

## **Mr. Scott 241**

### Chapter 241 I'll Be Your Shadow

"Just doing my duty."

That was all Cedric said. Everyone knew just how much meaning those four words carried. Then, Elena covered her mouth and pointed at Maia's feet.

"There's blood on Maia's feet!"

Cedric grabbed Maia's arm, looked at her feet, and frowned. There certainly was blood tracing down her feet.

"It's okay. I must've been cut by the pieces of glass when the bottle shattered," Maia said casually. She tried hard to break free, but he held on to her firmly.

"Please carry on, everyone. I'm going to take care of her." Cedric put his suit jacket around her legs and swept her off her feet in front of everyone.

"Cedric!" She hissed.

"I'm taking you to the hospital," he said firmly. He cared more about her injury than she did.

Maia was a little pissed off, but she could not raise her voice in public. "Put me down. It's just a scratch. I can take care of it myself!"

"What if it leaves a scar? Don't you hate those?" He asked.

Maia was startled. She was surprised that he remembered what she told him years ago.

"I like scars now. They remind me of the lessons I've learned and motivate me."

"Well, then. You can leave some scars on me." With that, he carried her to the elevator. Maia, on the other hand, was stunned by what he said.

She waited until the elevator door closed and spoke, "Ask yourself, Cedric. Are you treating me this way now because you're

Sed to the old me who revolved her life around you? Or, do I

really love me for who I am?"

His face was unreadable, but he stared at her with such tender eyes.

"I've been asking myself that question countless times ever since I lost you. My answer has remained unchanged throughout all these years.

"I love you," Cedric said confidently. Maia smiled bitterly at that.

"You say that, but I don't know if I can even love someone anymore. Especially you... I can't see how I could love you again. Despite that, are you going to keep loving me the way you do now?"

"It's my first time loving someone. It's good that you don't know how to do it. We can learn together," he said firmly, glancing at her tenderly.

Maia remained silent for a long time. The doctor cleaned and dressed her wound once they were in the hospital. She was about to stand up when Cedric tried to hold her again.

However, she dodged him this time. "I don't need your help."

The doctor saw it and nodded respectfully at Cedric, “Please keep Ms. Maia’s wound from water. It’s just a flesh wound. It’ll be okay in a few days.”

away

He nodded. Then, the doctor left. Maia was about to leave too, but he blocked her off.

“I’ll send you back home.”

Both of them stood there at the entrance of the emergency department. The wind blew past and tousled Maia’s hair. She raised her head and saw his gloomy expression.

“Look. You can see the stars tonight.”

Cedric gazed at her and frowned. He was worried about her wound.

“Cedric,” she said with no emotion. “Do you know how many times I’ve asked myself just how much I loved you back then? When the question popped up for the first time, I kept telling myself you saved me.

“You got injured and lost your memories because of me. It’s okay that you don’t remember who I am now. I could wait. I could be with you. After all, they say just being with someone is the most romantic gesture.

“I swore I’d be with you until the day you see me... You were the only ray of light that could light up my heart back then.”

Maia sounded so fragile. It felt like the wind could knock her down at any given moment—and yet every single word she uttered was so intense.

“A lot of nights came and went after that. The ray of light became dimmer and dimmer each day... Eventually, I beheld the fiery glow and your feeble ray of light was eclipsed by it. Then, it ceased to exist.

“Now, you’re casting it into my heart again, but I don’t need it anymore. I can be my own ray of light. Have I told you about this? It hit me when I was lying on the bed after surviving the fire.

“It felt good to live my life for no one else but myself. It feels spectacular, really. I’ll never be

your shadow again. I just want to be myself.”

in

Naturally, everything she said pierced straight through Cedric’s heart. He was in deep sorrow, but he did not loosen his grip on her.

It was heart-wrenching, but it was real. This was the kind of pain he put her through in the past. However, even in his agony, he was not going to let her go.

The summer breeze blew past him and tousled his short hair, which dropped and covered his

eyes.

“I’ll be your shadow this time.”

He would follow her everywhere she went. Maia was startled.

Then, she said, “If you’re going to be my shadow, then you should release your grip and walk behind me. A shadow doesn’t stir up trouble, nor does it annoy its master.”

She would know, as it was how she used to be.

“I’ll send you back,” he said firmly.

“Do you understand what I just said, Cedric? Let me go!” Maia shook his hand off and saw the sorrow in his eyes. She paid no attention to it and left the hospital.

Cedric, on the other hand, wanted to hold her in his embrace badly. However, he was stopped by her relentless warnings. Thus, he walked behind her like a shadow...

Maia hailed a cab and headed back to Cloud Nine Residences. He did the same and instructed his cab to follow hers. Then, she got out of the car when the cab arrived at her place. He did the same thing too.

He did not leave even after Maia had gone into her place.

She never expected that the arrogant Cedric could be this obedient.

She never expected that the egoistic Cedric would listen to her.

Maia received a text as soon as she closed her door. It was a text from him.

“Take care of your wound and get a good night’s sleep. I’ll be here whenever you need me.”

Chapter 242 This Way, Lady!

It was a brief text, but Maia felt tears in her eyes after she read it. She had longed for him to care about her this way in the past. The fact that he had shown up whenever she needed him was something she had not even dared to dream of.

However, all of his actions today were pure irony to what happened in the past. She dared not go to the balcony because she was worried that she would be found out like what happened last time. She was not sure if he had left.

Did he leave? Was he still standing down there?

Some time had passed when her phone rang suddenly. Maia snapped out of her thoughts and looked at her phone. She was both disappointed and relieved that it was not Cedric.

Buck was on the other end when she answered the call. "I investigated Victor according to the lead Hope gave us. Aside from some erotic pictures, I came up empty-handed.

"I had to work another angle. I looked into the female celebrities who had fallen victim to him. My findings confirm that Victor used to groom a girl group called Victorious Secret. They shot to fame for a little while, but it only lasted two years before they were disbanded and faded into obscurity."

"Victorious Secret?" Maia was a little familiar with this girl group. They had been famous for their unique songs. They endorsed many brands and put out a lot of performances. However, they were disbanded soon after their debut. No one had heard from them ever since.

It looked like there was a reason it happened. It was very likely they were put in cold storage.

"That's right. I tracked down the leader of the troupe. She was selling alcohol in one of the nightclubs in Prismara. She has a kid and that's how she's supporting her family. It's not an easy life.

"She was exposed to the unspoken rules that were present in Mykonos Studio. I don't think it'll be easy to convince her to testify against Victor."

"Which nightclub is she working at?" Maia asked.

"It's the first nightclub on Langford Street."

“I’m headed there now.”

Buck was surprised, “Huh? Did you say you’re going there now, Ms. Maia?”

“You heard me.” With that, Maia hung up the phone. She picked up her car keys and went

downstairs. She opened the apartment door and made sure Cedric was not around. She lowered

gaze and let out a sigh of relief.

her

Then, she composed herself before driving to Langford Street. She had a more pressing matter to handle once again.

The buzzing activities on Langford Street were a stark contrast to the dead silence in the rest of the city. Different tones of colored lights illuminated the nightclub. The patrons were dancing wildly to the music. The laughter, hollers, and shouts were deafening.

“Ms. Maia.”

She had just pulled over when Buck showed up at the entrance to the nightclub. Being a six-foot-two man, it was very easy to spot him.

“Where iss she?”

“She’s on the first floor. She was doing well at sales so she got assigned to the VIP floor.” Maia nodded and headed to the nightclub. She slipped past the crowd and ascended the glass staircase. She had just taken a step on it when the bouncer approached her with a smile.

“I’ve never seen you before, miss. Is this your first time here?”

The bouncer who blocked her off was burly, but Maia paid him no attention. Instead, she took out a wad of cash from her wallet.

“Is this enough?”

The bouncer’s eyes glinted the moment he saw it. Naturally, he stepped aside.

“Why, it’s more than enough. What business do you have on the first floor, I wonder? Fights are forbidden around here, especially up there. Me and my pals are looking after the place. I hope you won’t cause us any trouble.”

“I would’ve brought weapons with me if I wanted to fight. I’m just here looking for someone.”

He saw that she was unarmed. All she brought was a six-foot-two man. He nodded and smiled, “Is that all? This way, lady. Just holler if you need anything. I’m always ready to make some extra cash.”

Maia sneered. Everyone who worked in nightclubs was in it for money and nothing more!

She went upstairs. It was quieter compared to the ground floor, but the laughter and the shouting were still endless here. This was the place where the rich guys hung out. It was supposedly the VIP floor, but in truth it was no better than the ground floor.

A lot of them had pretty girls in their embrace, but they turned their gaze to Maia when she showed up. Some of them even whistled.

“Howdy. I’m a regular here, but I’ve never seen anyone as tasty as you.” One of the guys pushed the ladies next to him aside. He walked toward Maia with a glass in his hand and

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“Care for a drink, hottie?”

Buck was about to intervene, but Maia signaled him to stand back. She took the glass from the man and swirled the wine gently. Then, she poured all of its contents on the man’s face.

The man was a little tipsy earlier, but he was wide awake now. Maia cut him off when he was about to shout at her.

“I’ll have my men cut off your wiener tomorrow if you stand in my way!” She said this with a terrifying tone, causing the man to shield the area between his legs. Then, he finally saw who she was when the lights focused fully on her.

“M—Ms. Mala. I’m sorry to have offended you. I drank too much earlier. On top of that, the lights around here aren’t exactly bright enough for me to tell who you are just now.

“I’d never think you’d come here, Ms. Maia. I’m sorry for how I acted. Here. I’ll drink three shots as a way of paying respect to you!”

“That won’t be necessary. You’re the VIP here, Barney. Am I right in saying you’d know where this lady is?” Maia took out her phone and showed him a picture swiftly.

He recognized her instantly, “She’s always around here. I saw her and bought drinks from her earlier. I’m guessing she’s in the private room now.”

“Is she in today?”

“Sure. I bought the wine I offered to you from her. Her name’s Penelope. You’ll find her soon enough. She’s really hustling. She has targets to hit every day.”

Maia did not want to waste another second with him after he gave her the information she needed. She would go into the private rooms and look for her.

Chapter 243 Are You Going to Keep Lying?

Barney called out to her, “Is it true that my father’s company is collaborating with your company, Ms. Mala? He talks about you all the time. I’m sure we’ll run into each other again at The Heazon Awards next month. Please say a good word or two about me to my father.”

Maia glanced at the man before her. She thought he was tough at first. Little did she know that he was just another boy desperate for his father’s validation.

“I’ll pretend I didn’t see anything tonight as long as you treat the ladies nicely, Barney. I was

never here and we never met.”

He nodded and thanked her. "Splendid, Ms. Maia. I like how you cut to the chase."

Then, Maia went further in to look for Penelope.

He stared at her as she left. The smile on his face had all but vanished.

"I would've taught you a lesson in the private room if it weren't for the collaboration." He wiped the wine from his face. "How dare you pour wine on me,

bitch?"

Buck followed Maia and asked, "Do you truly believe he'll treat ladies nicely, Ms. Maia? He doesn't seem the type.

"He's a playboy. He's the same type as the bunch of guys I ran into at La Rouquette. What makes you think I'd believe the words of a miscreant?"

"Are you not going to make good use of the opportunity when you meet the Young Globaltainment Co.'s CEO?"

"I promised him I won't say anything to his father and I intend to keep my word. However, I didn't say anything about his father finding it out from someone else."

Buck chuckled, "Guys like Barney deserve to be taught a lesson. You go, Ms. Maia!"

A lady exited one of the private rooms with a cart, crying.

"That's her, Ms. Maia! That's Penelope!"

Maia approached her quickly. Penelope had her head lowered and asked respectfully, "Do you want something to drink? I've got some of the best stuff..."

“Can I have a word with you?”

Penelope raised her head when she heard a lady’s voice. She was lost for words when she saw

Maia.

“A–Aren’t you the CEO of Starlight Entertainment?”

“How many orders do you need to close every night?” Mala peered at her cart full of bottles. It seemed she had not been very successful tonight.

Penelope answered at once, “I can close dozens of orders if I am lucky, but tonight wasn’t my night. I made one of my old customers mad.

“I closed only six orders tonight. My boss is going to give me a hard time if I can’t meet my targets. Sigh...”

“Does this mean you’ll get the commission and peace of mind if you can close ten orders?” Maia asked.

Penelope nodded, “That’s about it. My daughter, Jasmine, is waiting for me to buy a bagel

too.”

“I’ll pay for the remaining four orders.”

Penelope was shocked to hear what she said. “Is that really okay? Are you sure you want to do it, Ms. Maia?”

“I’ll take your orders, but I’ll need to talk to you about something. Deal?”

Penelope looked at Maia and felt that she had no ill intentions, so she agreed. “Deal.”

Buck made the payment. Maia looked at the rickety place and said, “This isn’t the place to talk.”

“My place is right behind here. My daughter and I are the only ones there. If you don’t mind, we could go a serious talk.

there.” Penelope suggested. She sensed that it was ”

“Aren’t you worried that I might do something to both of you?”

Penelope shook her head, “You’re such an eminent figure, Ms. Maia. Why would you target us?” Maia laughed at that. Then, she followed Penelope and headed to the apartment.

Technically, it was just a flat. Rundown and shoddy, it would have looked like an abandoned. building if the lights had not been on. The metal stairs creaked as they climbed up.

Maia was taken aback. Penelope had been a popular singer who did a lot of performances for television. Everyone had wanted her. Why would she live in such squalor?

A little girl dashed right into Penelope’s arms as she opened a battered door.

“You’re back, mom!”

“Why aren’t you asleep? It’s already so late.” She carried the little girl and asked sternly.

“I want a bagel, mom. You promised...”

“How about we eat the bagel tomorrow? I’ll also buy pizza for you. I need to talk about something serious with this lady now. Can you go back to sleep?”

Jasmine had been looking forward to her bagel. Naturally, she was a little disappointed when she heard Penelope had not gotten her one. She hung her head in silence.

“Puy them some bagels and pizzas, Buck,” Mala ordered.

“Sure thing, Ms. Maia,” he answered immediately and left the place.

“That’s too kind of you, Ms. Maia! Here. I’ll pay you back...” Penelope was embarrassed.

Maia shook her head, “Consider it my gift for your daughter. I shouldn’t have come to your place empty-handed.”

“This squalor is barely worth living in...” Penelope let out a sigh as she looked at the damp, moldy walls.

“Thank you, miss. My name’s Jasmine. I’m five years old.” She raised all five of her fingers in her hand. Maia gave her the sweetest smile.

Penelope set her daughter on the floor and patted her head. “Go back to your room, Jasmine. I need some private moments with this lady. I’ll call for you when the bagels are here.”

“Okay.” Jasmine nodded obediently and went back to her room. Penelope poured Maia a glass

of water after that.

“There’s nothing much here, Ms. Maia. All I have to offer is a glass of water...”

“It’s fine. I came here because I need to ask you something.”

Penelope nodded, “Tell me how I can help, Ms. Maia.”

“It’s about Victor Terrence from Mykonos Studio.”

Penelope’s face went stiff when she heard what Maia said.

“W—Why would you ask about him, Ms. Maia?”

Maia answered, “The Victorious Secret was incredibly famous back then. However, it was disbanded with no warning. You guys completely went off the radar as well. You’re the leader of the troupe. Can you tell me what caused this?”

Penelope’s eyes shifted uneasily, “We didn’t want to continue our career in the industry anymore. T—There’s no other reason.”

“Are you telling me it’s better to sell alcohol in nightclubs than being part of a renowned girl group? Are you going to help Mykonos Studio hide their unspoken rules and mismanagement? I’m willing to bet the other members of your group aren’t living a good life, either.”

Chapter 244 The Evidence

“Um

Penelope lowered her head. Then, she looked into her daughter’s room and saw Jasmine playing with a doll that had been stitched back several times.

Her eyes reddened and silence draped over the entire place. Maia said nothing followed Penelope’s gaze.

“Your daughter is everything to you,” Maia said confidently.

Instead, she

Penelope nodded, “That’s right. I wouldn’t have been able to keep going if it wasn’t for her.” “Do you want to give her a better life?” Maia said.

Penelope stared at her, unnerved. “Are you offering me a helping hand?” There was longing in

her eyes.

Maia nodded, “You were the leader of Victorious Secret. You were both the lead singer and dancer. You’re experienced. I can put you back on stage if that’s what you want. Otherwise, you can work as a mentor in my company.

“Your salary will be more than what you earn selling alcohol and you’ll have a fixed working schedule. Both you and your daughter can stay in our dormitory. It’ll be safer than this place.” “I no longer want to return to the stage. I’d much rather spend my time with Jasmine now. I don’t want to miss out on her childhood. If I work as a mentor, I can groom the trainees and take care of my daughter. I’ll have a proper job with a steady income. It’s the best outcome I could’ve hoped for.”

“Okay. I’ll ask Buck to make the arrangements. You can start work tomorrow and take Jasmine to our dormitory,” Maia said decisively.

Penelope said gratefully, “Thank you, Ms. Maia. I could barely scrape by selling alcohol in nightclubs. it’s not the answer to my situation.

“I don’t want people to know that Jasmine has a mother who works inappropriate jobs too. It’ll do

things to her mind as she’s growing up. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Ms.

Maia.”

Penelope’s eyes filled with tears. She kept thanking the lady before her. It was hard trying to land a job with a steady income. It did not matter if she had to trade something for this job, she was thankful.

Then, she looked at Jasmine, who was still playing in her room. She lowered her voice, “Cards. on the table, Ms. Maia. Aside from female celebrities who already had powerful backers, everyone who debuted in Mykonos Studio had to let Victor have his way with them.

“That included the six of us. In those bastards’ eyes, it’s all a deal and you have to do it if you

Maia was taken aback by Penelope’s story. She knew what kind of person Victor was, but it was still jarring to hear it with her own ears. He was a monster. She could not believe that his reign. in the entertainment industry went unchecked for so long.

This time, she was going to take Victor out of the picture for everyone he had stepped on!

“Celebrities who shot to fame fast and bring in a lot of revenue for the company can’t shake him off that easily. It’s because these celebrities are usually favored by the public. They get devoted support from the male fans.

“Victor was a freakish man. He derived pleasure from sleeping with the celebrity that men all over the world coveted. That’s how he boosts his own ego.

Penelope laughed, but the hatred in her eyes was undeniable.

The next second, however, tears flowed freely down her cheeks, “Nora was one of the most famous stars in our troupe. She’d go on shows during working hours and let Victor have his way with her in the night.

“She was pushed to the limits very early on. So, she quietly gathered evidence and got ready to expose Victor’s dirty secrets. However, he caught her. Then, he drugged her and sent her to the asylum.

“I visited her several times, but she no longer remembered who I was. She was completely deranged. All she ever did was sing.”

Maia handed Penelope a handkerchief as she went on. “Victor is not a man. He’s a monster! Nora is Jasmine’s mother... she was pregnant when he drugged her. By the time she was sent to the asylum, it was too dangerous to abort the fetus.

“She died after she gave birth to Jasmine. Some complications concerning amniotic embolism. I spent all of my savings and bought the asylum’s silence. Then, I took Jasmine away.”

Maia was even more shocked after she heard this.

“What are you saying to me? Is Jasmine his daughter?”

Penelope nodded, “Give me a minute, Ms. Maia.” Then, she rose and walked to the kitchen. She moved the trash can aside and pulled out of the planks from the wooden floorboard. She came out and gave Maia a document sealed in a plastic bag.

“What’s this?”

“It’s all of the evidence Nora gathered. She was closest to me back then, so she sent everything to me. I took an IT course back in college. I have the know-how to keep the evidence hidden.

“I made a copy because I didn’t trust anyone. Little did I know it would come in handy six

Maia looked at the documents in her hands and frowned. She had never held a package heavier than the one she had right now. After all, Nora gathered the information at the cost of her life.

“Now that you’ve given me the evidence, aren’t you worried that I might go back on my word?”

Penelope shook her head, “I trust you, Ms. Maia.”

“Do you have that much faith in me?” After all, this was the first time they met each other.

This time, Penelope nodded, “I was in the industry for quite some time. If I’ve learned anything, it’s how to read people. I can tell you have a kind soul, Ms. Maia. I also believe that women look out for each other. I can tell you’ll be the one to bring down Victor.”

“Honestly, I’m not only taking him down for you guys. I have my own reasons as well.” Penelope was startled. “I don’t get it, Ms. Maia. You’re an eminent figure. On top of that, rumors on the internet suggest that Cedric backs you up.

“People like Victor would never do anything to you and get himself in trouble. He only picks on nobodies like us.”

“Indeed, He’d never take any conspicuous actions against me, but my company is undoubtedly in his way. So, it stands to reason he’d want to get me out of the picture.”

That was when it hit Penelope.

“Are you telling

you telling me that Victor is trying to kill you?”

Maia smiled in response. “It’ll be tough for him to kill me. Aside from victimizing ladies and pretending to be a hypocritical gentleman, what else is he capable of?”

Chapter 245 You Look Cute Together

“Ms. Maia” Penelope looked at her and went down on her knees. Mala was shocked and moved to help her up.

“What do you think you’re doing? Get up now.”

Penelope shook her head and said, “I’ll always be grateful to you for giving me a job and a safe place to stay, but I have to beg you for a favor.

“Please. Please tear Victor down and make sure he can’t come back from it! I know I’m powerless and this is all I can do, but you have what it takes to make it happen. Ms. Maia!”

Maia helped her up. She had not expected Penelope to be this passionate. “I give you my word. I’ll make sure he can’t come back from this. Everyone will despise him. He’ll pay dearly for everything he’s done!”

Penelope wiped tears from her face and nodded repeatedly.

The battered door swung open as Buck came in. “The food is here, Ms. Maia.”

Penelope opened the door swiftly. Buck was standing outside with bagels and pizzas in his hands, smiling. Maia shouted, “Jasmine. Your bagels are here.”

Jasmine was playing with the doll earlier, but she dashed out of the room the moment she heard what Maia said. “Bagels. Yummy bagels!”

Buck smiled as he put the bagels on the table.

“Can I have the bagels, mister?” Jasmine asked politely and pointed to the table, “You bought it for me. Right?” He nodded and smiled, “Of course, you can. I bought them for you.

“Thank you, mister!” Jasmine said again. Then, she gave one of the bagels to Penelope, “Here. You can have one, Mom. Let’s eat together!”

Penelope looked at the bagel her daughter had just given her. Tears began to flow again. Jasmine was a little worried.

“Why are you crying, Mom? I behaved. I asked this mister and he said he bought the bagels for me. I thanked him for it too. Hurry up and eat, Mom. You don’t have to eat my leftovers again.”

Penelope nodded. Jasmine was such a thoughtful kid.

“Okay. I’ll eat it. You’re the best daughter anyone could ask for, Jasmine.”

Jasmine beamed at the compliments her mother gave her. Then, she took a bagel out. Everyone was expecting her to take a bite out of it when she looked at Buck and Maia instead.

“Do you guys want to eat the bagels too? We can go halvesies!”

Maia shook her head and smiled. She patted Jasmine on her head and said gently, “We’re not hungry. Go ahead and eat it.”

“You’re so beautiful, miss.” Jasmine returned the smile, “You’ll look so cute together with the mister downstairs. He’s very handsome too!”

“I can’t believe you climbed up the windows again, Jasmine!” Penelope was a little upset. Jasmine lowered her head and ate the bagels. Maia walked to the window and looked out. A guy was standing beneath the street light. He was smoking.

Buck recognized him instantly. Maia stood next to him, stunned.

“What’s Mr. Cedric doing here, Ms. Maia?”

“I’m sure he was here looking for you. We’re quite some ways from the city, after all. It’s not exactly safe here. Perhaps he was worried about you?” Penelope took a guess.

Maia said nothing. Instead, she looked at Buck and said, "Get Penelope's numbers and arrange for her to start work at my company tomorrow.

"She'll be one of our mentors. Also, arrange an isolated room in the dormitory for her."

"As you

wish." Buck nodded and moved to do her bidding. Then, Maia opened the battered door and walked downstairs. It creaked again. Cedric put out his cigarette and walked toward

her.

"Watch out." He caught her hand because he remembered that she was injured in the foot.

Maia shook his hand off and asked, "What are you doing here, Cedric?"

"Taking a stroll."

What a lame excuse.

"Prismara Hill is wide and its air is fresh. It has a wonderful night view too. Why do you have to take a stroll here, near the nightclub?"

"It's too quiet there. I'd miss you." People tend to think a lot in the dead silence in the night.

Maia was a little surprised at that, but she said nothing. They could hear the clamor from the nightclub.

Buck came downstairs. Maia snapped back to reality and turned to her car without another word. She simply left Cedric there.

Buck saw what happened and caught up to her. "Aren't you going to say something to Mr. Cedric? A— Are you going to leave, just like that?"

"What's there to talk about? I have nothing to say to him. Ever."

"I think Mr. Cedric's hand is hurt."

Maia stopped in her tracks.

Is he hurt? Why would he be hurt?

Buck saw that Maia stopped and said, "Shouldn't you express some concern, Ms. Mala? He was very concerned about you. Perhaps you should repay the favor sometimes."

"I didn't ask for his concern," Mala said indifferently. Then, she clenched her fists and walked to the parking lot. Her phone buzzed just when she was about to open her car door.

It was a text from Cedric again.

"Don't doze off when you're driving. Take a good rest when you're back and take care of your wound. Sweet dreams."

His care for her was slowly seeping into her heart. Maia gritted her teeth. She wanted to delete the text, but she hesitated for a long time. In the end, she kept it.

Buck saw that Maia still had not gotten into the car. He was puzzled, "Is something wrong, Ms. Maia?"

She slid her phone into her pocket immediately and shook her head, "It's nothing." Then, she handed the plastic bag to Buck.

“What’s this?” Buck was puzzled, again.

“It’s the evidence that Penelope gave me.”

Chapter 246 Stay by Her Side

Buck was shocked to see the bag Mala handed to him.

“I didn’t know they had collected all the proof they could behind his back. I thought Victor had made sure not to leave any traces behind! With this evidence, it would be much easier for us!”

“Make sure that The Horizon Awards proceed as planned. I want this evidence to be exposed in front of all those famous personnel from the entertainment industry.”

“Don’t worry, leave them to me!” Buck promised.

Maia nodded and got in the car. As she was inside, she could not help but glance toward the other direction that led to the parking lot. Was he still there?

Buck was parked next to her. By the time he started pulling out, Maia’s car was still parked. He drove over and gave her a honk. He lowered his window and yelled at her, “Ms. Maia, are you alright?”

When Maia heard him, she collected herself and drove out of the parking lot. Whether Cedric was still there or not had nothing to do with her.

By the time she was driving on the roads, she noticed that a car was trailing behind her. It followed her all the way to Cloud Nine Residence. She knew the number plate very well, but the man inside it did not show up in front of her.

When she got back home and went out to her balcony to pretend to retrieve her laundry, she noticed that the car was gone. Maia was confused about her own emotions as she brought her laundry back into the room.

Little did she know that the man who was constantly on her mind was still downstairs. Cedric knew that she would only get angry if she saw him here, so he decided to remain in the shadows. He wanted to be by her side, even if it meant staying hidden.

That night, Maia had a hard time falling asleep as she kept tossing and turning in bed. She recalled how cold he looked standing by that lamppost.

Moments later, Maia tapped her temples as she remained herself not to think about him anymore. With that in mind, she took a deep breath and forced herself to sleep.

Cedric looked up at Maia's dark room and lit a cigarette as he whispered to himself, "Sweet dreams, honey."

He continued to stay by her side just to watch over her. He smiled sadly as he finished his cigarette. "I'll watch over you just like how you did to me."

The next morning, Mala woke up to the sound of her phone ringing. She frowned as she threw the covers over her head. However, her cell phone kept ringing.

Finally, Mala sat up and answered her call in a daze. The moment she placed the phone to her ears, Buck's voice came through.

"Ms. Malia, are you still in bed? It's The Quest's final episode today, you have to go on the show soon! You need to start getting ready!"

Maia was wide awake when she heard Buck mentioning The Quest. She just realized that it was the show's last episode and the day where they'd introduce their new girl group live!

"Don't tell me you're still in bed? I already told you about this yesterday! I'm already at your place!"

“Alright! Give me three minutes!”

As soon as Maia ended the call, she got up, rushed to the bathroom to wash up and get dressed. Maia almost messed up such an important day due to her lack of sleep from the other night! After today’s show, Starlight Entertainment would sign a two–year contract with the girl group from The Quest. Maia, as the CEO of the company, needed to be at the show.

While she was doing her hair, her thoughts drifted to Cedric. As the owner of Sunny Videos, he would also be there, right?

Maia’s movements slowed as she was caught in her thoughts. “He’s always busy. Maybe he won’t have time to attend the event? Would he just pre–record a video to congratulate the winners?”

Maia stopped herself from over–thinking as she hurried to finish doing her hair and rushed to the elevators.

When Buck finally saw her exiting the building, he heaved a sigh of relief. “Ms. Maia, get in the car!”

Buck quickly started the engine and drove out of the parking lot. “The itinerary for today’s show is next to you. You should take a look!”

Maia nodded as she took out the file and started to look through it.

“I know you’re not a morning person, but you’re usually punctual. You’ve never been this late. What happened? Was it because you were looking through the evidence that we have?”

“Nope, I just couldn’t seem to fall asleep.”

“Difficulty sleeping? You should really take note of your lifestyle. Insomnia is one of the first signs of aging!” Buck commented worriedly.

Chapter 247 He’s Not There

Buck glanced at Maia after he finished and added playfully, “Do you want Mr. Cedric to be there? If you do, he’s just one phone call away. No wait, just a text is enough! I’m sure he’ll appear if you text him!”

Maia noticed that the lights were green, so she said, “You should go back to driving and shut up.”

Buck remained silent throughout the drive to the venue. They were already broadcasting the show live when Maia got there. She hurried to her seat and noticed that there was an empty seat beside her. He was not there.

Seconds later, The Quest main theme song played, and Aiken appeared on the stage. He gave the audience a charming smile when the spotlights shone on him.

Maia was distracted through half of the show until a staff member jolted her back to reality by informing her that Aiken had invited her on stage.

Maia quickly composed herself and gracefully strolled on stage.

“Let us welcome Starlight Entertainment’s CEO, Ms. Maia Burgess!” A round of applause erupted as she walked to the center of the stage.

Aiken’s smile widened the minute he saw her, “Ms. Maia, today is The Quest’s finale. It’s a pleasure to have you here with us. So, tell me, how are you feeling?”

“I feel happy and proud,” Maia replied.

“Why do you feel happy and proud?”

“I feel like a proud mother witnessing the growth of my girls. From the midst of summer till autumn, I’ve seen how all the trainees have changed and improved. I had the honor of watching them grow, seasoned by the different challenges presented to them.

“Now, seeing them come so close to fulfilling their dreams and ascending onto that throne. Nothing would make me feel happier and prouder.”

Maia’s speech garnered a standing ovation form the audience.

Aiken also nodded furiously as he added, “Today, let us all witness the birth of 10 new superstars!”

Maia smiled as she looked at the trainees at the foot of the stage. “Good luck girls!”

They smiled and thanked her as they cheered each other on..

“Let us hype up the mood! Today is the day of the birth of our new girl group, we should be excited for it!”

Aiken continued to hype up the audience by directing the attention to Mala. “Ms. Mala, it looks like you don’t have any makeup on today, right? Dear trainees, am I right?”

Most of the contestants were surprised as they shouted, “Yes! Ms. Maia has such amazing skin!”

Maia smiled cheekily and said, “That’s because I clean my face regularly.”

All of the trainees laughed at her remark as it reminded them of what she had said to Fiona.

Maia left the stage shortly after hyping up the mood. Moments later, the show continued as the competitions heat up. The show attracted a few million viewers tuning in at the same time.

The internet was flooded with topics related to The Quest, and the warring couple was the first on every hot search list.

“I can’t believe Ms. Maia doesn’t have any makeup on! Her skin is so beautiful! I’m so envious!”

“It’s such a shame we don’t get to see the warring couple live. I didn’t expect Mr. Cedric to be absent from this event. I wonder what’s going on? Wasn’t he the owner of Sunny Videos?”

“I was wondering the same thing too! How is it that Ms. Maia is here but Mr. Cedric isn’t? I noticed an empty seat next to Ms. Maia when the camera filmed her.”

“I saw it too. That’s probably Mr. Cedric’s, but why isn’t he here?”

“The warring couple must not split up! Please! I’ll wait till the end of the broadcast!”

Comments flooded the live chat room as the fans rooted for their favorite contestant and

couple. It seemed like The Quest was the talk of the town for the day.

Maia sat on her seat as she looked at the contestants drenched in sweat, giving their all to show the world what they were capable of. She could not help but tear up at the scene.

Maybe it was because they reminded her of herself. How she had given her all to go after the man that she had love with all her heart.

Unfortunately, her dreams shattered into pieces. Maia wished that this would not happen to the girls on the stage. Yet, the reality was that there were only 10 seats available.

Maia continued to focus on the contest even though it had already been three hours. She studied each of the girls closely, and when the competition came to an end, most of them were

in tears.

“Ms. Maia, why don’t you say a few words of encouragement to the girls, before today’s result?”

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Maia took the microphone in her hands and looked at the girls on the stage. “These few

The minute Maia asked that question, the girls on the stage burst out crying.

“The seats on the other side of the stage look beautiful, don’t they? But there are only 10 of them. It means that there will be others who would be dropped. This is what it means to dream. Giving everything you’ve got isn’t always enough to guarantee success.

“Let this stage be a part in your life but don’t let it consume everything. Your life is in your hands, you get to choose how to live it! If you lose, then do it with your head held high, and make sure that you’re not afraid to try again! I believe in each and every one of you. You are all the best!”

Maia concluded her speech to thundering applause. When Aiken was about to announce the final 10 contestants that had made it, all the lights on stage went out.

Chapter 248 My Precious

The hall immediately fell into complete darkness. To better ensure that the finale of The Quest would not be interrupted by unnecessary noise, the organizers had requested that the audience and special guests leave their cell phones outside of the venue.

Due to the sudden situation, the crowd present had started to speculate what was going on.

“What’s this?”

“Is the power out?”

“How could they allow something like this to happen on The Quest’s finale?”

In the midst of the chaos, the screen on the stage lit up suddenly. Everyone immediately shifted their focus to what was on it.

Maia was surprised to see that it was her wedding video!

“Do you, Maia Burgess, take Cedric Larkin to be your husband? To promise to love him and keep him for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, and be faithful only to him, for as long as you both shall live?”

Maia looked at Cedric shyly as she could not hide the love in her eyes. “I do.”

“Do you, Cedric Larkin, take Maia Burgess to be your wife? To promise to love her and keep her for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, and be faithful only to her, for as long as you both shall live?”

Cedric hesitated before agreeing coldly. “I do.”

The people present in the video were smiling, yet their smiles were not entirely sincere. Some were generally happy, others were just waiting to see how this marriage would turn out.

Maia had not expected her marriage video footage to be broadcast live on The Quest’s finale. This scene reminded her of the time when she reappeared at Homer and Yvette’s press conference, while playing the video of how Yvette had treated Errol and her.

Maia did not panic. In fact, she was surprisingly calm through this ordeal. She knew that someone was behind this. The culprit had the capability of interfering with such a huge event and chose to do this just as they were about to announce the winners.

The culprit did it to ensure that this issue would attract the attention of millions of viewers, and to make Maia the center of attention so that the internet would be talking about her instead of her survival program and their new girl group.

Who could it be? Who was the mastermind behind this?

The video footage caused a minor disturbance amongst the crowd as they started talking

10

“What’s going on? Was this a technical error?”

“This was Ms. Maia and Mr. Cedric’s marriage video footage! Did you see how forceful Mr. Cedric sounded when he said I do?”

“Right? Now I think I can understand why they ended up filing for divorce. Did you see how Ms. Maia looked at him? She must have loved him deeply!”

“Yet, Mr. Cedric was so cold. I couldn’t help but feel bad for Ms. Maia!”

When the audience were busy discussing the nature of Maia and Cedric’s relationship, the video came to a stop, and an audio started playing.

“Honey, where are you? Are you coming back for dinner? I’ve learned how to cook, now I can make lots of kinds of dishes for you.”

“Honey, it’s getting colder now. Make sure you take care of yourself over there. Did they prepare warm clothes for you?”

“Honey, are you busy? Could you please reply to my text, even just for a while.”

Aiken’s face fell as he signaled the backstage crew to handle the situation. However, when they tried to play a different backtrack that they had prepared, it was all Maia’s voices.

The hall was in chaos. Who would have thought that something like this would happen at the finale of The Quest? The live broadcast viewership immediately rose up to a few hundred millions of viewers as everyone wanted to tune in to the gossip!

“It’s no wonder Ms. Maia turned out like this. It was all Mr. Cedric’s fault!”

“Ms. Maia must have been through a lot to change from being a gentle person to an iron lady. It must have been an agonizing and difficult experience.”

“I’m conflicted now. Should I continue supporting the warring couple?”

“At first, I only felt bad for Mr. Cedric, but now I feel bad for both of them!”

Maia was a hundred percent sure that this was all done intentionally by someone with ill will. Even though she did not know who was behind this yet, she would make sure to hunt the culprit down and make him or her pay!

How dare the culprit bring up something that she had tried so hard to bury and expose it to the public. Only she knew how much those audio clips and videos hurt her.

Maia bit her lower lip to remain calm and collected as she signaled the crew to pass her a microphone.

She took the microphone from the staff and forced a smile to make herself seem unfazed by

Out of the blue, a man appeared on the stage and commented, "I'm surprised that my most prized possessions would be shown on the screen of The Quest."

The crowd gasped in surprise as they turned to the voice. They were shocked to see Cedric showing up on stage.

At the same time, the audio was cut as Baz had managed to take control of the situation. Maia looked at Cedric in surprise as she was still on her way to the stage.

Her grip tightened on the microphone as she wondered when he had arrived at the scene.

Cedric walked toward Aiken and stared at him. Aiken immediately stepped aside and invited Cedric to take over his place with a smile.

When Aiken turned around, he whispered softly to cheer on himself, "It's okay, don't be upset. He is the only one that could help Maia now. I'm a world famous actor, let's be generous!"

Chapter 249 They're From Her

Cedric stood in the center of the stage. He had a playful smile on his lips that would make anyone swoon over him. His voice continued to echo through the hall as he explained.

"I'm sure all of you have seen and heard the messages from my girl." Cedric looked at Maia as he emphasized the phrase 'my girl'.

His

gaze was so passionate and intense that Maia felt like there was no escape as she was lured to him like a sailor to a siren.

Maia frowned as she stood rooted to the spot. The words she had prepared to address the crowd were no longer needed.

“Regardless of her behavior and the way she acts, she belongs to me. I will give in to her anytime.” Cedric announced with pride in front of a crowd of several millions,

The crowd started chattering after Cedric’s confession.

“I’m amazed by how bravely Mr. Cedric is confessing his love!”

“Ms. Maia should just get back with him! After doing so much, even if she was a puppet, she would be touched too, right? Anyway, do you think this was Mr. Cedric’s doing? Just to get Ms. Maia to get back to him?”

“Please, only an idiot would do that. This was obviously an accident and Mr. Cedric just so happened to be here to save the day. What a hero!”

“Yeah! To be able to solve the crisis and confess, he really is something!”

“I sincerely wish that they would get back together and live happily ever after! They should forget the past and move on together!”

“I agree. They’re a match made in heaven!”

Aiken heard those comments from the audience as his face fell. However, he could not deny that Cedric’s actions were admirable.

Maia was surprised by his confession as she mumbled that he was crazy.

As the confession hyped up the crowd, everyone was cheering and shouting, “Get back. together!” in unison. Even the live chat room had similar messages written on the board.

Soon after, the show went back to its original schedule as the past episodes of The Quest were shown on screen again.

Cedric had no interest in the program at all. The main reason why he showed up was to help Maia. He walked toward her under the intense gaze of the audience and announced, "Now, we're ready to take our seats and witness the birth of a new girl group!"

1/2

He held Maia's wrist gently and led her down the stage to their seats as cheers of, "Get back together!" erupted once again.

The cheers finally subsided when Aiken came onto stage with the winners list.

Cedric stared at Maia as she remained silent until they got to their respective seats. She knew that for the sake of the program, she would have to leave the stage with him.

Once they were seated, she struggled out of his grip and whispered,

upid

you do this?"

Cedric could feel his chest tighten as he smiled sadly. She had suspected his intentions.

"Why would I do that?"

"Wouldn't you? The wedding video may have leaked from other channels, but only you would have those recordings as I sent them as messages to your phone."

“You’d doubt me just because of that?”

Maia shook her head. “That’s not all. I just don’t trust you anymore. Trust no longer exists between us.”

Maia’s words cut like a knife. This was exactly what he had once said to her in the past. She was just returning the favor.

The air felt stagnant. Everything around her seemed to have come to a halt. Maia could not hear a thing, not even the cheers from fans as she could only hear a ringing sound in her head.

“If this is what you think of me, so be it,” Cedric replied.

Maia shifted uncomfortably in her seat as she asked. “Why didn’t you try explaining yourself?” “I didn’t trust you in the past.”

“So, you’re just trying to experience how I felt? What it felt like to be wronged and accused of something you didn’t do?” Maia asked in disbelief.

“I wanted to experience your suffering.” His reply made Maia’s mouth fall open. Seconds later, she regained her composure and snapped at him angrily. “Are you out of your mind? Why would you want to go through all the suffering that I’ve experienced?”

Cedric looked Maia straight in her eyes. “I have to go through all of this to be able to understand your pain, and how much I had hurt you in the past!”

He could finally understand how much pain he had put her through. However, he was doing this willingly. In the past, Maia was the one blinded by love. Now, it was his turn.

Chapter 250 You’re the Sweetest

The finale came to an end as the audience's thundering applause echoed throughout the venue. When the camera moved toward Mala and Cedric, he immediately pulled her in for a kiss before she could react!

Maia widened her eyes in shock. The crowd instantly went wild.

Maia shoved Cedric hard in the chest. Her face was as red as a tomato. Noticing her reaction, he ended the kiss shortly after.

He smiled lovingly in front of the camera as Maia struggled to hold her anger in. Her hands tightened into fists by her sides.

She knew very well that she had to put up with him. If she had hit him instinctively, the finale tonight would just end up in disaster. She kept telling herself to wait till the end of the show. As she bit her lower lip to vent some of her anger, she heard him say, "It hurts. That's why I needed something sweet. And you're the sweetest thing."

Maia could not help but release her fists and looked at him in surprise. She frowned as she noticed the hurt lingering in his eyes.

"Now, I understand why you used to love sweet things."

Maia had to deal with a less-than-ideal reality. So, eating sweet food was her only refuge.

"Isn't it a bit too late?" Maia asked. She stood up in the midst of the noise and walked toward the backstage.

The finale of The Quest had officially ended. The crowd was leaving under the direction of the security personnel. It was a shame that the show did not manage to end perfectly.

Maia wanted to find out who the culprit was behind this. How could her wedding video footage and audio messages appear at the same time, at The Quest finale?

What had gone wrong with the technical team? How could they allow something like this to happen? She needed an explanation!

She honestly did not think that Cedric was responsible for something like this, but then again, people could change. However, before she could pin the blame on him, she needed evidence. Maia's heels clicked as she stomped toward the backstage. Suddenly, she came to a halt as she could feel his presence behind her. "The show has already ended, what else do you need from me?"

"There's no need to look for the technical team." Maia was surprised that he knew what she had wanted to do.

1/3

"This happened at the very end of the show. Shouldn't the technical team be held responsible for this?"

"The system was hacked, and they weren't prepared to handle it."

"What? How did you know this? You got Baz to look into it?" Maia frowned as she bombarded Cedric with questions.

Maia had not forgotten that Baz was exceptionally skilled with computers. Buck was no match for him as Baz had specialized training. Besides, how could Cedric's personal assistant not have something up his sleeve?

"Someone intentionally leaked the video and audio recordings and the culprit is also highly skilled," Cedric told her as they walked through a narrow pathway leading to the backstage.

"So, Baz has no leads?"

Cedric nodded.

“There are just too many who have a grudge against me. After The Quest started airing, it became such a popular show, beating so many others in terms of viewership. Furthermore, the finale today gained more than a few million live views.

“Starlight Entertainment gained so much profit as well as fame from the show. Almost everyone in the industry would have an agenda against me. Victor had previously tried to lay his hands on me, who’s to say that he wasn’t responsible for this too?

“Unfortunately, I don’t have any proof, this is all just speculation.”

Maia was frustrated. She was not willing to let go of the person who had caused her embarrassment in front of such a huge audience. She vowed to take her revenge.

Moments later, Buck appeared as he rushed toward Maia. “Ms. Maia, I’ve been looking everywhere for you. I just came over from the technical team. Their system was hacked. Before the show, the technician checked the equipment several times.

They didn’t expect that the hacker would be so skillful as to be able to change everything in such a short time.”

Maia nodded and added, “I’ve already heard of that.”

“You already knew? Did you meet someone from the technical team? Or are you actually a witch with magical powers?” Buck teased as he glanced briefly at Cedric.

Maia narrowed her eyes at Buck and said, “If I was a witch, I’d have already apprehended the culprit, instead of just standing here and fuming!”

If it were not for that hindrance, The Quest would have ended perfectly. Their new girl group would have had a perfect debut!

wedding footage and audio recordings that destroyed her perfect show and

made her the talk of town.

“Ms. Maia, I think it would be quite difficult to find the culprit. He’s just too good at covering

his tracks. We don’t even know where to start. You know that, right?” Buck commented as he stole a glance at the intimidating Cedric.

Mala just gave Buck another glare.