are you going to serve sentence on behalf of them?"

She arched a brow, and her voice was charmingly seductive.

Obviously, she was not about to accept Ryan's apology.

Ryan was stunned. "If that's what you want, I shall ask someone to give them a ride here."

"No need for that." Ashlyn did not want to see them at all, for they would only irritate her. "I accept your apology, so you can leave now."

Pursing his lips, Ryan left the private room.

Caleb glanced at his retreating figure and blurted out, "Why do I think Mr. Yates resembles Lynn?"

At the door, Ryan froze in his tracks and whipped his head around to stare at Ashlyn.

At the same time, Ashlyn lifted her head and met his gaze.

Almost everyone in the private room started observing them.

They had the same straight nose, pencil-thin eyebrows, and the same lip shapes.

Fae gaped in disbelief. "I think the same, too! Lottie resembles them as well. Look, their lips look exactly the same!"

Charlotte responded shyly, "I look nothing like Ashlyn. She's so pretty!"

However, that was not how Ryan perceived the message as his gaze dimmed.

Without a word, he walked out and shut the door behind him.

"Let's continue eating. I'm starving," Ashlyn announced coolly. She then began eating the food on the table.

In a low voice, Tinsor urged, "Blair, you got many fans online after you showed your skills at the hospital. They praise you for being good at martial arts. Teach me!"

"I learned those from Ashlyn." Blair stuffed some food into his mouth. Glancing at Tinsor, he said, "I told you to come with me, but you refused."

"I have to follow my family rules. I can't become someone else's student!" Tinsor glared at Blair enviously.

"Don't be her student, then. You can just learn from her." Blair shot him a smug look. "Let's train together tomorrow after work?"

"Sure!"

They were both interns at Haddock Group now. Their pay was satisfactory, but they were slightly nervous to be working there.

Getting to his feet, Winsor greeted, "Ms. Berry, it's been a while since we last saw each other."

The entire world knew she was Lucas' wife after they got to see each other again.

When he learned of the news, his heart nearly broke into pieces.

He could not believe Lucas kept the fact that he was married a secret for years.

Lucas must be inwardly delighted when he saw me trying to court Ashlyn! Ugh, I feel the urge to beat him up.

As they were in public, he had to pretend that he was not bothered so no one would know how annoyed he felt.

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Ashlyn lifted her wineglass and clinked glasses with him deftly. "Mr. Jaquin, I hope you're well."

She quite liked Tinsor and Blair, for they were young and loyal.

They were full of life, and she could not help but admire them for their vitality.

"Ms. Berry, congratulations. You don't have to hide your marriage anymore. If Lucas dares to bully you, let me know. I'm your friend, so I'll definitely help you to beat him up!" he declared.

It was time for him to end his one-sided crush on her.

Winsor had never said something this mushy in his entire life, thus his cheeks were flushed by the time he gave her his word.

Ugh, why was I that mushy?

"I'm sorry, Winsor, but you'll never get the chance to do so." Lucas shot him a devilishly handsome smile. His strange gaze gave Winsor the creeps.

It felt as if Winsor was a prey who had been targeted by a predator.

Winsor's brows knitted together. Lucas seems different from usual.

Since they were rivals, he knew Lucas well.

Something is definitely up.

"Let's eat. This restaurant serves delicious food!" As they seemed like they were about to start an argument, James immediately cut in and urged everyone to eat to relieve the tension in the air.

Caleb grinned, for even he sensed that Winsor had romantic feelings for Ashlyn.

So he's another man who is in love with Linnie!

They ate and chatted gaily. Soon, it was almost midnight.

Everyone filed out of the private room and was prepared to head home.

Outside, they spotted two women sitting on the couch in the lobby of The Peacock.

It was late at night, but they were clad in thin clothes.

At the sight of Ashlyn, they jolted to their feet.

However, Ashlyn was not planning to stop as she strode ahead, ignoring them.

Without hesitation, Mary ran after her to stop her from leaving. "Ashlyn!"

Penelope snarled at her, "Didn't you see that we were waiting for you?"

"What is it?" Ashlyn had no choice but to stop in her tracks and glanced at them. Ugh, they are everywhere, huh?

Impatience and irritation were written on her face as she gestured for the others to leave without her.

Avoiding the mother and daughter duo, everyone else headed to the entrance as though they stunk.

"I'm sorry," Mary said hastily. Her gaze flitted to the door briefly before she looked away.

Ashlyn glanced in the direction she was looking and saw a male stranger standing there. Was Mary looking at him?

"I said, there's no need to apologize to me. I don't want to see you ever again. Looks like it was Ryan who sent you here to offer an apology, huh?" Ashlyn snickered icily.

"He's too free," she commented.

Huffing angrily, Penelope declared, "If Uncle Ryan didn't threaten to kick us—" Before she could finish, Mary cut in, "Penelope! Shut up!"

Even though Penelope did not manage to finish her sentence, Ashlyn could guess what happened.

Ryan wanted to kick them out, so they had no choice but to come and apologize to her.

No wonder Mary apologized to me readily when they hate me so much and want me dead! There was no way she would apologize to me willingly. Turns out Ryan was behind this!

"An insincere apology is useless," came Ashlyn's answer before she strode past them and left.

Everyone was waiting for her at the door.

Ashlyn climbed into Jared's car instead of Lucas'.

Seeing that, Lucas frowned in displeasure, but he did not comment on her action and told Spencer to drive away.

Inside the Land Rover, Ashlyn contacted Sinclair.

Ashlyn: His second personality has been dissociated. Can you go to him and treat him tomorrow? I don't think his new personality will see you willingly.

Back at the hospital, Sinclair had added Ashlyn's WhatsApp behind Lucas' back.

He often stayed up late at night. Thus, he immediately took his phone after hearing it beeping with a notification, only to find shocking news.

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Sinclair replied: I knew it. Don't worry, for I'll handle it. However, I might need your help to wake him up.

Ashlyn responded swiftly: Sure.

After that, Ashlyn tossed her phone aside and shut her eyes before letting out a long sigh. Many things were plaguing her recently.

Why does it seem like I'm busy every day?

Back in the hotel's presidential suite, Ryan had just stepped out of the shower.

He dried his hair briefly before jumping into bed.

Some time later, he was suddenly reminded of something.

Pulling his phone out, he found a photo of a woman and stared at her.

Without a word, he stroked his chin and fell deep into thought.

Do we really resemble each other?

He then searched for photos of a young Ashlyn.

Everything was just a search away nowadays.

He even searched for Charlotte's photos before she got disfigured so he could compare her face to Ashlyn and himself.

However, Charlotte's photo was taken too long ago, so it was quite blurry. She was an ordinary young girl and did not take many photos, unlike Ashlyn who often trended on social media.

Hence, he could not really come to a conclusion.

Something seems off.

Suddenly, a wild idea flashed across his mind.

Could Ashlyn be... Penelope instead? I mean, could Ashlyn be my sister's daughter? But what about Mary? The DNA results showed that she's related to the Yates family. No way Ashlyn is Mary's daughter. It's obvious Mary dotes on Penelope, and she treats Ashlyn harshly. Did something go wrong with the DNA report?

That very thought shocked Ryan senseless.

He sat up from the bed as his face turned pale.

I must find out what happened. No one can manipulate the Yates family!

His gaze darkened as he gave his assistant a call. "Do me a favor."

A few minutes later, he hung up and flopped back into bed.

He could not stop himself from thinking about Ashlyn's gorgeous face and everything she did.

Imperial Hotel had a dorm for each of its employees.

The seventeenth and eighteenth floors of the hotel were its employee dorm and rest area. Each employee had their own room.

Inside one room, a man was applying medicine to the wound on his calf as he bit back the anguish.

His wound had festered and inflamed. He did not deal with it in time, so it worsened as time passed.

Gritting his teeth, he poured hydrogen peroxide solution onto his wound.

At once, bubbles formed above his wound.

He pulled a knife out and heated it up before plunging it deep into his wound.

In the end, he cut the rotten part of his flesh out with the knife.

As he did not get any anesthetic, he was drenched in sweat. However, he did not make a sound as though he was cutting someone else's leg instead of his own.

Swiftly, he cleaned his wound and applied some medicine before wrapping it up with some gauze.

By then, he could finally let out a sigh of relief.

His entire body was drenched with cold sweat. Sweat was trickling down his forehead, and his back was wet.

Grabbing a piece of napkin, he wiped the sweat off his brows and sat up to roll the hems of his pants down.

Right then, someone knocked at the door.

A familiar voice rang out. "Chef Howard, the head chef wants to see you."

It was his apprentice, Denny. Howard got to his feet carefully and kept all the stuff he used earlier to dress his wound.

Pretending nothing had happened, he bit back the pain that flared up his heart and walked to the door calmly.

He pulled the door open to reveal a young man shorter than him and around the age of nineteen standing outside.

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Upon seeing him, Denny flashed a cheeky smile. "What are you doing inside? What took you so long to answer the door?"

Howard answered innocently, "Denny, I-I think I'm ill. My head is burning up. Am I going to die?"

Denny's expression changed abruptly. Standing on his tiptoes, he placed his hand on Howard's forehead. "Oh, you're burning! I'll go get Dr. Walker now."

Jim Walker was the doctor working for Imperial Hotel. Normally, the employees would seek treatment from him if they suffered from fever or headaches.

After Denny's figure disappeared from sight, Howard slumped.

My wound has been festering for some time, so I hope Dr. Walker doesn't realize that I'm hurt.

Howard did not stop working even after he suffered an injury. He did not let anyone know he was shot in the leg.

After all, a gunshot wound was too sensitive to be revealed to the public.

Alas, his wound was pretty serious now. If he insisted on working instead of recuperating, he might have to amputate his leg.

As he was running a temperature now, he had no choice but to rest for a few days.

A few minutes later, Denny arrived with Jim.

Jim was a middle-aged man in his fifties with pleasant features. He allowed Denny to drag him into Howard's room and panted. "Denny, I'm old. I'll fall if you continue dragging me!"

"Dr. Walker, Chef Howard is usually healthy. He has never been sick. Of course I'm worried sick as he suddenly got ill!" Denny responded anxiously.

After dragging Jim over to Howard's bed, he came to a stop as he panted. "Chef Howard, how are you doing? Dr. Walker's here."

Howard blinked silently. Everyone in Imperial Hotel treated him well, and he was not a robot without feelings.

How can I take action against them?

Tears threatened to gush out of his eyes, so he forced himself to calm down. "Dr. Walker, I think I have a fever," he said slowly.

Jim pulled his infrared thermometer and took Howard's temperature. Narrowing his eyes, he announced, "You're running a high temperature at thirty-nine point two degrees Celsius."

He also checked Howard's tongue. "You have a hard time digesting food recently, too."

After giving Howard the once-over, he asked, "Do you feel unwell besides the fever?"

Howard shook his head. "No."

"Young man, you can earn money anytime, but you have to rest. Don't be a workaholic. Everyone in the hotel knows you've never asked for a day off despite having worked here for years. I'll give you a medical certificate so you can rest for a week," Jim told him.

He then wrote the medical certificate and a prescription, giving them to Denny. "Give this to your

manager. Remember to buy the medicine at the pharmacy according to this prescription.”

“Sure!” Denny hurried away with both notes in his hands. After that, Jim packed up his stuff and left.

Howard was left alone in his room. Pulling out a slender necklace beneath his pillow, he gazed at it.

His marine blue eyes stared at it so adoringly as though it was his lover.

Seven days. I only have seven days left. After resting for seven days, I'll have to complete the mission assigned to me by the organization. Otherwise, I'll have to say goodbye to this world.

Pain gripped his heart so tightly that he could barely breathe.

I can't... I dare not... I shouldn't...

Slowly, he shut his eyes.

As pain flared up his leg, he knew he had to make up his mind in a week.

Early in the morning, Ashlyn went to the movie studio.

Arriving at the film set, she spotted Jonathan and Naomi shooting the last scene.

The sight of them standing next to each other was pleasing to the eye. In fact, Ashlyn's mood lifted when she saw them.

Her lips curled up as she went over to them quietly. As they were engrossed in the scene, she did not disturb them.

Taking a seat, she whipped her phone out and ordered some milkshakes.

Twenty minutes later, the scene finally came to an end.

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Ashlyn heard Greg as he shouted emotionally, “Cut! That's a wrap!”

Applause erupted on the set.

Overwhelmed with excitement, Jonathan wrapped his arms around the young woman before him, lifting her and spinning her in a circle.

Naomi paled in surprise and yelped, “Ah! Put me down! I'm so scared!”

The atmosphere was so infectious that even Ashlyn smiled.

She relished the cheerful crowd and the lively mood in the air.

Suddenly, someone called out, "The milkshakes are here!"

The crowd saw staff from a milkshake store streaming onto the set with cups of milkshakes in tow.

Just then, Greg and the others noticed Ashlyn sitting in a corner.

"Ms. Berry! You're here!"

With a smile, Ashlyn got up from a bench to approach them.

"Filming has officially wrapped up, right?" she asked.

"Yeah, today." Greg nodded and continued, "All we have left is editing, promotional work, and the like."

"That's great. Good job, everyone! Have a milkshake and rest up. Let's celebrate this at Imperial Hotel later tonight. Dinner's on me!" Ashlyn declared with a wave, looking every bit like an imposing leader.

The crowd was naturally elated by her offer. "Oh! That's great!"

"Thanks for the treat, Ms. Berry!"

"Thanks for the milkshake too!"

Ashlyn's lips curved into a pretty smile when she heard the crew and actors singing her praises. She replied affably, "Don't mention it."

After working together for several months, Naomi and Jonathan had developed a good rapport, especially since they now shared the same manager.

Naomi was technically Jonathan's junior now.

Both of them approached Ashlyn, and Naomi wiped the sweat off her forehead while saying, "Hi Ashlyn, it's good to see you here."

Meanwhile, Jonathan's eyes sparkled as he queried, "How did you find my last act, Ashlyn?"

She replied confidently, "Pretty good! It was really impactful. Your acting skills will only improve once you do a few more films under Director Maxwell. Anyway, you should pack up your things at the hotel and go home. Don't live in the movie studio anymore. Jared and Isaac want you to shoot an action film next. They've already arranged classes for you at a training camp."

Stunned, Jonathan stammered, “W-What? An action film? But I'm...”

I'm a top idol! How can I shoot an action film? Am I going to turn into one of those buff dudes? My God, even the thought is frightening!

Jonathan was on the verge of crying at his tragic fate.

He was an artist under Nolan Entertainment, and he questioned why Jared wanted to have a say in his career.

A curious Naomi piped up, “What about me, Ashlyn? Did you make any plans for me?”

“I'm not your manager. You should be talking to Isaac about this.” Ashlyn tapped the young woman's head fondly and added, “Come on. Pack your things so we can go home.”

“Wait, Ashlyn... Did you come here to fetch me home?” Naomi was so moved that she tried to blink away her tears. She looked just like a little kid whose only wish was for her parents to meet her after school.

Confused by Naomi's sudden show of emotion, Ashlyn said, “Who else could I be here for? Your brothers are both at work.”

Jonathan found himself envying Naomi. He wished he was one of the Nolans instead. That way, he could enjoy being at the receiving end of Ashlyn's care for a change.

Unbeknownst to everyone, the craziest idea suddenly popped up in Jonathan's mind. He was determined to marry into the Nolan family.

Poor Naomi had no idea she was now a top idol's target.

Naomi's greeting inadvertently confirmed Ashlyn's status as Mrs. Nolan, though those who worked in showbiz more or less heard rumors about the relationship. Everyone on set now realized how Ashlyn could simply invest hundreds of millions on a whim.

It also made sense why Lucas treated her differently from everyone else.

After that, everyone cleaned up the filming set in earnest.

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On the neighboring film set of “Angel and Devil,” production had resumed sometime back after the director and lead actor were replaced.

The crew was also wrapping up their filming that day.

Kate, who had invested in the film with Haddock Group, showed up on set on the last day of filming.

Alas, Ashlyn ran into her nemesis at the doors of the movie studio just as she was leaving.

Kate's gaze landed on Ashlyn's beautiful face. The older woman spat on the ground and sneered.

That earned her a furious glare from Naomi, who yelled at the security guards near the movie studio door, "Sir! Someone is spitting on the floor. How uncultured!"

Kate's expression stiffened. All she wanted to do was to express her disdain toward Ashlyn.

Not imagining Naomi would start pointing fingers at her, she flushed, angry and embarrassed.

After all, paparazzi milled about the movie studio.

If any of them happened to snap a picture of today's scene, Kate would surely be painted as a disgusting and uncivilized rich lady.

She wished she could turn back time and stop herself from spitting in the first place. In seeking a small piece of gratification, she had potentially ruined her public image.

Meanwhile, the security guard instantly went on guard when they heard Naomi's voice.

He grabbed the hat resting on his knee before running toward Kate, accusing, "How could you be so uncultured? Even kindergarteners know not to spit anywhere they want! I'm going to fine you fifty, ma'am!"

Kate shot Naomi a spiteful glare before turning her attention to the security guard. She peevishly whipped out a hundred from her purse and snapped, "Fifty, is it? It's not as if I can't afford that! Keep the change!"

The security guard was accustomed to such prima donna behavior from the celebrities in the movie studio.

Ignoring Kate's nasty words, he let out a scoff. "My job is to follow the rules. Fifty means fifty! Who the heck are you looking down on, huh?"

At the same time, he stopped Kate from leaving by grabbing her wrist. Loudly, he declared, "I'm telling you; I won't take a dime of your dirty money! I'm making an honest living for myself, and I don't need your extra fifty for anything! Even if I'm poor, I won't sell out my dignity by accepting your ill-meant charity. Understood?"

His raised volume instantly attracted the attention of the bored paparazzi squatting outside the movie studio.

They instinctively turned to look at the doors of the movie studio, bringing Kate's worst nightmare to life.

Suddenly, the paparazzi swarmed them like bees drawn to honey.

They incessantly snapped photos of Kate and blasted her with questions. "Ah, it's Mrs. Fraser!"

"Do all wealthy people think they can look down on the rest of the population?"

"What gives you the right to mistreat people, huh? Everyone is equal!"

"So what if you're swimming in cash? Spitting on the ground is utterly disgusting!"

"I'm going to put this on the front page of my paper!"

Kate could only raise her purse to shield her face as she tried to dart into the movie studio. Unfortunately, the paparazzi were starved for news after two days of peace and quiet.

Initially, they had only planned to write a dull news piece on the filming wrap-up of Ashlyn's film crew.

Kate's little fiasco was akin to catnip to them.

Despite her fury, Kate stopped herself from cursing out loud. She knew the paparazzi would have no qualms about soiling her reputation if she reacted poorly.

Naomi and Ashlyn watched the scene unfold from a distance, and the former could not help but cackle in glee. "How tragic that all this began from a spit."

Ashlyn was tickled by Naomi's comment as she teased, "You're pretty mischievous, huh."

"No one asked her to behave so disgustingly!" Naomi harrumphed before getting into Ashlyn's Land Rover.

I used to be so jealous of Lucas for riding in Ashlyn's car. Now I get to be in it too! Wow, the feel and the view are amazing!

Naomi suddenly abhorred her Porsche 911.

Elsewhere, an endless stream of tourists crowded the airport.

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The tall, middle-aged man's eyes were glowing with kindness and serenity when he looked at the beautiful lady. "Well then, I'm going back to Maredania, Linnie. Call me if you need anything."

"Oh, just leave already. Stop being such a sap," complained Ashlyn as she shoved a gift to him. The gift was placed inside an ordinary box, so it felt as though there was nothing special about it. "Here, take this. You'll like them."

Caleb could not help but shoot a sweet smile, and anyone could tell he was genuinely happy.

I guess she never changes. She's still someone who can't say anything nice, but her action always shows how much she cares.

Hugging the gift, he uttered, "Okay, until next time, then."

After saying that, he turned around and left.

It was not until his figure could no longer be seen in the airport's VIP walkway that she turned around, ready to leave.

Just then, she heard Penelope's voice. "Ashlyn!"

Ashlyn arched her brows and halted her steps. Up ahead, she saw Penelope and Mary standing there.

My gosh, how could I bump into them when I'm merely here to see someone off?

Ashlyn was truly fed up with her fate and bad luck.

"What?"

"Because of you, my mom and I are embarrassed, but don't you gloat. I will tell my granny about this once I reach Maredania, and she will definitely get justice for both of us. She is a countess and is someone you will never get to meet. Women like you are from a lower class, and you will never be equal to me. I am the true socialite."

Ashlyn looked at Penelope as though the latter was a lunatic. "Are you done?" she asked.

Penelope was stunned. "Yes..."

"Then shut up. Listen up, woman. I am not interested in your social circles and am even less intrigued about that granny of yours. I won't bother meeting her, not even when I'm ridiculously bored. Even if she extends an invitation to me, I still won't go."

After saying all that, Ashlyn turned around and left with her head held high.

It did not matter that all that could be seen was her back. She still inspired fear and exuded a regal aura.

At the time, neither realized that was actually the case.

There would come a day when Penelope's grandmother extended countless invitations, but Ashlyn would still refuse to meet up.

"Ignore her. Let's go. She was probably just putting on an act. There's a good chance she's secretly envious of us," said Mary as she tugged at Penelope. "Good job earlier. Your words were very powerful."

"Mom..." murmured Penelope. She rarely received any compliments from her mother, so she could not help but feel a little excited.

"Okay, let's go now."

With that, the mother-daughter duo fished out their air tickets and got ready to board the plane.

Everything was ready, so they boarded the plane soon after.

Ryan was kind to them as he bought them first-class tickets.

When the two of them got onto the plane, they saw Caleb sitting a short distance away in the seat right next to the window. Both ladies grinned, and their eyes glowed simultaneously.

Mary, in particular, was excited.

She had heard rumors of how Caleb was the most desirable bachelor in his age group. He had never gotten married. If I can marry him, I will be the wife of the president of the Piano Association.

Those thoughts prompted her to pretend to be shy and deliberately dropped her handkerchief at the side of his foot. She made it look as though it was just an accident.

Surprised, Caleb picked up the handkerchief and returned it to Mary elegantly. "Your handkerchief, ma'am."

"Thank you, Mr. Powell," replied Mary. She acted as if she was surprised. "I never thought I'd run into you on the airplane. Are you heading back to Maredania as well?"

Somewhat recognizing her voice, Caleb lifted his head and saw Mary there. Wait, isn't that the old woman who bullied Linnie? Ugh, she's so disgusting. How unlucky do I have to be to run into her here?

Despite his thoughts, he nodded at her politely.

He did not say anything, but Mary was too excited to notice his stoicism and lack of enthusiasm.

Hence, she continued, “My mother gave me this handkerchief. The renowned tailor, Leslie Winters, designed and handcrafted it. See that plum blossom there? It’s—”

“Is it as good as the handkerchiefs I have with me?” Caleb cut off before he retrieved the box he had with him.

Mary's initial intention was to share how noble her family was, so she was confused when she saw the box that looked rather ordinary.

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The items inside that box, however, were so perfect that even an amateur like her knew how high the quality was.

The condition and stitching were obviously much better than the handkerchief created by the famous Leslie Winters.

How is that possible? I can't believe someone who's more skilled than Leslie actually exists!

Mary was so surprised that she stumbled a step back. “T-This is virtually perfect. My mother loves embroidery and has always been a fan of Leslie Winters' products. I can't believe there is someone out there who can stitch even better! Will you sell one of those handkerchiefs to me?” requested Mary immediately.

Everyone knew that the countess loved embroidery products.

Mary and Penelope made such a huge mess that they were forced to return to Maredania. If the countess were to discover what the two of them did, she would, without a doubt, be infuriated.

If I can get her one and put her in a good mood...

Mary was already scheming.

Letting out a scoff, Caleb scanned Mary from head to toe. This woman bullied Linnie... I wonder if how she'll react if she learns that she's spending a fortune to buy Linnie's work now. Maybe her jaw will drop. Still... it would be an insult to Linnie if someone like this woman has Linnie's product.

Those thoughts prompted Caleb to reply calmly, “I'm sorry, but a good friend of mine gave them to me, so I will not sell them. The plane is about to take off. Please return to your seat.”

Mary reluctantly shifted her gaze from the box, then made her way to her seat.

After taking her seat, she turned to Penelope and whispered, “Do you think maybe Mr. Powell has a

thing for me?"

"Huh? What do you mean?" asked Penelope while blinking in confusion.

"He seems to care about me because he told me to return to my seat. Maybe he doesn't want me to get hurt after the plane takes off..."

Charlotte, whose seat was right in front of Mary, could not help but twitch her lips a little. Is she a retard? He was obviously chasing her away. How did she even interpret that as something romantic?

Charlotte and Joseph had boarded the same plane because they needed to return to Maredania for the treatment on their faces.

When they boarded the plane, they made their way to Caleb to greet him. They never thought that they would run into Mary, who was so engrossed in her own narcissism and so focused on Caleb that she was not aware of the passengers in front of her.

A few hours later, the plane landed steadily on the ground.

Caleb got into his family's car and made his way to the castle right away.

His family was one of the most prominent families in Maredania. His brother, in particular, was the globally renowned oil tycoon, Nicholas Powell.

Both Caleb and his brother were single and shared the same love for exquisite stitching.

That was why Caleb, being the mischievous brother he was, wanted to show off the box of incredible handkerchiefs he had.

Caleb made his way to Nicholas' room right away. He walked past several housekeepers, most of which were men when he made his way through the castle.

Since Caleb and Nicholas were two of the most desirable bachelors in the world, they attracted countless women who wished to marry them and become the lady of the castle.

Regardless of age and appearances, many women applied to be the castle's housekeepers just so they could try their chances on the siblings.

That was why over eighty percent of the housekeepers in the castle were male. The remaining twenty percent were married women.

As Caleb walked past the housekeepers, he nodded politely at them.

Arriving Nicholas' room, he knocked on the door.

When he heard someone responding from inside, he opened the door and entered the room.

He then lifted the ordinary box he had with him and smiled to brag. "Hey Nicholas, guess what I got my hands on?"

"What can you possibly have?" replied Nicholas. The siblings looked similar, but the aura Nicholas exuded was even stronger. It was the kind of aura that only powerful men had.

His eyes shone with wisdom that was forged from his life experiences and intelligence. When Nicholas heard his brother talking, he shifted his attention from the documents he was reading and looked at his brother.

This brother of mine is a middle-aged man, but somehow, he is still as innocent as a kid. Gosh, what am I going to do with him?

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The funny thing about these siblings was that they were polar opposites, with one being grounded and the other being lively.

The contrast was simply too obvious.

"Tada!" exclaimed Caleb. When he saw how disinterested his brother was, he quickly opened the box. "Look! My friend gave me so many handkerchiefs."

"Really?" replied Nicholas. He was immediately intrigued, and his sharp gaze landed on the content of the box right away.

He was momentarily stunned, but then began praising, "Oh, these are breathtaking. Look at that. There's a straight pattern, zig-zag pattern, overlock pattern... Her skills are incredible."

Every single one of those handkerchiefs was worth a fortune and would fetch a good price at any auction.

If they were taken to the museum, there was a good chance they would end up being a part of the museum's collection.

After admiring each and every piece of fabric inside the box, Nicholas asked, "Caleb, can you please introduce me to this friend of yours? I'm simply too curious. Even Leslie's nothing compared to what your friend can do, even though Leslie is the most skilled embroiderer in Maredania. Someone as skilled as your friend should be welcomed as a VIP."

"I've told you a million times, Nicholas. She's a weird girl, and she doesn't enjoy meeting with old souls like you, so you should just give up."

Caleb could see how much Nicholas loved those handkerchiefs, so he chose one from the box and handed it over. "Here, you can have this. I'll keep the others away and treasure them."

After saying all that, Caleb left the room while hugging the box.

Staring at that handkerchief, Nicholas was deep in thoughts for quite some time.

Suddenly, he jumped as though he was enlightened. He then rummaged through his stuff endlessly. It took him some time before he got another handkerchief from the safe deposit box.

He compared the stitching on the handkerchief inside the safe box to the one Caleb had just given him. The way both handkerchiefs were stitched is the same! That means the same embroiderer might've made them.

The only real difference was that the handkerchief inside the safe deposit box was old, whereas the one Caleb had just given Nicholas was brand new.

Could the same person have stitched both handkerchiefs? Is she the owner of this handkerchief?

Nicholas felt his heart thumping fast. He could not wait to meet the person who made that handkerchief because he wanted to ask her about what had happened all those years ago.

However, the handkerchief had a much more important task.

He had already heard about how the countess, Bianca Yates, would be throwing a birthday party next Friday. She has always liked exquisite embroidery, so this handkerchief will make a great gift.

Many years ago, the eldest daughter of the Yates family had an arranged marriage with Nicholas. Bianca and the elders of the Powell family had already agreed to have them get married.

Rumor was that the eldest daughter, who had been missing all these years, had finally returned. Unfortunately, Nicholas was in love with someone else and had been saving himself for that person. He actually spent over twenty years searching for that person with no success.

As a result, he was still single. That did not mean he would marry the eldest daughter as promised, though. He would use that exquisite handkerchief to terminate his engagement.

Unlike teenagers, who only focused on love, both Nicholas and the eldest daughter of that family were middle-aged individuals, so it would be rather ridiculous for them to be hung up on love.

Nicholas had also reached the point where his goals in life no longer allowed him to do anything drastic.

That was understandable and natural. It was what happened to everyone when they grew old. They

could not be as reckless as they used to be for love.

At that age, being all lovey-dovey and talking about it all day would just embarrass them.

Rumor has it that the eldest daughter of the Yates family has a daughter who is in her early twenties. I am a globally renowned oil tycoon, so there is no way I'd marry someone like her.

Although Nicholas did not want to lose the exquisite handkerchief he had with him, he had no choice.

He would rather spend the rest of his life alone than to get involved with another woman.

Inside the Count's Mansion, Penelope did not even put her luggage away when she ran into the yard where Bianca was resting.

As it was quite the journey, the former looked disheveled and did not like a socialite who grew up in a luxurious environment.

Bianca was enjoying some tea at that moment, but her heart ached when she saw Penelope in that state. Reaching out to hold her granddaughter's hand, she uttered, "Oh, my poor child. Let me look at you. How did you get so thin? Didn't your uncle take care of you?"

"Granny..." murmured Penelope. Tears gathered around her eyes.

"Oh, dear. Why are you crying?" asked Bianca, feeling her heart break even more. "What's wrong?"