

Her Riches 221

Chapter 221

Having been viciously kicked on the side of the waist by Gwendolyn's foot, Cedrick was in such pain his body spasmed uncontrollably.

He held his hands over his waist, and before he could come to terms with the excruciating pain, she swiftly reached for the decorative vase on the nightstand and swung it toward his head.

Cedrick hastily covered his head and bent over.

He did not fight back, neither did he dodge. He merely stood there and allowed her to hit him.

Gwendolyn smashed the vase in her grip on his back three times consecutively.

Because she was feeling dizzy, she could not muster much strength, so her moves were not as forceful.

Nonetheless, it still hurt as the dense porcelain vase smashed against his back.

Cedrick was probably traumatized at that point.

Frustration swamped him. I'll never put anything that can be used as a weapon on my nightstand next time!

Seemingly unable to vent her anger after hitting the man several times, Gwendolyn aggressively slammed the vase on the corner of the table, shattering it into pieces. Then, she hurled the sharp edge of the broken shard toward Cedrick.

"Gwendolyn!"

Worried that the broken shard would hurt her, Cedrick instinctively backed away.

Because of his brief hesitation, he did not manage to dodge in time and got cut by a piece of broken shard on his right collarbone. A faint blood scratch mark appeared on his skin, and the collar of his white shirt was stained by blood quickly.

Gwendolyn had wanted to slit his neck, but she missed it and cut his collarbone instead.

Taking opportunity of the situation, Cedrick hurriedly grabbed her wrist and threw the weapon in her grip aside.

Gwendolyn glared at his face furiously. "Cedrick! You're probably wearing this thing on your face to scare me, aren't you? I shall see how ugly the face behind this mask is!"

"Don't... I—"

Before he could clarify anything, Gwendolyn hit her forehead against his.

As he loosened his grip, she regained freedom of her hands and swiftly took off his mask.

Cedrick was utterly stunned. How can she still be so ferocious when she's drunk?

With the mask removed, he had his back to her in guilt. He dared not turn around, and his heart was pounding so fast it felt like it was about to jump out of his chest.

He waited for a second. Then, two...

Unexpectedly, Gwendolyn, who had been taunting aggressively behind him, suddenly turned quiet. Even the atmosphere fell into complete silence.

He cautiously turned his head a little and tried to steal a glance from the corner of his eye.

To his surprise, Gwendolyn had already collapsed on the bed, seemingly unconscious. There was a big, red mark on her forehead, and evidently, she had passed out after smashing her head against his.

Only then did he breathe a sigh of relief. What happened earlier had obviously left a lingering fear within him.

A stinging pain radiated from his collarbone area. Pressing his hand against the wound, the fresh red blood on his fingers reminded him about everything that happened earlier.

Tears welled up in Cedrick's eyes. His whole body was in pain after getting hit by her.

Indignance overwhelmed him.

He meticulously took care of her while she was drunk. Little did he imagine she would be so ruthless toward him even when she was in such a condition.

After finding out that Gwendolyn liked someone else in the morning, then learned later that the man she fancied was Sherman, and eventually getting whacked up by her, Cedrick had been suppressing his disappointment for the whole day. At this point, he could finally no longer hold his emotions back.

His nose stung sharply, his eyes burned, and he could feel his eyelashes wet with tears.

While bitterness overwhelmed him as he stared intently at the blood on the tip of his fingers, Gwendolyn opened her eyes a little and fixed her gaze on him quietly for a long time.

Cedrick could vaguely sense her intense gaze.

Whipping his head around, he exchanged glances with Gwendolyn.

W-What's up with that expression? Does she recognize who I am?

Nervous, Cedrick gulped. A myriad of thoughts raced through his mind as he tried to figure out an excuse to fool Gwendolyn.

Before he said anything, Gwendolyn sat up, approached him, and held his face. A wide smile spread across her flushing red face.

“I’m dreaming again, huh? Indeed, I can only see you in my dreams. Even though you look somewhat different this time, you still look so handsome...” Burp...

A burp laced with a strong alcohol smell could be felt on Cedrick’s face.

His mind went blank as he looked at her in a daze.

“I don’t care! This is my dream! I have the final say!”

With a gleeful smile, she inched closer toward him. It was clear she was up to no good.

While he was still in bewilderment, she lightly left a peck on his cold, thin lips.

Astonishment flickered in Cedrick’s dark eyes. That soft, tender feeling on his lips could still be felt vividly. He stood rooted to the ground as if he was electrocuted.

D-Did... Did she just kiss me?

A smile crinkled the corners of Gwendolyn’s eyes. She appeared contented, but her eyes still gave off a dazed look, and it was a sign that she was still in her drunkard state.

Cedrick straightened his back, not daring to move a single muscle.

Who knows what else is she going to do next? Will she give me a vicious slap on my face or kick me in my waist again?

Under his doubtful gaze, Gwendolyn wrapped her arms around his waist. As she shifted her gaze downward, she noticed the blood mark beside the collar of his shirt. A pained look crossed her face.

“Why will you get injured even in my dream? Who on earth dares to hurt you? I’ll kill him!”

The distressed look in her eyes instantly dissipated all the grievances Cedrick had inside him earlier.

Even though he already sensed that she had most likely mistaken him for someone else, it did not matter to him.

“I’m fine. It doesn’t hurt,” he tenderly said.

The smile on Gwendolyn’s face, however, vanished. She was rather unhappy.

“But I feel bad.”

As her words fell, she leaned over and gently kissed the blood mark on his collarbone.

She was just like a kitten, trying to comfort her injured companion.

Her gentleness was on par with her viciousness while she beat him up earlier.

“Gwendolyn, you—”

Cedrick was dumbfounded by her action.

Her soft lips were as sweet as honey, melting his entire heart as she kissed his collarbone, stirring up his desires.

He wrapped his arms around her waist, unwilling to let her go.

He was touched, satisfied, and surprised, yet afraid he would lose her again. A mixture of emotions enveloped him.

For a second, he wished that time could stop.

He selfishly hoped Gwendolyn's love and care would only belong to him forever.

"Do you like it?"

Cedrick caressed her head and broke into a smile. "I like it very much."

Gwendolyn nestled herself into his arms and rested her head on the other side of his collarbone, sniffing the tobacco smell on his body.

"Then you have to come into my dreams every night. I want to hug you, kiss you, and sleep with you..."

Her voice grew softer and softer as she spoke.

Lowering his head, Cedrick found that Gwendolyn had fallen asleep again.

But it was different this time. She slept exceptionally well in his embrace and did not wake up in the middle of the night.

Cedrick remained in the same position and did not move for several hours. As time passed, he felt his neck and back beginning to ache.

Just as he tried to place Gwendolyn's head on the pillow, she furrowed her brows at his slightest movement, seemingly voicing her protest soundlessly.

Left with no choice, Cedrick could only suppress the aches and pains he was experiencing. He covered a blanket over her and let her stay in his embrace to sleep the entire night.

At six the following morning, Cedrick was taking a quick nap while leaning against Gwendolyn's head when he heard someone softly mimicking a bird chirping outside the door.

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Figuring that it was Nico, Cedrick sobered up at once.

Lowering his head and seeing the woman in his arms sleeping exceptionally well, he carefully placed her on the bed.

Luckily, Gwendolyn was deep asleep and did not have much reaction.

He quietly got up, grabbed his coat, and headed outside.

Nico was waiting outside the door. The moment Cedrick stepped out, Nico's sharp eyes immediately noticed the blood stain on the collar of his shirt.

"Boss, why are you hurt? Did you two fight last night?"

There wasn't any fight. I got whacked instead.

If not for Nico mentioning it, Cedrick would have forgotten about that incident.

The wound no longer hurt. Yet, he could still vividly remember the kiss Gwendolyn left on his blood mark with her soft lips.

The tip of his ears turned red. Regarding the incident last night, he was very contented.

The only exception was perhaps the fact that his back hurt a little...

He reflexively rubbed his back and aching neck. An exhausted look clouded his face.

“Let’s go. She’ll wake up later.”

Seeing that action, Nico instantly came to a realization and exclaimed, “Boss, you’re progressing pretty well, huh! You got things done so quickly. I bet it must be a wild night yesterday!”

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Nonsense! I can never force Gwendolyn to do anything unless she volunteered to do it. Besides, she’s the one who got violent last night!

Cedrick’s lower back was still aching from last night’s beating. I’m not going to suffer alone.

Glaring at Nico, Cedrick said, “Each word you said earlier will cost you a month of salary. Do the math on your own.”

“Huh?”

The unforeseen disaster filled Nico with despair.

I said so many words just now. Does that mean I won’t get paid for many years? What a heartless and unreasonable boss!

He fell into despair and stood transfixed for a while.

Meanwhile, Cedrick smirked and turned around to leave. Although his body ached, he walked swiftly while humming as if he was in a good mood.

Nico ran after him and cried, “Boss! I was wrong! Please give me a chance!”

...

It had been so long since Gwendolyn slept so well.

In fact, she did not wake up until her phone rang at nine-thirty in the morning.

“Honey, I’ve already taught her a lesson about what happened last night. It won’t happen again. Please come back to the villa tonight. Your party’s the day after tomorrow. You need to get ready—”

Marcus coughed before he could end his sentence, and that grabbed Gwendolyn’s attention.

Gwendolyn who was still in a daze thought about it before saying, “Okay.”

“Come back early tonight when you’ve finished your work, okay? You need to try on your gown.”

“Okay.”

Upon hanging up, she turned around to continue sleeping. However, her mind was slowly starting to clear up.

I went to The Honey Bee for a drink instead of going back to the Harris residence last night. So, how did I end up in this bed?

Instantly, she sat upright and turned her head to see broken pieces of a vase scattered on the ground near the bedside table. Perplexed, she quickly gave William and Quinton a call.

The two had been guarding the door after Cedrick left. As soon as they received Gwendolyn's call, they rushed into the room.

Gwendolyn had too much to drink last night that she could not remember what happened. "Who sent me to the hotel last night?"

"It was Mr. Jenson. He even took care of you the entire night."

Gwendolyn's brows tightened into a frown as she quickly examined her body. Only when she realized she was fine did she let out a sigh of relief.

Good thing Cedrick didn't do anything to me. Otherwise, I will show up at the Jenson residence with a knife to slaughter him. Then again, if nothing happened last night, why are there broken pieces on the floor?

She did not remember fighting Cedrick. All she remembered was having a sweet dream about Maverick last night. She even kissed and hugged him in the dream.

Alas, neither William nor Quinton knew anything. Looks like I'll have to ask Cedrick to find out what happened.

Gwendolyn said, "William, go to the Jenson residence to look for Cedrick. Tell him I want to talk to him face to face."

"Understood, Ms. Shalders." With that, William went out to carry out the orders.

"Quinton, tell the hotel manager I'll pay for the broken vase at its original price."

"All right."

It just so happened that the hotel manager and a server arrived with a trolley and were about to knock on the door when Quinton turned around to open it.

Having heard Gwendolyn's words, the hotel manager smiled politely. "You're too kind, Ms. Shalders. Mr. Jenson has already paid for the vase."

In fact, Cedrick paid ten times the amount as a suggestion for the hotel to remove all decorations except for the tissues from the bedside table in the guest rooms.

The thought of that made the manager smile brighter. He then stepped aside to reveal the custom-made food on the trolley.

"Not only that, Mr. Jenson even ordered breakfast for you. These are made on the spot by our five-star chef. Why don't you try them, Ms. Shalders?"

At the same time, the server was transferring the breakfast to the suite's table until there was no space left.

Gwendolyn pursed her lips in silence as she scanned the breakfast on the table.

Could Cedrick really be so attentive? Why do I feel like he has a motive? Did he actually have sex with me last night?

At that thought, Gwendolyn slipped her hand under the covers and quietly examined herself again to confirm that she was not in pain or injured.

Unable to find a breakthrough, she had no choice but to ask the hotel manager, "I just got back to Salinsburgh, and I'm not familiar with Mr. Jenson. Do you know what he looks like?"

The manager shook his head. "Ordinary people like us aren't worthy of seeing his real face. He usually wears a mask when he goes out. Then again, I've seen his back before. He's tall and exudes an incredible aura. I guess he has a handsome face."

Gwendolyn said nothing in response.

It looks like I have to meet Cedrick in person to get to the bottom of this.

Gwendolyn did not take a single bite out of the breakfast Cedrick had ordered for her. Instead, she washed up and left the hotel to supervise the construction of Angle Corporation.

It was not until the afternoon did William rush back. “Ms. Shalders, I’ve visited the Jenson residence. Mr. Jenson isn’t there.”

“What about Jenson Group?”

“I’ve asked the employees, too. He’s not there either.”

Very well. We’ll just keep trying tomorrow and the days after that. He’ll be there one day, anyway.

Hence, she made William go looking for Cedrick for two days straight. She even sent people to stand guard outside the Jenson residence and Jenson Group. Still, Cedrick was nowhere to be seen.

The situation confused Gwendolyn. Is he hiding from me on purpose? Why is he doing that?

Just like that, two days went by peacefully. Soon, it was the night of the party.

The party was held at Marcus’ villa. It was a grand party, so much so that all the major business figures and influential people of Salinsburgh were present.

Gwendolyn was getting her makeup touched up in the room two hours before the start of the party.

Hanging in the corner of the room was a gorgeous custom-made gown designed by Ms. Z. It was an expensive outfit. The gown fluttered as Gwendolyn walked, making her look like a fairy.

Just then, Ezra gently knocked on the door and reported softly into her ears. “Ms. Gwendolyn, Mr. Jenson hasn’t returned until now. Apparently, he’s carrying out a mission and won’t be returning tonight. Mr. Marcus says he’s going to announce the wedding later tonight. What if you get laughed at when Mr. Jenson doesn’t show up tonight?”

Gwendolyn was unfazed.

She did not care about all those things. After all, she was already planning to cancel the marriage arrangement.

“It’s fine. I still have my dad. They won’t gossip even if Cedrick doesn’t show up today.”

It’s just that Cedrick is being a little too obvious in avoiding me.

While pondering about it carefully, she put down her applicator to hear a housekeeper knock on the door and say, “Ms. Gwendolyn, Old Mr. Jenson’s here. He wants to see you in private and is waiting for you in the side hall.”

“All right.”

It was best to not keep Valentino waiting for long. After all, he was an elder. Thus, Gwendolyn changed into her gown and headed to the side hall.

“Hello, Old Mr. Jenson. My father has specially prepared coffee for you when he heard you were coming,” she greeted the old man in a sweet and polite manner.

Valentino put his coffee cup down, surprised to see Gwendolyn.

“Come closer, child. Let me have a good look at you.”

Smiling, Gwendolyn took a seat beside Valentino.

Although it was their first meeting, Valentino liked her from the bottom of his heart. Not only was she pretty and graceful, but she was also smart with her words. Clearly, she was a thoughtful person.

Satisfied with the young lady's character, Valentino said, "What a great child. No wonder Cedrick likes you. He's never asked me for help. It's his first time getting my help so he could marry you..."

Gwendolyn did not catch what he said after that, for her mind kept replaying the words he said earlier. Cedrick got Old Mr. Jenson's help for the first time just to be engaged to me? That means the son of a b*tch lied to me! He clearly has a motive! Why is he avoiding me, then?

Chapter 223 Nowhere To Hide

Suspicious thoughts raced through Gwendolyn's mind.

Valentino was still speaking when she snapped out of her thoughts. "Cedrick's really fallen for you. By the way, you've been back for a few days already, right? Have you two met yet? What's your first impression of him?"

"I haven't met him yet, Old Mr. Jenson," answered Gwendolyn.

She then seized the opportunity to continue, "I've been sending people to meet him these days, but he's been avoiding me. So, no. I haven't met him yet."

The look on Valentino's face grew serious. "Did that really happen?"

He then asked Logan to enter and ordered, "Get Cedrick here this instant. What's he avoiding her for?"

"Yes."

In the meantime, Gwendolyn kept her smile while chatting and having coffee with Valentino.

Ten minutes later, Logan returned.

“Old Mr. Jenson, Mr. Jenson isn’t coming tonight. He’s on a mission.”

“What kind of mission’s so urgent that he has to bail his fiancée’s party? Ugh. This rascal!”

Valentino stomped his cane on the ground and tried to stop himself from being too harsh with his words. He assured her, “Don’t worry, Gwendolyn. I’m going to bring him here, even if it means kidnaping him.”

Instead of rejecting the suggestion, Gwendolyn smiled obediently. “We’ll follow your lead.”

Valentino cast her an affectionate gaze, but it darkened when he shifted his gaze to Logan.

“Tell that rascal to kneel in the ancestral hall for three whole days until his legs break if he doesn’t show up on time today.”

With that, Logan left.

Ten minutes later, he returned again to report gloomily, “Mr. Jenson says he’ll... carry out his punishment in the ancestral hall once he returns from his mission.”

Hearing that, Valentino lost it!

He’d rather get punished than attend his fiancée’s party, huh? He’s dead set on going against my words.

Since Gwendolyn was still present, he had no choice but to steel himself and increase the severity of the punishment. “The punishment doesn’t scare him, huh? Very well. Tell him he’ll get whipped a hundred times if he still doesn’t show up.”

Logan's face fell. "One hundred whips? Are you being serious, Old Mr. Jenson?"

Valentino simply stomped his cane on the ground and turned his head, snorting coldly.

Even so, Valentino dared not pass the message to Cedrick. "Old Mr. Jenson, you know how stubborn Mr. Jenson is. He'll definitely go to the ancestral hall to receive his punishment if he's decided to not attend. Are we really going to beat him if he goes to the ancestral hall? He'll be dead if we really whip him."

There was a change in Valentino's countenance. He lowered his head and fell silent.

In the meantime, Gwendolyn's eyes darted between the two men's expressions.

Sounds like the Jenson family's whipping punishment isn't as simple as I thought. Can a hundred whips really kill someone as muscular as Cedrick? He's from the army, though.

However, Valentino had already said that in front of Gwendolyn. It would be too embarrassing for him to go against his promise, but he could not bring himself to beat Cedrick to death as well.

The atmosphere in the room grew tense.

At that moment, Gwendolyn knew Valentino was keeping quiet and waiting for her to speak.

With a smile, she said gently, "Old Mr. Jenson, this whipping punishment sounds really terrifying. It's just a party, anyway. His mission is more important. Please don't punish him. It's okay if Mr. Jenson doesn't come."

Gratified, Valentino patted her hand and sighed. "You've got such a big heart. I'm sorry you have to deal with this."

"It's okay, Old Mr. Jenson."

However, her generosity only made Valentino feel more sorry.

“Don’t worry, Gwendolyn. Even if he doesn’t show up today, I’ll find a way to let the two of you meet. I’m going to make him apologize to you.”

Soon, the party officially began.

Gwendolyn had become the center of attention as soon as she appeared.

Her gorgeous gown, her delicate makeup, and her every move made her look beautiful beyond words.

The party that night was organized because of her.

Gwendolyn walked up the stage under everyone’s gazes and made a wonderful speech about returning to the Harris family.

When she finished speaking, Marcus went upstage to announce her engagement with Cedrick while the crowd cheered.

Since Cedrick did not show up, Marcus decided to simplify his speech and skipped the important parts to distract the guests.

Halfway through the party, Gwendolyn had finished toasting to the guests and found a table in the corner to enjoy some wine quietly.

Sherman felt bad to see her drinking alone. Hence, he walked over and sat across from her.

“Gwendolyn, you don’t really want to get engaged with Cedrick, do you?” he asked.

She said nothing and swirled her glass elegantly.

Seeing that, Sherman continued, "It's ridiculous. How could he be absent on such an important day and make you put up with everyone's criticisms alone? He won't treat you well when you marry him in the future."

Gwendolyn snorted. "Mr. Ferguson, no one, apart from you, is criticizing me today."

Looking gloomy, Sherman said, "That's because Mr. Harris is doing a great job of controlling the crowd. Gwendolyn, I regret not letting my parents talk to him about asking your hand in marriage. But I'm willing to fight against the Jenson family if you're willing to be with me."

"That's not necessary, Mr. Ferguson. I don't want that," rejected Gwendolyn without hesitation.

"Why? Do you really like Cedrick?"

Gwendolyn put down her glass and said solemnly, "I don't like him, nor will I marry him. Similarly, I only see you as a friend. We'll never get married. I hope you can understand that."

Sherman paled, totally at a loss for words.

The Harris family's party ended at eleven o'clock at night. Nico, who had been hiding near the Harris residence, rushed to a car that was parked about two hundred meters away.

He checked his surroundings before getting into the car.

Before Nico could even make himself comfortable, the man, who had been waiting in the car for a long time, asked, "How did it go?"

"Don't worry, Boss. No one dared to criticize Ms. Gwendolyn thanks to the threats you made in advance and Mr. Marcus' skills in handling the situation."

Cedrick felt incredibly guilty.

“Is she upset?”

Nico pondered and answered, “No. I saw her chatting with Mr. Ferguson for a long time, and it looked like the conversation went well.”

Immediately, Cedrick pursed his lips. The color drained from his face, and a look of dejection filled his dark eyes.

Although Nico could not see Cedrick’s expression in the dark, the former could sense a thick tension building up in the air.

I shouldn’t have mentioned Sherman’s name. Hitting his mouth frustratedly, Nico quickly changed the topic. “It’s getting late. When are you planning to return to the Jenson residence?”

Cedrick contemplated for a moment. “I’ll wait here a little longer.”

He did not return to the Jenson residence until an hour later.

Remembering the punishment Valentino had given him for not attending the party, Cedrick went straight to the ancestral hall instead of the villa.

Logan was already waiting for Cedrick at the entrance. Clearly, the former had been waiting for a long time.

“Mr. Jenson, Old Mr. Jenson’s been saying he’s feeling uncomfortable ever since he returned. Please go and have a look.”

Thus, Cedrick followed Logan without giving it much thought.

Upon arriving at the guest room on the second floor, Logan suddenly halted in his tracks and made a gesture for Cedrick to enter.

Frowning, Cedrick asked, "This isn't Grandpa's room. Why did you bring me here?"

"Old Mr. Jenson's leg wasn't in a good condition. He was feeling uncomfortable when he arrived at this point. Hence, he decided to spend the night here," explained Logan without the slightest change in his expression.

Cedrick kept mum, clearly not believing Logan's words.

Noticing that, Logan met Cedrick's gaze and questioned, "Do you think I'd dare to joke about Old Mr. Jenson's health? He's in there. You'd better go in quickly. He'll be mad if you're late."

Cedrick was not fully convinced, but he still pushed the door open and took two steps forward. Immediately after that, Logan gave him a push at the back and locked the door.

"Open the door, Logan!"

Cedrick banged on the door a few times, but there was no sound outside the door. It was as if Logan had left.

Just as Cedrick was feeling puzzled, a familiar woman's voice rang out behind him.

"It's useless. This was arranged by Old Mr. Jenson because you kept avoiding me."

This voice...

Chapter 224

Cedrick held his breath while sneaking a glance at Gwendolyn.

She sat on the couch by the window with her back facing him, sipping red wine.

He clenched his fists so tightly that they felt clammy. Could she be drunk by any chance?

Would she be as gentle to me as two nights ago?

"I admit I don't know you well, yet you still plotted to get engaged with me. Don't you think you owe me an explanation?"

Cedrick's hand was on the doorknob when he felt his heart drop.

Gwendolyn's speech was coherent and paced regularly. It was clear she'd barely imbibed any wine and was still sober.

That meant that he would be dead meat tonight.

Cedrick still wasn't ready to face her.

He stalked toward the window and considered making a run for it.

Gwendolyn's languid voice sounded. "Old Mr. Jenson has instructed the windows to be locked. It is also fitted with bulletproof glass and can't be shattered. We're just going to have a nice little chat. I wonder what you're so afraid of?"

He had no chance of escape.

Cedrick subconsciously touched his face to confirm that his mask was still on. Gwendolyn couldn't possibly recognize him that easily.

He cleared his throat. "You must be joking, Ms. Gwendolyn. We aren't acquainted at all. I decided to get engaged with you merely because the fortune teller mentioned that we'd get along well together."

Gwendolyn placed her wine glass down and turned to face him. "I've told you before that there's someone I—"

She was cut off abruptly.

The man who stood by the window in a well-fitting suit gave off an aloof aristocratic air.

The sheer sight of him flooded her with a bone-deep sense of familiarity.

Her expression froze as she carefully scrutinized the man from head to toe.

Cedrick's heart was in his throat when he noticed the change in her expression.

"Mr. Jenson, you really look like someone."

Gwendolyn got to her feet with her brows furrowed and gingerly approached Cedrick.

"Ms. Harris, you must be mistaken. We've never met," His eyes were glacial as he uttered in a hoarse voice.

Gwendolyn's eyes reddened as she met his familiar eyes.

Her hand shot out without forewarning to grab his suit collar and press him against the glass window.

"Are you taking me for an idiot, Maverick? Do you think I won't be able to recognize you just because you're wearing a mask? You might fool everyone, but I can tell it's you from your eyes and mannerisms!"

Cedrick felt his entire body go numb.

Should I come clean?

Will Gwendolyn think that I've been deceiving her all along?

She hated being kept in the dark the most and had never liked him in the first place. Wouldn't doing so compound the hatred she bore against him, so much so that it'd be even more difficult for him to be forgiven?

"Why didn't you come looking for me if you weren't dead? How come you've taken on the identity of Cedrick? Maverick, you owe me a much due explanation!"

Gwendolyn grabbed his collar so tightly that her hands were trembling. Her eyes swirled with shock, confusion, and fury.

"Ms. Harris, I—"

"What are you calling me?"

Gwendolyn raised her hand and curved her elbow as she swiftly landed a hard blow on his abdomen.

Cedrick's features beneath his mask twisted in pain, and he bent down reflexively. Despite that, Gwendolyn tugged his collar and backed him up against the window once more.

He wouldn't retaliate as he feared that he would accidentally hurt Gwendolyn due to the disparity between their strength.

However, Gwendolyn had no such concerns.

She would whack him with all her might every single time.

Her mind had no room for reason as she stared daggers at Cedrick.

She still couldn't get over Maverick being alive and well.

Why didn't he look for me?

Why act like we're strangers?

"If you refuse to tell the truth, I'll have to take matters into my own hands!"

She reached out to snatch his mask.

Cedrick held on tightly to it. "Ms. Harris, isn't it unbecoming of you to be so forward on our first meeting tonight?"

"What's wrong with me touching my fiancé? Why are you so scared of me seeing your face? If you are Cedrick and not Maverick, you should have nothing to fear!"

"I—"

Gwendolyn didn't give him a chance to defend himself as she leveled another blow at his abdomen.

Gwendolyn swiftly ripped off his mask while he was curled up in agony.

Time seemed to stop as they looked into one another's eyes.

Gwendolyn surveyed his face in astonishment.

Besides his eyes, the rest of his features were completely altered. He now only vaguely resembled Maverick at a glance.

Even so, his gaze and mannerisms gave him away.

He was obviously Maverick.

“Why does your face look so different? Is it because you’re wearing another mask?” Gwendolyn pinched the skin of his face and attempted to peel off his disguise.

Cedrick kept his grip firm on her hand and said sternly, “That is because I am and have always been Cedrick Jenson!”

“I don’t believe you! Did you undergo plastic surgery? You must be delusional to think I won’t be able to recognize you because of that! Why don’t you try switching your eyeballs instead?” She gritted her teeth seethingly.

Cedrick’s resemblance to Maverick was the only indicator on his face that they were the same person.

She recalled the severe burns and wounds from the lashings on Maverick’s back before the incident and broke free from Cedrick’s grasp to lift his shirt.

“Ms. Harris, aren’t you taking things too fast by stripping me?”

“Shut up and turn your back to me! If you aren’t guilty, then let me inspect you!”

“Fine. Go ahead.”

Cedrick raised both of his hands and let her manhandle him.

While Gwendolyn was suspicious, she still had her reservations.

Instead of removing his clothes one by one, she loosened his shirt from his belt and lifted it along with his suit.

His broad back was instantly revealed. Its defined musculature was flawlessly smooth, with tan skin that looked exceptionally enticing under the room's lighting.

It was devoid of any scars. She couldn't even make out the deep knife wound on Maverick's waist which he sustained from Asher while looking for her in the mountains.

Gwendolyn slowly let go of him and retreated to the bedside with unsteady feet.

She sat on the bed in a daze in total disappointment.

Her rational mind was coming back to her.

Maverick was dead. She'd witnessed the burial of his ashes.

Moreover, Maverick and Cedrick came from such contrasting family backgrounds that it was unlikely they were related.

A shot of pain went through her heart at the anguish of experiencing loss all over again.

Nevertheless, she held back her tears in front of Cedrick.

"I mistook you for someone else."

Cedrick discreetly let out a sigh of relief and turned to face Gwendolyn, who was looking down dejectedly.

He ventured, "Ms. Harris, did you mistake me for your ex-husband? It seems like you still have feelings for him."

Gwendolyn pursed her lips and chose to ignore him.

She stood and sat back on the couch, quaffing the remaining half bottle of red wine.

“Ms. Harris!”

Cedrick snatched the wine bottle from her. “Your body can’t take it if you continue drinking in such a way.”

“You should worry more about yourself since our wedding will be called off sooner or later.”

Gwendolyn’s expression was indifferent as she opened a new bottle of red wine.

Cedrick took hold of the bottle once more.

“Let me join you then, Ms. Harris.”

Cedrick sat on the couch opposite her. He’d just filled two full glasses of red wine when Gwendolyn downed them in the blink of an eye.

It wasn’t enough, as she emptied the entire bottle right after.

She paid the price by ending up drunk again.

Cedrick’s heart ached as he took in her buzzed-up state. He rounded the coffee table and took the wine bottle from her hands.

“That’s enough. Let me carry you back to bed to get some rest.”

Gwendolyn didn’t struggle from his grasp as he smelled too familiar.

His scent invaded her senses, causing her mind to short-circuit.

“Mavy...”

Cedrick was about to get a towel from the bathroom to clean her face when he froze at the term of affection.

He paused for several seconds before turning back in disbelief to gaze at Gwendolyn lying in a drunken stupor on the bed.

“What did you call me?”

Chapter 225

Cedrick’s mind went blank.

Mavy?

He had never expected that name to come out of Gwendolyn’s mouth. Is she talking to him as though he was still Maverick?

Does this mean she actually still has the slightest hint of feelings for him?

The man’s heart was in utter confusion, and after mulling for a long while, he finally mustered up the courage to speak.

“Gwendolyn, I—”

Before he could finish, the red-faced woman tugged at his sleeve furiously.

“Maverick! If you dare lie to me again, I’ll dig up your coffin, destroy your gravestone, and drag your corpse out!”

She’s so brutal...

The man instantly swallowed his words.

He sat by the bedside in a daze, deep in thought.

Gwendolyn didn’t love him anymore. He had always known that.

As her ex-husband, the only use he had for her now was if she needed him as a scapegoat.

If she ever finds out about all the huge lies I made up, she’ll hate me and never forgive me, right?

Wallowing in distress, he sat next to her and watched the woman deep in slumber.

He had spent a great deal of effort on this engagement, for his biggest regret in life was divorcing her in the past. In fact, he was now terrified of losing her again.

If coming clean to her will only make things worse, then it’s better if she just accepts the fact that Maverick is gone forever. I’ll start afresh with her as Cedrick Jenson.

Gwendolyn didn’t appear to be sleeping well, her knitted brows giving her a grim expression.

Cedrick massaged the space between her brows carefully and planted a gentle kiss on her forehead.

Then, he grabbed a towel from the bathroom to wipe her face and hands before grabbing himself a blanket from the closet, curling up on the sofa, and calling it a night.

With his mind remaining fuzzy, he slept all night.

The man was eventually awakened by the sound of the door unlocking from the outside.

Seeing that Gwendolyn was still asleep, he walked toward the door quietly and found Logan standing outside.

“Did you have a good chat with Ms. Harris last night, Mr. Jenson?” the older man asked with a grin. “Did you both...”

He made a gesture with his two thumbs pressing against each other.

Cedrick’s expression remained cold as he ignored Logan’s question. “When Ms. Harris wakes up, tell her to have breakfast with Grandpa before she leaves. If she refuses, don’t force her to stay.”

“Yes, Mr. Jenson.”

Cedrick went to the room next door to wash up before walking out of Valentino’s villa.

Then, he heard some noises from a corner as soon as he arrived at the entrance to the building.

Upon paying close attention, it sounded like Nico.

The other person sounded like William.

“You’re early, William. Ms. Harris probably hasn’t woken up yet. You might have to wait a while longer.”

“That’s fine, but she didn’t drink last night, did she? She’d already drunk so much during the party, so I’m guessing she got wasted. Does she seriously think she can hold her liquor and drink all she wants like before?”

William heaved a deep sigh.

“What’s wrong with Ms. Harris?” Nico asked, curious.

William paused momentarily. “It’s all in the past. Ms. Harris doesn’t want anyone to talk about it. I’ll get a pay cut if she finds out I blabbed.”

“You can tell me. I don’t see her that often anyway, so it’s not like she’d know you told me. Besides, it’s just the two of us here now. My lips are sealed.”

Across the wall, Cedrick was about to leave, but he walked back upon hearing that the two were talking about Gwendolyn.

“Do you remember when Mr. Wright passed away half a year ago?” William began. “When Ms. Harris came back from his funeral, she locked herself in his room and bawled her eyes out, refusing to eat or drink for three days. She even went to the wine cabinet to drink all the concentrated liquor—on an empty stomach! Her body couldn’t take it, and she nearly destroyed her own liver. That’s when her health started to decline.”

Nico was shocked.

“I can’t believe it. Ms. Harris... She...”

William sighed. “Ms. Harris never admits it, but she really likes Mr. Wright. She had a hard time accepting the fact that he was gone, and she was devastated for a really long time. Anyway, that’s all in the past. Let’s not talk about it anymore.”

Nico grew skeptical. “But how? I heard that Ms. Harris has grown quite fond of Mr. Ferguson. Is that not true?”

“Mr. Ferguson?” William was bewildered. “Where did you hear that from? Apart from Mr. Wright, Ms. Harris has never even spared any other man a single glance.”

...

By now, Cedrick's mind was in such a buzz that he could no longer hear what the two said after that.

William said she really likes me, and that she bawled her eyes out because of my death. She almost wrecked her liver from drinking because of me. So, the woman I love has loved me all this while too? She said there was someone she likes that day. Was she actually referring to me, and not Sherman?

Cedrick's body began to tremble as a wave of inexplicable emotions swept through him.

He had never felt so glad in his life, nor did he ever dare imagine that Gwendolyn actually loved him.

His eyes reddening, the man turned in the direction of the villa.

He couldn't wait to tell her that he was still alive.

Suddenly, a silhouette appeared right in front of him. It was Nico, who had just finished speaking to William.

"Where are you headed, Boss?"

Cedrick pushed him aside. "I'm going to tell Gwendolyn the truth."

"Are you sure about this, Boss? Last night was your first time seeing her again after six months. That was your best chance to come clean, but you lost it, and you even put up an act with her. She's in her worst possible mood now. Do you think she'd forgive you if you went back to her now?"

No, she won't.

Telling her the truth now would be asking for trouble, and his plans would only backfire.

The woman might even be so infuriated that she cut him off completely, refusing to ever contact him again.

Even so, he couldn't bear to wait another second, knowing that she loved him.

Suppressing the joy in his heart, Cedrick began to think rationally.

Nico tried to help too. "Or perhaps you can pretend to have lost your memories to make her feel sorry for you? And when the time is right, you can tell her you've recovered your memories. She probably won't be as mad if you did this."

That's a plan, all right.

Cedrick fell silent for a moment and eventually shook his head. "Forget it. Gwendolyn's too smart," he responded frigidly. "If she finds out that I pretended to have lost my memories, that'll only complicate things further, and I might end up turning into a corpse for real."

"I think it's still best to find a good time to tell her the truth—at least while she hasn't been completely overcome by rage," he concluded.

Then, he pondered for a while longer before instructing Nico, "Have Gwendolyn come over to my villa tomorrow night. Tell her I'd like to treat her to dinner."

Nico looked uncertain. "Will she come, though?"

"She will," Cedrick answered confidently. "She's always been overly skeptical, so whatever happened last night wouldn't be enough to clear her doubts. I'm guessing she'll start doing her own investigation for the next few days too. She might even try to look into me, so I'll have to come clean to her before she finds out the truth on her own."

Nico nodded fervently.

That makes absolute sense. We can't wait any longer. It's all over if Ms. Harris finds out that Boss has been hiding the truth from her all along!

After making all the necessary arrangements, Cedrick walked out of Valentino's villa.

Yet, the man seemed to recall something just after taking a few steps forward, and he turned back.

"This isn't enough. Find me a thick horsewhip—one that's thick enough to cause some really serious tears on the skin."

Nico grimaced as he heard that. "Boss... You're so brutal even to yourself!"

Alas, Cedrick remained firm in his decision. That's my only choice if I want her back. I missed my best chance to come clean last night. If she beats me tomorrow night, that means she's actually willing to forgive me, and hopefully, that'd help to ease her anger too. But things won't be as simple if she doesn't even bother laying a finger on me.

Chapter 226

Cedrick sighed lightly. He felt immensely guilty thinking about William's words.

"Hurry up and go. I've made her suffer so much in the past six months. I should give her something in return so I don't feel too indebted to her."

Nico hesitated to speak. You no longer owe Ms. Gwendolyn anything!

Nevertheless, Nico knew Cedrick loved Gwendolyn too much and would do everything he could to please her.

He's expressing his love too humbly. Nico genuinely felt sorry for him, yet he was powerless to help.

...

When Gwendolyn woke up, the first thing she did was check her body for any visible hickeys.

The cotton quilt was neatly folded on the small couch.

It seemed Cedrick didn't take advantage of her last night.

He was even willing to sleep on the couch. She realized he was quite a decent man, unlike the rumors she had heard about him.

Gwendolyn remembered everything that happened before she got drunk and passed out last night, but because of the effect of alcohol, her mind felt fuzzy.

The matter related to Cedrick was too peculiar. She reckoned she needed to investigate further.

When Gwendolyn learned Valentino had invited her for breakfast, she intended to refuse initially, but recalling Cedrick's matter, she thought it would be best for her to go.

At the dining table, Gwendolyn chatted with Valentino, "Old Mr. Jenson, I heard Mr. Jenson came back only half a year ago. I met him in person last night. He's quite handsome, but why are there rumors that he looks hideous?"

Valentino replied without the slightest change in his expression, "Since he gained a foothold in Salinsburgh, too many socialites approached and offered themselves to him. He didn't like that, so he deliberately spread the rumor."

"I see." Gwendolyn smiled and probed further, "Has he always looked like this?"

"Of course." He gave her a puzzled look, his wrinkled face expressing genuine confusion.

Gwendolyn's grin widened. "I just thought that since Mr. Jenson is so good-looking, I wanted to see if there were any old photos of him."

"I'm afraid there aren't any. He hates being photographed."

Does he hate being photographed? That's somewhat similar to Maverick. Subsequently, she fell silent and continued eating her breakfast.

On the way home, Gwendolyn was reminded of the words Triss told her at The Honey Bee.

Triss said, "Cedrick is quite pitiful. He returned from carrying out a mission in the army half a year ago, covered in blood and badly wounded. I heard he was coughing up blood every day. Grandpa was petrified to see him like that."

Maverick passed away six months ago, and Cedrick returned home, scarred and battered, also half a year ago. Is there a connection between the two events?

To resolve her doubts, she made a call to Triss.

"I can't believe you took the initiative to contact me, Gwendolyn. I'm really flattered!"

Wearing a solemn expression, Gwendolyn asked, "Triss, I'm calling you today mainly to ask about Cedrick."

"Wow!" Triss exclaimed with a meaningful tone. "I understand, Gwendolyn. What do you want to know about Cedrick? I'll tell you everything I know!"

"When did Cedrick return to the Jenson residence half a year ago?"

Triss, on the other end of the line, contemplated for a moment. "It's been quite some time. I can't remember clearly."

"In that case, do you notice anything different about the current Cedrick?"

"Not really. Cedrick was sent to the army at a young age and rarely returned home, especially after he turned fifteen. He didn't come back until half a year ago."

What? He didn't go home since he turned fifteen? That's weird. Gwendolyn added, "Previously, I heard you mentioned he was injured when he returned half a year ago. Where was he injured? Were his face and back severely wounded?"

"I'm not too sure about that. I didn't see his wounds. I only heard from the servants at Grandpa's villa that he was gravely hurt. Still, I'm certain his injuries were severe because when he was fighting for power with Uncle Yael, he always showed up in a wheelchair and wearing a mask."

After asking so many questions, it seemed to Gwendolyn she didn't acquire much useful information.

She made some small talk with Triss before hanging up the call.

William, who was driving in the front row, asked curiously, "Ms. Gwendolyn, why are you suddenly concerned about Mr. Jenson? Did sparks fly between you two last night?"

Busy trying to wrap her mind around that matter, Gwendolyn didn't bother responding to his teasing. She merely said, "William, I can't shake off this feeling that something's weird. I feel that Maverick isn't dead."

William was unconvinced. "Ms. Gwendolyn, how is that possible? Putting aside the fact that Mr. Wright was already seriously injured before the incident, his chances of surviving were meager since he charged into the fray alone. Besides, Justin watched his body being cremated."

"What if the body is fake? What if they found someone with a similar physique as him to replace him?"

William considered her words carefully. "That is possible, but if Mr. Wright is still alive, why isn't he returning to find you? He was really eager to stay by your side every day in the past."

That was also one thing that baffled Gwendolyn.

As she stared out of the car window and became lost in her thoughts, Cedrick's demeanor last night surfaced in her mind.

Despite how well Cedrick concealed his emotions when he looked at her, she couldn't help but sense that he knew her. Furthermore, his small habitual movements when he was nervous were exactly the same as Maverick. Could such a coincidence really happen? But why doesn't he have any scars? A burn caused by the S40 strong corrosive potion would definitely leave scars, and it's difficult to remove them altogether.

Gwendolyn reckoned she needed to ask Asher about that.

Before that, she went to Angle's new building. The decorations there were basically complete, and in a few days, they could pick a good day to move all the operations from the Fairlake branch.

Upon reaching the CEO's office on the top floor, she sat in the executive chair while William stood guard outside the door.

Gwendolyn checked Asher's flight schedule. After finding out it was his rest day, she dialed his number. "Asher, does our laboratory have any medication that's good for removing scars, capable of making the skin appear as if it has been marred?"

Asher replied, "No. Even the best medication won't allow the skin to recover to that extent. Why are you asking this? Are you hurt?"

She immediately shook her head. "That's not it. I'm curious, so I'm just asking."

"If you want the skin to recover entirely without any trace, I'm afraid plastic surgery, specifically a skin graft, is the only option. The country with the best technology worldwide is Hawen."

Gwendolyn was quiet for a long while before she spoke solemnly. "Asher, do you know about my engagement to Cedrick?"

"Yes. What's the matter?"

"Cedrick seems to be a member of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information about his whereabouts is very well guarded, so I can't investigate from my side. But if it were you, could you find out any records of him traveling abroad in the past six months?"

Asher was confused. "Why do you suddenly want to check his travel records?"

She smiled. "I'm engaged to him, so I want to know more about him."

Asher thought that was reasonable.

Although he had his doubts, he didn't press further. "Sure, but it won't be easy to investigate Cedrick's itinerary. I'll need some time."

"How long do you need?"

"At the earliest, tomorrow afternoon."

...

Gwendolyn stayed awake the entire night.

She hadn't been getting quality rest over the past six months; however, during the recent two nights she spent alone with Cedrick, she slept surprisingly well that she almost didn't wake up for the entire night. Perhaps by tomorrow, all my doubts will be cleared.

The next day, Nico entered the CEO's office at Jenson Group, his expression downtrodden.

Yesterday, he had visited all the racecourses in Salinsburgh and finally found a whip specifically designed for taming fierce and wild horses.

After placing it on Jenson's desk, he said, "This whip is quite rough in texture. Please handle it with care, Boss."

Cedrick lapsed into thoughtful silence before keeping it away.

Nico, expressing his concern, reminded Jenson once again. "Boss, if Ms. Gwendolyn intends to whip you tonight, please don't put up a strong front. Instead, try to look aggrieved, scream in pain, and shed a few tears to invoke her sympathy."

Cedrick nodded in response. His mind was occupied with thoughts on how to approach the conversation with Gwendolyn later that evening.

Cedrick's apparent lack of concern over his warning caused Nico to feel anxious.

However, upon reflection, he realized if Cedrick was not afraid of being physically harmed, why should he worry about him?

Meanwhile, Gwendolyn went about her usual routine at Angle Corporation, focusing on the preparations before work.

She remained busy throughout the day and nothing unusual happened. Before leaving work, she received the information Asher had finished compiling and faxed it to her.

Gwendolyn printed all the documents and studied them closely. Her expression turned more and more icy as she went through all the information.

The information showed that Cedrick did make a trip to Hawen a few months ago.

With no existing business connections between the Jenson family and Hawen, Gwendolyn struggled to find a plausible reason for Cedrick's visit, apart from the possibility of him undergoing plastic surgery. Does that mean Cedrick lied to me last night?

While she was contemplating, William knocked on her door and came in. "Ms. Gwendolyn, Nico just came by and said Mr. Jenson would like to invite you to have dinner at the villa after work. He will personally cook for you. Would you like to go?"

"Sure," Gwendolyn answered with a flinch.

Since it was difficult for her to investigate, she thought it would be better if she could test the waters directly.

After tidying up her desk, she stuffed the documents into her bag and grabbed her coat from the rack. She then glanced at William and said, "It's time to leave. Let's go."

William was taken aback but quickly caught up with her.

Upon arriving at the Jenson residence, Gwendolyn could not recall the winding paths in the Jenson residence. She had to get Logan to guide her to Cedrick's villa again.

As they reached the front of Cedrick's villa, Nico and a few other bodyguards were already waiting for her at the door.

Seeing Gwendolyn walking over, Nico respectfully bowed slightly. "Ms. Gwendolyn, it's been a while."

"Not really. I saw you before I left Cedrick's villa the last time I was here," she replied.

Err...

Feeling awkward, Nico froze for a moment before diverting to another topic. "Please come in, Ms. Gwendolyn. Mr. Jenson is waiting for you."

Gwendolyn just looked away and walked into the villa alone.

Not long after she took a few steps forward, Nico whispered behind her, "Mr. Jenson has to attend an urgent mission tonight. After dinner, he'll need to leave the city for the operation. It'll be a confrontation that involves real gunfire."

"What do you mean?" Gwendolyn cast him a baffling glance.

Nico seemed frustrated, suppressing the urge to say more. He sighed silently and said, "It's nothing. Please go inside."

His words piqued Gwendolyn's curiosity, but seeing that he was unwilling to provide further explanation, she decided not to press him any further.

She continued walking alone to the villa. Just when she was about to knock on the door, she noticed the front door was slightly ajar.

Gwendolyn gently pushed open the door, but before she could fully see the situation inside, someone emerged from behind, grasping her wrist and pulling her in.

She found herself wrapped in a familiar and comforting embrace, and the person holding her tightly was trembling uncontrollably.

Gwendolyn could sense that he was anxious. "What are you doing, Mr. Jenson?"

Cedrick wore a thin silk shirt, his lips pressed tightly together, but he did not utter a word in response.

After releasing her from his arms, he staggered backward, his knees slowly sinking, and his back straightened as he knelt before her.

That familiar action struck a chord within her, and in an instant, realization washed over her. Her eyes welled up with tears, turning red. "Maverick."

Her words came out as a statement and not a question.

"That's right. That's me." Cedrick did not press his voice intentionally.

Cedrick noticed the shimmering teardrops in her glistening eyes, his heart constricted with pain.

Gwendolyn looked up to rein in the tears that threatened to spill.

She then cast an indifferent glare at him. "So you deceived me. You were never dead, yet you didn't come to find me. Instead, you deliberately orchestrated an emotionally manipulative will just to witness my misery? Just look at how easily I could be fooled. How foolish I am to not be able to see through your act!"

"No, Gwenny. I..."

Gwendolyn interjected, "Shut up! You don't deserve to call me Gwenny. I thought you enjoy calling me Ms. Harris?"

Cedrick's heart sank when she reprimanded him. He held her hands and apologized, "I'm sorry. It was my mistake last night. I should have been honest but hesitated. But I didn't deceive you when I wrote that will. Let me explain!"

"Do you honestly expect me to believe you now? Why did you choose to confess tonight? Is it because you realized I saw through your acting and was on the verge of uncovering the truth? You have no choice but to come clean, huh?" she retorted.

Cedrick was struck dumb for a moment, realizing she had partially guessed the truth.

Gwendolyn's eyes were laced with a tinge of sarcasm as she saw the reaction on his face, knowing that her guess was indeed correct. "I don't care if you're Maverick or Cedrick. I hate liars, especially those who faked their deaths! This is too much!"

Cedrick looked up, trying to hold his tears. "I didn't deceive your feelings. Can you please listen to me?"

"I don't want to hear it. I don't want to see you ever again!" She swung her hand away, turned around, and was about to leave.

"Don't go, Gwenny!" Cedrick caught up with her, wanting to embrace her from behind.

"Get lost!" she shouted, slapping him lightly on the cheek, not exerting much force.

Hence, only a slight mark of redness appeared on Cedrick's cheek.

Gwendolyn could not help but pause as she noticed that despite being slapped, he was still smiling.

His dark eyes glistened, and he said in a soft voice, "Is one slap sufficient to release your anger? If not, feel free to continue striking me. I can endure the pain, don't worry!"

Gwendolyn gave him a cold glare, unable to decipher the game he was playing as his eyes revealed no emotions.

Cedrick continued, "But you'll hurt your hand if you hit me. Here, use this to whip me. Keep going until you are happy."

As he spoke, he reached behind his waist and pulled out a riding whip, offering it to her with a placating gesture.

Gwendolyn refused to take the whip or offer any response to his words.

Despite Gwendolyn's reluctance, Cedrick took matters into his own hands and forcefully placed the handle of the whip in her grasp.

He then straightened his back, tilting his head with anticipation in his eyes, obediently awaiting the punishment.

He had set aside his ego in front of her.

However, the more Gwendolyn looked at him, the angrier she became. She glanced at the whip in her hand and suddenly recalled what Nico had said earlier.

It was only now that she understood his intention. He has a mission to carry out later, yet he's going through all this trouble to ask for my forgiveness. He pretends to be aggrieved and afraid of pain, but at the same time, he instructs Nico to remind me not to be too harsh with him. The act they put up is so unprofessional. Does he think I'll show him mercy because of that?

Gwendolyn thought it would be a waste of his effort if she did not whip him to her heart's content.

Chapter 228

How thoughtful of you? It seems like you've prepared yourself to get beaten up. Cedrick, do you think that I don't dare to hurt you now that you have a high status?"

Cedrick lifted his head up to fix his eyes on her. His eyes were red as he voiced, "I don't care about the status. I'm merely an ordinary guy in front of you. If I've made you angry, I don't mind getting beaten up by you."

His words sounded genuine compared to what he said yesterday.

"If that's how you want it, so be it."

As she raised her horsewhip, her gaze looked hostile.

At that moment, she was overcome with the urge to beat Cedrick up badly. I can't wait to see Cedrick covered in blood. I'll beat him up until he's unable to get up and beg me for mercy!

Nevertheless, she held herself back, taking only half of her strength to whip two times on his left arm.

"Does it hurt?" Her gaze remained indifferent.

Cedrick furrowed his brows slightly, attempting to control his arm from trembling too hard.

Taking a breath silently, he lied with a beam, "Not at all."

Gwendolyn didn't use all her strength and assumed his worst condition was getting a swollen wound on his arm. However, those two whips were powerful enough to hurt Cedrick. The spikes on the whip snagged his shirt and torn his flesh open, leaving two bloody cuts on his arm. It was a ghastly sight to see Cedrick's white shirt drenched in blood.

Noticing something was not right, Gwendolyn looked down at the whip in her hand.

The horsewhip was a rough job, and there were sharp prickles on it. Watching the horsewhip covered in blood, Gwendolyn came to a realization and felt the pain for him.

Just when she felt that way, a wave of fury crashed through her abruptly, causing her to lose her rationality.

He's acting well by pretending to be hurt!

With that thought, Gwendolyn lifted his chin lightly and sneered, "Cedrick, I can't believe that you're putting on a pitiful act to garner sympathy from me. Is it fun to fool me with your tricks?"

Feeling aggrieved, Cedrick said pitifully, "I have no intention to fool you! It's my fault for making you sad. I'm willing to accept any form of punishment from you. However, can you please let me explain after you've calmed down later?"

Gwendolyn narrowed her eyes and replied harshly, "Sure. Wait till I finish whipping you. We'll talk later if you still have the energy to explain!"

Then, Cedrick shut his eyes with his teeth gritted and waited obediently.

Once again, Gwendolyn raised the horsewhip shakily.

Cedrick waited for a long while to hear that loud sound of a whip-crack but nothing happened.

Knowing the lethal force of the horsewhip, Gwendolyn wasn't hard-hearted enough to land another strike on him.

Cedrick had been putting on an act to lie to Gwendolyn. Because of that, she harbored guilt for the past six months. Nevertheless, she was washed over by the urge to beat Cedrick to death after knowing the truth.

Although feeling extremely angry, Gwendolyn felt sorry to inflict a serious injury on Cedrick.

At that instant, she couldn't help but feel a sense of defeat for falling for Cedrick's dirty tricks.

Feeling upset, Gwendolyn released her anger by whipping the floor vigorously.

The ear-splitting sound reverberated through the air. It was so loud that Nico and William could hear the whipping sound outside the villa.

After she was done, Gwendolyn threw the horsewhip away. She didn't bother to look at Cedrick who was still kneeling on the ground. Walking toward the door, she pushed it open and left without saying a word.

Nico was standing outside the villa and didn't expect Gwendolyn to come out that fast. At that time, he was holding a medical kit.

He wanted to hide the kit from Gwendolyn, but it was already too late.

Nico's attempt to hide the kit made the situation worse instead. Gwendolyn was under the impression that he was playing along with Cedrick to put up an act to fool her.

Gwendolyn scoffed, "What a well-prepared arrangement! It's a waste of talent for him to fool a silly me with his smart tricks."

Hearing that, Nico paled. "N-No. This is a misunderstanding. I prepared these for Mr. Jenson. It has nothing to do with him."

Nico heard the loud terrifying crack and was worried about Cedrick. Furthermore, Cedrick had to go on a mission later. Worrying about Cedrick, Nico prepared the medical kit so that he could get him bandaged right away.

The look in Gwendolyn's eyes grew cold. She didn't believe his words at all.

Meanwhile, Nico felt helpless realizing that he might have complicated the situation. He stuttered anxiously, "Ms. Gwendolyn, this has nothing to do with Mr. Jenson. It's me."

Gwendolyn didn't want to hear anything and left the Jenson residence without looking back.

After she left, Nico slapped his mouth with frustration and went into the villa to check on Cedrick's condition.

Cedrick had already gotten up from the ground and could be seen sitting on the couch in a daze.

Hastily, Nico went up to him to check on his wounds and was relieved to see only two marks on his left arm. His movements were smooth and swift as he cleaned the wounds for him.

Cedrick had splinters from that horsewhip in his flesh. Noticing that, Nico cautiously picked them up with a tweezer and later proceeded with disinfection.

As he recalled what happened outside the door, Nico told Cedrick everything.

“Sorry, boss. I’m worried that you would be injured badly. It’s dangerous for you to go on a mission with wounds. I didn’t expect to be caught by Ms. Gwendolyn. After the mission, I’ll explain everything to her again.”

Cedrick’s eyes darkened gradually. “It’s useless to explain. Whatever you’re doing is my doing as well. She won’t believe me anymore.”

Seeing how sad Cedrick was, Nico couldn’t help but blame himself for causing the trouble and slapped himself hard in the face.

“I’m sorry. It’s all my fault!”

He continued to slap himself. His force was so great that his face turned swollen from the impact. Instantly, blood started to ooze from the corner of his mouth.

Cedrick stopped him from tormenting himself by saying, “It was me who messed everything up. I’ll explain to her when I have the chance. Don’t blame yourself for that.”

His words didn’t make Nico feel better at all. To Nico, Cedrick was his savior, brother, and his family.

Even though he might argue with Cedrick sometimes, Nico would always look out for him.

Shortly after that, a team of people left the Jenson residence and departed the city overnight.

...

Gwendolyn had an insomnia again.

She appreciated Cedrick for saving her life and getting hurt because of her in the past. However, it turned out that Cedrick intentionally faked his death to lay a guilt trip on her. After knowing that she had been fooled, she couldn't help but cry over and over again.

Gwendolyn had even thought of carrying the torch for him for the rest of her life. In fact, she even had a plan to return to Fairlake to live near his cemetery in the future.

Now that she thought of it, she merely felt that the whole affair was really ridiculous. I have been nothing but a fool!

There was no way that she could forgive Cedrick for what he had done.

However, she couldn't bear to vent all her anger on him by whipping him to his death.

Perhaps, the only way for her to forget everything was to stop contacting him and cut ties with him.

Gwendolyn stayed up for the whole night and contemplated.

After a night of thinking, she finally made up her mind.

The next morning, she put on some makeup and went out to the Jenson residence to look for Valentino.

Valentino could tell that she had something to say by her solemn expression. After breakfast, he brought her to the guest room.

Upon hearing what she said, a look of disbelief spread across Valentino's face. He turned to exchange glances with Logan who was equally confused.

“Did I mishear you, Gwendolyn? It’s only been two days since the announcement of your engagement with Cedrick, and now you’re telling me that you want to call off the engagement?”

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Gwendolyn’s gaze remained determined. “Yes, Old Mr. Jenson. I think Mr. Cedrick and I aren’t a good match for each other. If we could, I’d like to... be friends.”

Valentino was surprised by her decision. “Did he mistreat you, Gwendolyn? Tell me, and I’ll take care of him!”

“No, he wouldn’t dare do that. I just...”

Fifteen minutes later, Gwendolyn emerged, grim-faced, from Valentino’s villa. William was waiting for her at the entrance.

Upon her appearance, he hurried forward. “How did it go, Ms. Gwendolyn? Did Old Mr. Jenson agree?”

Gwendolyn gazed down glumly and shook her head.

Valentino had walked her through the pros and cons. Her engagement with Cedrick was not an ordinary affair, as it concerned many other people as well. In fact, Cedrick had publicized their wedding to also be a business alliance.

If the engagement were to be broken off two days after the reception, Harris Group and Jenson Group would face massive financial losses and negative publicity online.

Needless to say, the repercussions would be huge.

Furthermore, Valentino no longer got involved with the Jenson family’s major affairs. As Cedrick was the new head of the family, she would have to discuss the matter with him.

Knowing him, he would not consent to it even if she pointed a gun at his head.

Gwendolyn was furious, yet she could not think of anything else.

Cedrick has me trapped well and proper this time!

She could finally understand why Treyton and Eloise had been engaged for two years, yet they remained together even though they truly despised her. For the children of a rich family, in particular, an engagement built on a business alliance was not easy to call off.

Forget it.

She heaved a long sigh. I'll plan it all over again soon. For now, I don't even want to think of that brute, Cedrick.

"Starting from today, I will not entertain Cedrick, his bodyguards, or his subordinates if they come to see me."

"Yes, Ms. Gwendolyn."

William nodded. Then, he followed in her wake as she departed.

The pair walked from Valentino's villa to the Jenson's majestic residence in a single file. When they turned the corner, they did not notice the young man in a blue suit studying her through his fine, gold-rimmed glasses.

Xander Jenson narrowed his eyes and adjusted his glasses with nonchalant elegance. "Is that the heiress of the Harris family who's engaged to Cedrick?" he asked his bodyguard behind him.

"It appears so, Mr. Jenson," the bodyguard replied after taking a closer look.

"She's beautiful, but she does not seem to be in a good mood. Find out what she's doing here today."

"Yes, Mr. Jenson."

The bodyguard left noiselessly and returned ten minutes later. "She's here to back out of her engagement, Mr. Jenson," he reported upon reappearing at Xander's side, "but Old Mr. Jenson did not agree."

"Back out of her engagement?"

Xander lapsed into a thoughtful reverie. "Cedrick was the one who wanted to get married. Apparently, she does not feel the same way about him."

"It was said that Mr. Cedrick did not attend her party," the bodyguard added. "It appears that she's not important to him."

"Preposterous." Xander sneered. "You think you know what goes on in Cedrick's head, do you? We'll find out after a little digging."

"What do you mean, Mr. Jenson?"

Xander gave an enigmatic smile. "Cedrick is out on a mission," he said loftily. "I heard it involves a gunfight. What do you think will happen if he finds out his fiancée wants out and that the old man agreed to it?"

The bodyguard grasped his meaning at once. "Don't worry, Mr. Jenson. I will make sure the news reaches Mr. Cedrick's ears exactly as it happened."

...

As the matter of calling off the engagement remained unresolved, Gwendolyn set that notion aside and went to Angle.

After days of preparation, it is almost complete. Over the next two days, I'll bring over the more important artists from Angle, pick a date, and we will officiate the grand opening of the new building.

Seated at her desk before her computer, she worked the entire day, going over the case file of every artist the company had signed in her stringent selective process.

Gwendolyn remained lost at work until the end of the workday when a scuffle sounded outside the corridor. It was so loud that it drew her notice.

Setting her documents down, she was prepared to go outside for a look when the office door suddenly flew open. Nico came in with his eyes red, and hands covered in blood.

Puzzled, Gwendolyn glanced outside and found Ezra and Quinton on the ground, clutching their shins and grimacing in agony.

She turned back to glare at him. "How dare you assault my people in front of me?"

Nico bowed his head, looking sincerely apologetic. "I'm sorry, Ms. Gwendolyn. I have sent half a dozen people to look for you but they had been rebuffed by those two, so I was forced to come myself and barge in through drastic measures. Don't worry, though. The blood on me is not theirs. They're just mildly hurt."

I have left instructions that I would not see Cedrick's people. It must be something serious for Nico to barge in.

Gwendolyn lowered her voice. "What's the emergency? What happened?"

Nico's eyes turned red. "It's Mr. Jenson. He's on the way to the hospital, but he refuses to enter the emergency room until he sees you one last time. I beg you, Ms. Gwendolyn, go to him!"

Cedrick is quite a good fighter. What could have happened to him?

Gwendolyn's heart lurched. Upon second thought, however, she grew dubious. "He's always deceiving me with cheap tactics. Isn't he sick of them by now? Before this, he faked his death. This time, he's gravely ill. What's next?"

"It's true!"

Nico wept. If it were not inappropriate, he would have knocked her out and carried her to the hospital himself.

"We were fighting terrorists in the mountains of Salinsburgh, and Mr. Jenson was shot in the chest; the blood all over me is his. He wants to see you one last time. I'm begging you, Ms. Gwendolyn! Please go see him!"

Gazing at him weeping in earnest, she felt her heart twinge with pity.

"I'll trust you just this once! If Cedrick lies to me again, I will never forgive him!"

Without packing her things, she picked up her bag and went with Nico to the hospital.

A group was gathered in the corridor outside the emergency room and making a huge ruckus that escalated to the point of a heated quarrel, but they all looked solemn. Some even had tears in their eyes.

Gwendolyn quickened her stride. Leading the way, Nico shouted, "Make way! Stop squabbling! Ms. Gwendolyn is here!"

The group fell silent immediately. Some even stepped aside orderly to let her pass.

Venturing deeper, Gwendolyn soon detected the overwhelming, metallic stench of blood.

Laying on a stretcher, Cedrick was deathly pale. He had streaks of blood all over him. The spot where his heart was, in particular, was drenched in a deep crimson. There was blood still oozing out. Even the stretcher had been stained red.

The scene was so bloody that Gwendolyn remained in shock for a long while.

He's not lying this time! He has lost so much blood!

Gwendolyn clapped her hand over her mouth in horror as her tears fell, rolling off her cheeks. Her feet felt like lead that every step she took was impossibly heavy.

Cedrick's dull eyes brightened at her approach. He raised a hand, bloody and trembling, to grab her tiny wrist.

"Don't cry. I-I'm not in pain, but my heart hurts when you cry."

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Gwendolyn's tears turned into a stream. She could not stop them.

Clutching his hand, she screamed, "Don't you dare die, Cedrick! I'm going to marry someone else if you die and make you regret it as long as you live!"

Cedrick's bloody lips parted in a painful smile.

"T-That won't do. You're mine."

Despite her tears, she managed a chuckle before turning to the two paramedics in the corner. "I'm here. Send him in, quickly."

Cedrick would not let go of her hand. "Let me explain, Gwenny, please?"

“Be good and go through with the surgery. I’ll be out here. You can tell me everything when it’s over.”

Cedrick’s visage was paler than ever. It looked as though every drop of blood had been drained from him. It was plain he could not hold on much longer.

However, he stubbornly maintained his grip on her wrist—he wanted to get a good look at her. There was only a ten percent chance of survival if he went in, and he feared he might never regain consciousness.

Gwendolyn’s heart wrenched painfully. She forced herself to pry his fingers apart and watched him being wheeled into the emergency room.

The light came on, indicating that the surgery was underway. Gwendolyn sat outside and gazed blankly into space. The tears streaking her face had not yet dried.

It was her first time shedding tears in front of that many people, but she did not care. All she knew was that she did not want Cedrick to die.

She waited for three hours until nine that night, yet Cedrick still had not emerged.

Nico sent the squadron home. With a similarly grave expression, he sat on the bench across from Gwendolyn.

Then, as if he had considered something at length, he began, “You thought that Mr. Jenson had lied to you about the incident involving the abandoned warehouse six months ago. He was not. He did enter knowing full well he might die. If not for the rest of the boys making it there in time to rescue what’s left of him, he would have died in the fire.”

Gwendolyn looked up slowly to meet his gaze.

Nico continued glumly, “As for why he did not return to you despite having survived, the Jenson family had been going through internal strife, and he needed to return and deal with it. The whip scars on his back are a consequence of his defiance of the Jenson family laws. Though he was fortunate to have

survived at the warehouse, vast areas of the skin on his face had been burned, and he had broken his leg in the fight. His internal organs, too, are not faring any better.”

His gaze flicked and he skipped the part about the virus in Cedrick’s body.

Aside from his duties to oversee his family, the reason why Cedrick did not return to Fairlake was that the professor still had not discovered a complete cure for the virus within him, and it necessitated a trip to the laboratory every other day. It was only with the help of the suppressant that he lived until now.

Cedrick had once decreed that not a word of any of it was to be mentioned to Gwendolyn.

Pulling himself out of his reverie, Nico continued, “When has Mr. Jenson not put his life on the line to win you back, Ms. Gwendolyn? He’s true to you! He’s a fool when it comes to love for he only knows how to give everything he has but would never tell you any of his pain. He was ashamed to reunite with you after regaining his identity because he was afraid you would hate him more if he mentioned it. He feared that he would lose you forever. He has bumbled himself before you.”

Gwendolyn lowered her head. Her heart was filled with guilt to the brim, and it tormented her.

She saw Cedrick covered in blood every time she shut her eyes. Worse still, something like that had happened to him more than once.

He must have been in even worse shape during the incident at the abandoned warehouse six months ago.

However, she was still furious that he had kept all that from her. She blamed him for his deception and she even whipped him.

Gwendolyn felt her heart sear with pain as though it was stabbed. The intensity of it made her gasp for breath.

“I am sorry.”

Aside from those three words, she could not offer anything else to make up for it.

“An apology is not what he needs. Just a little bit of love on your part will send him over the moon.”

Nico sighed at the sight of her despondency. “He no longer owes you anything, Ms. Gwendolyn, but when he found out that you were grieving for six months because of him, he blamed himself. He had me procure a whip not because he wanted to put on a charade for you but because he was trying his

best to make up for the pain you have endured for six months. That you did, but he too, has been tormented by illnesses for half a year.”

“When you slammed the door and left yesterday, he wanted to wait for you to come back so he could explain things, but you went to Old Mr. Jenson and asked to call off the engagement instead. Worse still, Old Mr. Jenson agreed to it. He was only hit by the bullet because he had been distracted.”

Gwendolyn stopped crying at once and frowned. “I did see Old Mr. Jenson and proposed for the engagement to be called off, but he did not agree. I was planning on doing something about it. Who told you this?”

Nico met her gaze. Realizing that something did not add up, he quickly sent somebody to investigate.

Half an hour later, the atmosphere at the entrance to the emergency room grew tense.

“It was somebody sent by Mr. Xander.”

Gwendolyn’s features hardened. “Xander? How well does Cedrick get along with him?”

Nico appeared serious. “Not very well. The internal strife the Jenson family went through was caused by Mr. Yael, Mr. Xander’s father. Mr. Cedrick had only been back for three days and the power nearly fell to Mr. Yael’s hands; he only managed to snatch it back after almost two weeks.”

Gwendolyn pursed her lips. Looking down, she did not speak.

After a spell of silence, her gaze grew colder. “Do you know how to sneak into the Jenson residence without being seen?”

Nico was taken aback. “Ms. Gwendolyn, are you suggesting...”

There was a cold, dangerous glint in Gwendolyn’s eye.

“It’s time to settle the score with him.”

...

It was eleven in the evening, and a muffled cascade was sounding in the elegantly decorated bedroom.

Having just showered and clad in a bathrobe, Xander was drying his hair as he emerged from the bathroom.

As soon as he entered the bedroom, the lights in his chandelier began flickering. The curtains, too, rustled from being whipped by the wind. A sense of foreboding filled the space.

Noticing something awry, he put his gold-rimmed glasses on.

At some point, a woman had seated herself on his bed.

Her lithe legs were crossed sideways, and her arms were folded. She looked seductive yet elegant. It was a very pleasant sight.

I must say, Cedrick’s little fiancée is beautiful, with an amazing body. Even I want to...

He gave a polite smile. "When did you come here, Ms. Harris? Why would you sneak into my bedroom at this time of night instead of coming through the front door? This is a little inappropriate, don't you think?"

Gwendolyn did not speak. She merely fixed him with her glare.

As she was in Xander's villa, he had an army of bodyguards at his disposal. Furthermore, Xander had no reason to fear her as she was a woman. Instead, with a wicked smirk, he teased her.

"Could you have taken an interest in me, Ms. Harris? Are you trying to make my dear cousin a cuckold?"

Gwendolyn scowled, her expression turning vicious. Leaping to her feet, she appeared in a flash before Xander and swung the handle of her dagger at his neck.

Xander tried to defend himself but was too weak to do so. As a result, he was knocked out mercilessly. He fell to the ground in a crumpled heap.

Gwendolyn gazed down at him. "Turns out you only look the part of a brute but you're actually pathetic."

When Xander next awoke, he found himself tied to an office chair, and a scrap of cloth stuffed in his mouth.

Leaning against the table, Gwendolyn toyed idly with her dagger.

The glint of the blade illuminated her seductive yet cruel face.

Oh, no... This is not a woman to be trifled with.

Xander was beginning to grow afraid. Turning toward the door, he gave muffled yells.

“It’s no use. I’ve knocked out all your bodyguards. Besides, it’s the middle of the night. You can scream yourself silly and no one will come for you.”

Being usually handsome and gentlemanly, Xander was now in a wretched state. His hair was wet, and he was still clad in his bathrobe.

Nico heard Gwendolyn’s coy teasing tone from outside the window. It sounded strange to his ears.

Why does it sound like she’s going to bang him? Could she have taken a liking to him and decided not to teach him a lesson? If Boss finds out, he might be so pissed that he would come here from the operating table!