

## **N Destiny 2311**

### Chapter 2311

Shirley lifted a shirt and helped Zacharias to put it on. Given his injuries, he couldn't manage the buttons, so she stepped in to help. Naturally, this required her to stand close to him while buttoning his shirt. As she worked, she sensed his gaze lingering on her. Seizing a moment when her attention was diverted, he lightly pressed his lips against her forehead.

"Quit fooling around," she chided, looking annoyed. "I don't fool around when I'm with others, but I can't help myself when I'm with you," he replied playfully. He seemed utterly shameless whenever he was around her.

After buttoning his shirt, she helped him put on his vest and coat. Before leaving, she brought an extra jacket in case he got cold and needed it.

By the time they left the hospital, Roy had already arranged for more than ten bodyguards to be on standby. To maintain secrecy about Zacharias' whereabouts, all the surrounding lights were turned off as a tall, slender figure stepped out.

Shirley was about to get into Zacharias' car when he stopped her. "You can take the car behind mine."

"Why?" she asked.

"No reason." He gestured for Roy to sit beside him after that. She had just shut the car door and was about to leave when Freddie spoke. "Don't you know the reason, Miss Lloyd? Mr. Flintstone's trying to protect you."

Shirley's heart skipped a beat as she understood what Freddie meant. If the criminals managed to track Zacharias and targeted his car, it would be unsafe for her to stay with him. He was genuinely trying to protect her by having her take a different vehicle. She hurried to the next car, her chest tightening, hoping nothing terrible would happen again.

Once Zacharias' car drove out of the hospital grounds, another six cars trailed behind him. The line of cars seemed especially grand as they all made their way to his office. Eventually, they arrived safely at their destination.

She hopped out of her car and hurried over to Zacharias before entering the lobby with the rest of his bodyguards. Once they got into the building, he ordered her and a few other bodyguards to follow him while the rest of the men stayed downstairs.

The filming crew was also on standby. Zacharias had to record a 15-minute-long interview. Shirley watched as a staff member hurried over to fix his hair. He didn't need much more than that-his complexion seemed exceptionally healthy and radiant because of his fever.

Meanwhile, Shirley, Roy, and other bodyguards stood behind the cameras. They watched as Zacharias, who had just regained consciousness that morning, spoke energetically. He answered the interviewer's questions and exuded his usual charismatic aura.

Even though 15 minutes wasn't a long time, Zacharias' suit placed a lot of pressure on his shoulder injury. Shirley knew how bad this was for his wound, and she couldn't help but clench her fists when the interviewer bombarded him with questions. Her gaze was filled with worry as she looked at the man.

He could sense her concerned gaze on him from the corner of his eyes. He glanced over in her direction just for a few seconds. She noticed a slight frown forming on the corner of his lips.

The interviewer didn't know anything about what had happened to Zacharias. She didn't know that the man who had rushed for the interview was injured. She only received orders. to do the interview at the very last minute, and she wanted to get to know the man more, so she added a few extra questions that the public was curious about.

When Shirley saw how the interviewer kept pestering the man, she strode over to a spot where the interviewer could see her before she held her hand up and gestured for the interviewer to stop. The interviewer froze for a moment before she hastily asked a final question to wrap things up.

Zacharias pressed his brows together. The injury on his shoulder started hurting as he had been in the same seated position for too long. Right then, he felt a pair of slim but strong hands holding onto his left shoulder and helping him up. "Please send the interviewers off," he uttered while looking at Freddie.

Freddie immediately started to clear the space, and soon enough, Shirley and Zacharias were the only two people left in the office. Once they were left alone, he leaned most of his weight against her shoulder.

Chapter 2312

"It hurts, Zacharias uttered in a whiny tone. "Where does it hurt? Stand still, and let me look at your wound, Shirley replied, her voice laced with concern. The man stood upright as she reached over to remove his suit and vest. Then, she slowly unbuttoned his shirt.

His breath quickened, and he sounded increasingly breathless. He was simply too aroused by the woman's actions as she removed his clothes. "Seems like you're getting used to undressing me," he teased.

She glared at him and thought, Is he still in the mood to joke around? His injury probably isn't too severe, then! Nevertheless, as she examined the wounds on his back, fresh bloodstains seeped through his bandages, causing her to gasp at the sight. She could only imagine how much it must hurt but was also impressed by his pain tolerance.

"It looks like your wounds have reopened. We have to head back to get them treated in the hospital. You shouldn't wear such tight clothes for now," Shirley uttered.

"So, you expect me to walk out naked then?" Zacharias asked playfully.

"You'd freeze to death." She raised an eyebrow. The temperature was warm in the building, but the weather outside was around four to five degrees.

"You do care about me, huh, Miss Lloyd!" He chuckled.

"Well, it's my duty as a friend," Shirley replied flatly. Then, she handed him his coat. "Put this on until you get to the hospital!"

Zacharias took the coat over and carefully put it on, ensuring not to apply too much pressure on his wounds.

“The place is cleared. You may go down now, Mr. Flintstone.” Roy entered the room to give them an update.

With the rest of the man’s clothes in her hand, she walked out of the room with him. Again, she got into the car behind Zacharias’, and they returned to the hospital.

After arriving at the hospital, the doctors hurried over to tend to Zacharias’ wounds. Shirley stood by his side, but when she saw fresh blood oozing from his injuries, she turned her face away, unable to bear the sight. Surprisingly, the man didn’t make a sound, even as the doctor cleaned his wounds. She couldn’t help but think that he was indeed quite brave.

The doctor’s forehead glistened with beads of sweat as he finished tending to Zacharias wounds. “Mr. Flintstone, please try not to apply any more pressure on your wounds if possible,” the doctor urged.

“Alright. Thank you,” Zacharias replied with a nod.

The doctor wiped his sweat off before leaving the room. Shirley noticed a thin layer of sweat on Zacharias’ forehead, so she handed him a tissue. “Here. Wipe your sweat.”

“You can help me with that, he suggested.

“Isn’t your other arm perfectly fine and functional?” she retorted.

“Are you not my bodyguard?” he retorted.

She was left speechless, and she had no choice but to wipe his sweat off for him. As she did so, the man reached his hand out and held on to hers. “I’m so glad you were with me,” he uttered as he turned to look at her.

“It’s my job,” Shirley replied, pulling her hand away. “What are you planning to do after your three-month internship?” Zacharias asked curiously.

'I don't know. I don't have anything planned out yet," she replied. Her father hadn't passed her any missions so far.

Zacharias was somewhat concerned-he was worried that he wouldn't be able to see her anymore once she no longer had to show up for her job. "Why don't you stick around and work with me?' he offered. 'I can offer you high pay."

"I don't need the money," Shirley replied with a smile. "My mom's company has more than enough of that."

He wished he had another way to keep her around. Suddenly, he found himself hoping for time to slow down for the next three months.

Right then, Shirley's phone chimed with a new notification. She scrolled through her messages while standing by the bed, and her eyes lit up when she saw that it was a message from Cole.

'I heard Mr. Oswald mention your name. Are you taking care of someone in the hospital?' Cole asked. She felt her chest tightening after she read his message. She hadn't told Cole that she was interning with Zacharias.

Suddenly, a large hand reached out to snatch her phone.

Shirley panicked and instinctively reached out to grab the person's arm. However, she realized Zacharias had used his injured arm to reach for her phone.

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Unfortunately for Shirley, she happened to grab Zacharias' wound, but she quickly released her grip. However, by then, the man had already finished reading the message. She snatched her phone back and asserted, "Even if you're my boss, you're not allowed to peek at my messages."

"Ouch! That hurts." He winced, covering the spot where she had grabbed him.

Concerned, she immediately put down her phone and checked on him. A subtle smile played on his lips, suggesting he was more significant than she'd thought. After confirming that his arm was okay, she picked up her phone and headed outside.

"What if he finds out?"

"Cole won't misunderstand us," she replied calmly. The coolness of the alcohol on Zacharias' skin and her proximity ignited a warm desire in his heart. He asked, "Why?"

"Because we trust each other," she replied firmly. "You wouldn't understand."

Zacharias, already hurt, felt more wounded by Shirley's words. He remained silent and reached out to hold her hand. "No need to wipe me anymore."

She had only wiped him for a short while and wondered why he was acting strange. "You still need to cool your back down," she said.

"Your words have already cooled me down," he said gloomily, clearly sulking. Shirley had never seen a man in his late twenties behave so childishly. "Zacharias, don't mess around," she said, biting her lip in frustration.

#### Chapter 2314

Early the next morning, Josef persuaded Shirley to take some rest. She briefly considered entering the hospital to greet Zacharias, but given the complex circumstances, she opted to head home instead.

She went to Ava's house to rest. She called Willow, who was currently abroad, selecting her wedding dress. Willow and Jasper had already set out on a journey around the world. Shirley could finally relax knowing that Zacharias was under Josef's care, and she enjoyed a good night's sleep.

She stayed at Ava's house for three days and planned to return to Flintstone Residence once Zacharias was discharged from the hospital.

However, the man hadn't sent any messages during those three days. It wasn't until the fourth day, at 6.00AM, that he finally messaged her. "I'll be discharged today. Please come over."

She was surprised when she saw the time and wondered why he was up so early. So, she replied, 'I won't go over. I'll go directly to the Flintstone Residence.'

'No. You must come. Shirley hesitated, but before she could reply to Zacharias, he called her. She pondered why he was in such a hurry. She answered her phone and said, "Hello!"

"This is an order," he stated firmly. Seeing his urgency, she reluctantly agreed, "Alright, I'll come over immediately."

"I want to see you before 8.00AM," he demanded and hung up the phone. Shirley couldn't help but wonder about Zacharias' unwavering insistence. She mused, Why does he need to see me? If it's about moving things, his bodyguards could easily handle his luggage and accompany him.

However, after three days of rest, she also felt the need to return to work. She got in her car and drove toward the hospital.

When she arrived, everything was already packed and ready on his side. He was sitting in the lounge, his posture suggesting that he was waiting for someone.

Shirley's heart skipped a beat, and she hoped Zacharias wasn't waiting for her. She couldn't help but notice how much better he looked now, draped in a high-neck black woolen sweater that bestowed upon him an air of elegance and sensuality.

"You're here," he greeted with a nod. She reciprocated with a nod. Just then, Freddie entered and informed Zacharias, "They've arrived."

Zacharias then turned to her and said, "Come with me."

Shirley initially thought that when Freddie mentioned "they've arrived," he was referring to Zacharias' convoy. She followed Zacharias and stood by his side as they ascended the elevator, heading toward the hospital's back entrance.

After reaching the private exit, which had already been cleared, several cars were parked, accompanied by more than a dozen vigilant bodyguards. Some stood facing outward, and one, wearing an earpiece, guarded the car door with an air of confidence and competence. That man was none other than Cole.

As she stepped outside with Zacharias, he seized the moment to draw her closer. Before she could react, he had already taken her hand and guided her out.

At the same time, Cole's gaze lifted to welcome the arriving individuals, and his expression changed when he saw them. He saw Zacharias holding a girl's hand—none other than Shirley.

When she saw Cole, she instinctively attempted to free her hand from Zacharias' grip. Soon, a sudden panic coursed through her.

However, Cole's professionalism remained steadfast. As Zacharias approached him, Cole nodded respectfully and conveyed, "Mr. Oswald is waiting for you in the car."

Zacharias acknowledged with a smile, promptly entering the vehicle as Cole opened the door.

Shirley, still standing a couple of feet away from Cole, harbored a desire to explain herself. Yet, she was acutely aware of the gravity of the situation, which made it an inopportune moment for such a conversation.

Cole's gaze remained fixed on her, betraying his curiosity. However, his unwavering professionalism restrained him from displaying any emotional reactions. He offered a slight nod to her and redirected his attention to their surroundings.

Inside the car, the two most important people in the country, Zacharias and Ren, were engrossed in a discussion of crucial matters.

Shirley, being mindful of not disrupting Cole's work and not wanting to attract attention, chose to stand silently in a corner, quietly observing the unfolding events.

Shirley's gaze repeatedly darted toward Cole, and her thoughts were in turmoil. Has Zacharias asked me to come early to engineer misunderstandings with Cole? She dismissed this notion, considering it all to be mere coincidence. She couldn't understand why Zacharias would resort to such tactics, as she didn't see herself as being so important to him.

Just then, the car door opened, and Zacharias elegantly stepped out of the car. He nodded to Cole and exchanged a few words with Ren.

As Ren's motorcade began to depart, Cole cast a deep and affectionate look in Shirley's direction. She acknowledged him with a nod. A certain man closely observed this entire scene.

After Ren's convoy had departed, Zacharias' motorcade slowly approached. She turned to Zacharias and said, "I drove here. I won't be returning with the motorcade."

"Hand the car keys to someone else and come with me," he insisted. He didn't want to grant her any more leave. She had to remain by his side at all times during the coming period. She was resolute. "I'll drive back by myself."

Zacharias lowered his head and said in a hushed tone, "Unless you want Imogen's internship to be tarnished."

This statement momentarily silenced Shirley, and he appeared pleased. "Come with me," he ordered.

She turned to one of the team members and told him where her car was, asking him to drive it back for her. Zacharias' car door remained open as he waited for her to get in. The convoy set off on its way back to Flintstone Residence.

Throughout the journey, they exchanged no words, mindful that the other bodyguards could still overhear their conversations within the car. Shirley was also aware that her private matters with Zacharias were not suitable for public discussion.

After entering the Flintstone Residence, the bodyguards took Zacharias' luggage and documents inside and then left. The housekeeper was there to assist with his needs, such as sending his soiled clothes for dry cleaning. She accompanied him to the study with the documents.

Finally, alone in the study, she placed the documents on the desk and asked him, "There was nothing important, so why did you ask me to come to the hospital so early?"

Zacharias had clearly anticipated this question. He answered in a calm tone, "Isn't it perfectly normal to have my subordinates return to my side?"

Shirley needed to clarify, "Do you know that my great-uncle would find you? Did you also know that Cole would be there?"

He smirked and said, "Do you think I deliberately wanted to make Cole misunderstand us?"

She couldn't forget how he had deliberately held her hand. "Is it not?"

"I'm busy and don't have the time to make other men jealous," Zacharias denied, even though his actions suggested otherwise.

Shirley stared at him in silence, finding him mysterious beyond argument and calculation. 'I'll explain everything to Cole,' she said and wanted to leave.

"What will you explain? That I was the one you were taking care of in the hospital? That you were substituting for Imogen during her internship? Or why were we holding hands?" He suddenly fired a barrage of questions.

She stopped and turned to face him, "I'll explain my substitution for Imogen to him. He will believe me."

With a serious tone, Zacharias cautioned her, "Do you want to broadcast the news of your internship replacement to the whole world? You should know that you can escape unscathed, but if this information gets out, Imogen will never be able to work in a government position for the rest of her life."

Shirley visibly paled at this threat. "So, you can't explain all of this to Cole. You have to let him misunderstand. If you tell him, I'll cancel Imogen's government job qualification, and she'll never be employed," he threatened.

She shot him a glare, her frustration mounting. This man was exasperating; he wouldn't even let her clarify.

"You're ruthless," she muttered before storming out of the room.

#### Chapter 2316

Zacharias sighed softly, his actions not entirely clear in purpose, but he proceeded nevertheless. He intended to make Cole understand that he was actively pursuing Shirley. If Cole were willing to withdraw from this competition, it would be best for him.

She returned to her room and checked her phone, only to be met with disappointment when she found no message from Cole inquiring about the morning's events. This left her wondering if there had been a misunderstanding.

However, only Cole was privy to the truth of the matter. At noon, the housekeeper prepared lunch, though Shirley's lack of appetite kept her from descending to partake. Nonetheless, the servant was diligent and delivered a meal to her room. Gratefully, she accepted the tray and expressed her thanks.

"Don't mention it. This was an order from Mr. Flintstone himself."

Shirley was speechless. Dining on the second floor, she pondered the purpose of her current role. It seemed less like being a bodyguard and more like a companion to Zacharias, who spent his time idly at home.

In the afternoon, she went to the underground level, where the man had a training room for boxing. Today, she turned the punching bag into an image of Zacharias, unleashing her pent-up frustration with fast and precise punches and kicks.

After an intense series of strikes, she heard applause from the side and immediately turned into a defensive stance. Zacharias was standing there, watching her. Shirley, who was drenched in sweat, lowered her guard, removed her gloves, and walked out.

"I guess you were treating the punching bag as if it were me," he said with a smile.

"You guessed correctly," she replied, not denying her intentions. She had indeed wanted to take her frustration out on him.

He grinned. "Once my injury has fully healed, we can have a rematch. She felt a sense of relief after her release, realizing that harboring anger toward him was ultimately fruitless. She simply needed to endure for another three months, at which point she would regain her freedom. She could then choose to minimize her interactions with him.

"Mr. Flintstone, I apologize for my behavior this morning. I will strive to fulfill my professional responsibilities," Shirley said calmly, adopting a more professional attitude. However, Zacharias didn't seem pleased with this change.

Sweating and drained, she passed by him, heading for a much-needed shower.

"Shirley, am I truly that intolerable?" His voice carried a hint of frustration.

She turned to look at him, her eyes falling upon a flawless figure under the dim lighting. However, her heart was already spoken for, and no matter how impressive the man was, she couldn't accept his pursuit.

As she contemplated the idea of easily forsaking her feelings for someone she cared about in favor of falling in love with someone else, Shirley couldn't help but wonder what sort of person she might become. Would she be labeled as fickle, shifting affections so readily? Such a thought troubled her deeply, and she realized that she wouldn't even like herself if she allowed her heart to waver and her attention to be divided. She wanted to maintain a steadfast and serious commitment to the person she cared for.

With determination, she turned to him and said, "I must be honest, Zacharias. I do appreciate your qualities, but the person I have feelings for is Cole. I cannot entertain the pursuit of anyone else." After delivering this firm statement, she left. He was grappling with a sense of helplessness and gripped the railing behind him.

In the realm of love, favoritism was elusive. Love didn't play favorites, and even the strongest individuals had to endure the painful facets of love.

After taking a shower, Shirley made her way downstairs. Unexpectedly, as she passed through the living room, a familiar male voice resonated, "Pretty, did you miss me?"

She looked up and found Tony sitting on the couch, prompting her to smile and greet him, "Long time no see, Mr. Tony."

However, he was somewhat annoyed. Initially, he could have lived here and seen her every day, but Zacharias didn't allow it.

Shirley had just finished washing her hair, and her long, wet tresses cascaded over her shoulders. Her uniform somehow added to her allure. Just then, the elevator door nearby opened, revealing Zacharias, who emerged from the underground floor.

"Uncle Zacharias! I've come to see you." Tony, who was initially slouching, suddenly sat up straight while trying to appear more dignified.

Chapter 2317

It was clear that Tony was afraid of Zacharias. Zacharias' mood was far from pleasant, and he cast a stern look at Tony. "Go back!"

"I won't. I've brought all my luggage here, and I plan to stay for a few days to take care of you, just as per my grandpa's instructions."

In other words, it was Josef's instruction. Zacharias reluctantly nodded. "You can stay for three days."

"Yay!" Tony celebrated with a triumphant fist pump. Then, he shifted his gaze to Shirley, thrilled at the prospect of finally being able to spend time with his beloved goddess.

Zacharias glanced at her, who lowered her gaze, avoiding his eyes. His mood worsened, and he ascended the stairs.

Tony sensed his uncle's mood, and as soon as Zacharias left, he approached her and inquired, "Goddess, who upset him?"

Shirley didn't answer and merely shook her head.

"It can't be a woman, can it?" Tony speculated. "If Uncle Zacharias were upset about work, someone would have borne the brunt already. He wouldn't just bottle it up. It must be a woman who has hurt his heart."

While he was muttering, she had already moved to stand by the door. He noticed her departure and followed her. "Goddess, you're his bodyguard. So, you must know who he's been in contact with. Please tell me!"

Shirley replied calmly, "Mr. Tony, please don't disturb me while I'm working."

Tony pulled a chair over, sat in front of her, and held a cup of tea while thoroughly enjoying the view. "Goddess, just looking at you is a spiritual delight. I've decided to sit here and watch you work."

She was speechless but chose not to respond. She kept her gaze on the man, who couldn't withstand her sharp stare for long.

"Don't look at me like that; it's giving me the creeps," he said, moving the chair and opting to watch TV from the couch instead.

As snowflakes gently fell outside, Shirley's mood suddenly brightened. The sight of snowflakes falling brought her joy.

In the study, Zacharias stood by the floor-to-ceiling window, watching the snowflakes. He sighed as if he had come to a realization. He understood that love couldn't be forced, especially when it came to Shirley. Trying to seize it would only lead to adverse consequences,

After a day of snowfall, the outside had transformed into a beautiful wintry landscape. She opened the door to catch some snowflakes, and the landscape lights reflected in the snow, resembling beautiful ice crystals. She took out her phone and checked the time.

Not having received a message from Cole yet, Shirley took a deep breath and decided to send him a message.

‘Cole, please don’t misunderstand what happened this morning. Mr. Flintstone and I are just friends.’ She decided to keep her internship a secret, so she referred to her relationship with Zacharias as one of friendship.

After sending the message, she anxiously waited for Cole’s reply. Meanwhile, Cole had just finished his mission and returned to the dormitory. He picked up his phone and saw the message from Shirley. He fell into deep thought.

His work had been affected today because he couldn’t stop thinking about what he had witnessed in the morning. He had seen Shirley holding hands with Zacharias as they walked out of the hospital lobby. While she had quickly let go of Zacharias’ hand upon seeing him, he couldn’t help but notice the look in Zacharias’ eyes, which were filled with affection as Zacharias looked at her.

Cole was painfully aware that he couldn’t escape the harsh reality between him and Shirley. She deserved someone who could offer her a better life and future, something he couldn’t provide. Zacharias, on the other hand, could give her a happy and stable future.

With a sigh, Cole realized that she was wonderful, but he didn’t deserve her.

‘Shirley, I’ve decided to apply for a transfer from this position. I’m going back to the base to undertake other missions,’ Cole replied. He had just submitted the request to his superiors.

Chapter 2318

Shirley belonged here, while Cole did not. As soon as she heard the notification sound, she grabbed her phone to check. After seeing the message about his transfer request, she felt an immediate sense of urgency. She dialed his number directly.

Cole, who was holding his phone and suppressing his inner reluctance, heard the phone ring. He looked at the call from Shirley and ultimately hung up.

She kept calling him repeatedly, but he didn't answer her calls. She was truly anxious as she felt like her budding relationship with him was about to end.

Zacharias descended from the second floor and did not see her. He looked at Tony, who was still watching a movie, and asked, "Where is she?"

Tony pointed in the direction outside the door and said, "She's been outside for a while, and she's not afraid of the cold."

Zacharias furrowed his brows and quickly walked to the door. At that moment, she was turning to open the door, and they collided. The sudden hug took him aback. However, she took a step back, and he noticed tears on her face. He was surprised. "What happened?"

"Could you lend me a car? I need to go somewhere urgently." Shirley requested.

"Where to?" Zacharias gazed at her intently.

"To find someone," she replied and looked at the Ferrari outside. She said to Tony, "Mr. Tony, can you lend me your car for a while?"

"Where to? I'll go with you," Tony said enthusiastically. "Don't lend it to her," Zacharias ordered his nephew. He feared that she might get into trouble as her emotions seemed unstable.

Shirley wiped her eyes, and as her emotions surged again, she began to cry. "Mr. Tony, please take me to a place. Thank you," she implored.

Tony was stuck between Zacharias' stern expression and Shirley's plea. "All right. I'll take you," he said bravely and grabbed the car keys. "Let's go!"

Zacharias reminded him, "Drive safely."

After they left, Zacharias opened the door and observed her swift entry into the car. A sense of foreboding began to creep over him. What could be causing her anxiety? It must be Cole. Has something happened to him?

Meanwhile, Shirley and Tony embarked on their journey to the White House. When he learned of the destination, a shiver ran down his spine. "Goddess, why are we heading there? I wouldn't dare to drive inside. If they catch me, Uncle Zacharias will have to bail me out."

"Just park near the guard post over there," she instructed. "Goddess, why are you going to the White House? I'd be trembling if someone invited me there," he said. Shirley remained silent, her focus fixed on the passing time as she urged, "Hurry up."

"We're already moving quite fast. Any quicker, and we might just take off."

After reaching the White House, Tony parked the car and flatly refused to drive any further.

She had no choice but to open the door and rush into the snowy mist. Watching her, he sighed. She truly is a goddess. She just casually strolled into the White House. If only I could marry someone like her, that would be great.

She showed her ID at the guard post and received a call from the White House office, enabling her to gain entry. With determination, she proceeded to the bodyguards' dormitory and inquired about Cole's room, making her way there directly.

At this moment, Tony's phone rang. He quickly picked up, noticing it was Zacharias calling. "Hello, Uncle Zacharias."

"Where are you guys?"

"Goddess asked me to come to the White House. She's inside now, and I don't know who she's looking for."

“How has her mood been on the way?”

Tony recalled his observations during the journey and candidly stated, “She seems like she just went through a breakup.”

After hearing this, Zacharias immediately figured out the situation. It wasn't that something had happened to Cole, but rather, Cole had made a certain decision.

Chapter 2319

Cole must have seen Zacharias holding Shirley's hand that morning. Did Cole just pass up the chance to be with her?

At this moment, Shirley had already arrived at Cole's door. She took a deep breath and knocked on it.

Thinking it was someone coming for work-related matters, he got up to open the door. However, he didn't expect to find a slender, tall figure standing outside with snowflakes still clinging to her hair.

“Shirley! H-How did you come here?” He was surprised and taken aback.

“Why didn't you answer my calls?” Shirley asked through clenched teeth.

“I was packing my things, and my phone was on silent.” Cole gave an excuse. She entered his room and saw that he was indeed packing a suitcase. Her chest ached. “Are you planning to leave without even saying goodbye?”

Cole looked at Shirley with a pained expression. He didn't expect to hurt her like this, but now that she was here, he felt more at ease talking to her face-to-face before leaving. “Please sit down. Let's talk.”

Tears welled up in her eyes as she said, “Isn't this good enough for us? Why do you have to leave?”

“Shirley, I'm sorry, but I don't belong here. I have a more important mission to fulfill,” Cole said in a low voice.

She also understood that being a bodyguard was limiting him. He should have a better and brighter future. "Please don't go," she pleaded.

"Shirley, I've already made up my mind. Thank you for liking me. I will remember our friendship, and I wish you find a better person to love," Cole hinted. He knew there was already an outstanding and better man by her side.

"I have no relationship with Zacharias. This morning, it was him intentionally holding my hand that led to your misunderstanding. If there's a misunderstanding, I can explain it clearly," she hurriedly explained. She was truly upset, to the point of almost crying. At her age, she couldn't control her emotions, and she didn't know how to retain someone who was about to leave.

After listening to Shirley's words, Cole felt even more relieved. Knowing that Zacharias liked her and realizing his fortune in being liked by her, he held a glimmer of hope that she might transfer her affection to Zacharias, allowing him to depart with peace of mind. At the same time, she could have a brighter future. "Shirley, I'm not the right person for you. Zacharias is the one who suits you," he said calmly.

She was taken aback, and tears welled up in her eyes. He handed her the tissue. "Please don't cry. You deserve someone better. The country trained me to fulfill a greater mission. My life is destined to be transient. I've thought it through; I won't marry in this lifetime."

A single tear rolled down her cheek. At this moment, she felt helpless in the face of a love that was destined to end abruptly.

Cole picked up the small bear doll Shirley had given him and handed it back to her. "Take this back. Give it to someone you cherish."

She took it with tears in her eyes and looked up at him. His resolute and calm demeanor only made her feel more lost. "Cole, I will remember you wherever you go. Please take care of yourself." She took the small bear doll while suppressing her downcast emotions.

"You too. Live well and grow strong," Cole said to Shirley. He opened the door and looked at her, saying, "Shirley, go back."

She stood up reluctantly and took one last deep look at him. Then, she walked to the door. Cole resisted the urge to follow Shirley, saying, "Take care."

"You too." She nodded, turned around, and once again, tears streamed down her face as she bid farewell to this short-lived love.

Shirley walked out step by step while exuding an air of sorrow. At this moment, as snowflakes fell upon her on the twilight road, she noticed a convoy with hazard lights flashing not far away. A tall figure stepped out of one of the cars. He was holding an umbrella as he approached her.

Chapter 2320

When Shirley saw the person clearly, she was stunned-it was Zacharias. She gazed at the man beneath the umbrella, who was as calm as water, but his deep eyes revealed a sense of compassion and tenderness toward her.

The snowflakes were shielded by the umbrella, creating a small world exclusively for them. At that moment, the world seemed to grow quieter.

"Why did you come?" Shirley asked. Her face was disheveled as she wiped away the tears and turned her face aside to hide her tears from the man. However, Zacharias had already seen what he needed to see. "Did you go to see Cole?" he guessed.

"This is my private matter, and I don't want to discuss it," she refused to answer.

"Did he reject you?" he asked as he analyzed the situation from Cole's perspective. He knew that Cole would choose to let go wisely.

At this moment, Zacharias also comprehended that Cole's feelings for Shirley were sincere, which explained his decision to let go. This was a result of the realization that, due to his profession, Cole couldn't offer her a stable future. Zacharias empathized with Cole's choice, acknowledging that if their roles were reversed, he would make the same decision.

The willingness to endure temporary pain for the sake of securing a better future for her was a testament to the depth of his affection.

She bit her lip and remained silent, as this man had already guessed everything, and she had nothing more to say.

In the car not far away, Tony sat observing the pair under the umbrella. Though he couldn't eavesdrop on their conversation, he sensed an unusual level of care Zacharias was displaying toward Shirley. Zacharias had left the residence to pick her up and shield her from the snow with an umbrella, privileges not typically afforded to ordinary bodyguards.

Tony suddenly realized why Zacharias had driven him away the last time he expressed his desire to make Shirley his girlfriend. This discovery left Tony feeling somewhat resentful. He thought, Hmph! So, it seems that Uncle Zacharias has been interested in this female bodyguard all along.

He continued to observe the romantic scene under the umbrella. He couldn't help but feel a sense of annoyance at how the situation was unfolding. It suddenly dawned on him that Shirley might become his aunt in the future, and this idea filled him with a strange mix of emotions. It was as if something valuable to him was slipping away.

As a result of the inner turmoil she felt, Shirley's body and spirit turned cold, causing her to shiver. She embraced her arms, realizing that she had worn a uniform when she ventured out this time, and only now did she sense the cold.

"Get in the car," Zacharias urged. She didn't want to ride in his car. She pointed toward Tony's car and said, "I'll ride in Mr. Tony's car." Without waiting for the man to respond, she hurried into the snow and ran toward Tony's car.

Tony, who had been silently envious, suddenly felt elated, realizing that his goddess had chosen him. He alighted from the car, walked around the front, and opened the passenger door for her, saying, "Goddess, please get in."

Shirley expressed her gratitude and promptly took the front seat. He immediately got into the car, casting a glance at Zacharias, who remained in the snow and firmly pressed the gas pedal. The car surged forward.

Roy approached and said, "Mr. Flintstone, please get into the car. It's not good for your health to stay out in the cold."

Zacharias nodded and turned to walk toward his car.

At the first red light they reached, Tony noticed a noticeable change in Shirley's mood. She appeared to be wrapped in a heavy shroud of melancholy, and her thoughts seemed far removed from their surroundings. Concerned, he couldn't help but inquire, "Goddess, what's troubling you? Who has caused you this distress?"