

Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 101 - Tips

“I suddenly saw your favorite polenta. I wanted to pay for it, but the storekeeper gave it to me for free.” Joseph showed Ashley what he had just gotten and continued, “You told me to be frugal, and I listened. I thought it was worth it, so I took it without second thought. Just so you know, I didn’t force her to give this to me.” When he was done talking, he gazed at Ashley, whose eyebrows were furrowed, and waited for her praise.

Ironically, she felt upset as she looked at the proud look on Joseph’s face. She took a deep breath and asked, “When you went for shopping, what was your expression?”

“The usual. Though I may add, I looked gentler than I always did. That’s what you taught me,” Joseph answered truthfully. He did not even forget to emphasize how good of a teacher Ashley was.

In all honesty, Joseph was innocent. He seemed to be at the peak of his first love and was always in a good mood. He followed his girlfriend’s instructions obediently, learned to be frugal, became more approachable, and most importantly, pleased Ashley in every way he could. Compared before, he became less aloof. Because of his incomparably handsome face, coupled with his outstanding temperament, it was only normal for Joseph to be popular with people.

As Ashley gazed at Joseph, who was clearly confused and clueless, she was at a loss for words. ‘Wasn’t he a shrewd man?’ She suddenly felt that she had done something wrong. What could it be? She only taught him how to be righteous. Perhaps it changed when Joseph put it into practice?

Ashley thought for a moment. “First of all, you have to pay if you want something. You just can’t take other people’s things, especially those of other women. Second, you have to be easy-going exclusively to me in the future. Lastly, only by remembering these two things can you be a good boyfriend. Do you understand?” she said in the most serious tone she could. She believed that Joseph would know what was wrong with himself and stopped pretending to be innocent once she said her straightforward explanation. Did he not know that she was the innocent one between them?

To Ashley's surprise, he suddenly burst into laughter. Joseph suddenly realized that she was jealous. At the thought of it, he could not help but smile brightly.

Seeing his suggestive laughter and eyes, Ashley felt embarrassed. She spoke her true thoughts without thinking! Now, he must have figured out that she was jealous. Otherwise, why did he have that complacent look on his face? 'I must be influenced by his stupidity to just blurt out my feelings.'

There was nothing else she could do but head back indignantly to the villa while Joseph's gleaming eyes were on her.

But before she could take a few steps, Joseph pulled her back. As a result, she stumbled to his lean, strong arms. "As a good boyfriend, I will listen to what my girlfriend says," he whispered sincerely into her ear.

Ashley no longer felt embarrassed because of this. She lifted her gaze and answered in a dream-like voice, "Yes. You should do what I say, honey."

Gazing at his docile expression, she wanted to touch his head the same way he did to her. However, he was holding her tightly. She could not stand on tiptoe and could only reiterate, "My man can only be good to me. That would show if you're a real man or not. You have no choice but to do it." At that very moment, she remembered a popular saying on the Internet: 'A real man only warms the heart of his beloved and is cold towards others. If a man is nice to all women, he is nothing but a philanderer.'

'I've always been nice to you, and my promises are not just empty words. Time will tell that everything I've said is true,' Joseph thought while looking affectionately into Ashley's bright eyes. "Yes madam," he said with a faint smile.

His gaze shifted from his girlfriend's pretty face to her bright red lips. He felt the urge to kiss her passionately right then and there. However, Ashley seemed to have sensed what he wanted to do, so she raised her head and said with a beaming smile, "Honey, carry me on your back, please. I don't want to walk anymore."

Since his cunning plan had been thwarted, Joseph could only give her a peck on her luscious lips. Then, he bent down in front of her and said, "Hop in, my queen. I'll carry you home."

Ashley took the bags from his hand at once and climbed on his tall, strong back. She figured that Joseph was keen on having intimate contact with her. She was lucky that she was able to dodge his attempt before it happened, or else she would have been kissed on the street again. Until now, she could not stand being kissed in public. Every time it happened, her heart would wildly pound in her chest.

It took them about 20 minutes to reach the villa. Ashley was finally able to touch the top of Joseph's head as she wished. Then, she leaned on his broad shoulders and murmured to herself, "Why are handsome men so popular here? I'm pretty, am I not? Why does no one pay attention to me?" She suddenly felt jealous of Joseph's irresistible charm for no reason at all.

It took them about 20 minutes to reach the villa. Ashley was finally able to touch the top of Joseph's head as she wished. Then, she leaned on his broad shoulders and murmured to herself, "Why are handsome men so popular here? I'm pretty, am I not? Why does no one pay attention to me?" She suddenly felt jealous of Joseph's irresistible charm for no reason at all.

Joseph snorted upon hearing her words. 'How dare those vile men approach my girlfriend?'

Little did Ashley know, he frightened those who were attracted to her with his sharp and terrifying gaze. Although the trick was not new, it was very useful. Thanks to his intimidating eyes, he was able to drive away every single one of those strangers, even though they were not a threat to him. But Joseph never showed his capricious side to Ashley.

Ashley felt dejected for a while. She thought that the reason for this was Joseph was too handsome to ignore. Fortunately, her sad feeling did not go on for a long time. Besides, he promised her that he would not deceive others with his innocent face again.

She leaned against Joseph's toned back along the way. Then, she took out the food in her hand and ate with him as they laughed and talked.

The moonlight cast a faint line on them, lengthening their figures. At the same time, it made everything look so harmonious and pleasant. This plain yet

beautiful memory etched in Ashley and Joseph's minds as they traversed this sweet journey.

After a tiresome walk, they could finally take a rest. But before Ashley had a chance to change her shoes, Joseph asked her for a deep k!ss.

He could still remember the cunning look in her eyes before she climbed on his back. Now, Ashley seemed satisfied with the success of her plan. He figured that it was her way of escaping from being k!ssed publicly. However, she must have forgotten that Joseph could be cunning as well. They had just returned to the place where nobody else was around. He could finally k!ss her as he wished.

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As Joseph gazed at Ashley, who was trying to please him with pleading eyes, he suddenly remembered the lovely look on her face when she revealed that she was, in fact, jealous. At the thought of this, his l!ps curled into an inexplicable smile.

Before Ashley could take a step back, Joseph had already stretched out his long arms kept her in his tight embrace. Without warning, he bent over and k!ssed her.

“Be... hmm... gentle,” Ashley stammered in between breaths. For some reason, she felt that Joseph was a little wild and strange tonight. They k!ssed fervently for a while. Then, he bit her l!ps gently, which in turn became numb with pleasure.

Hearing her coquettish m0ans, he became gentler and more passionate. He could not stop k!ssing her as though he was eating scrumptious food.

‘Do you know how happy I am whenever I see you get jealous? You’re so cute when you’re bossy! Also, do you know that I can’t control myself when you whisper and laugh in my ears? Everything about you seems like a fatal attraction for me. I can’t stand it anymore. Tonight, I will completely have you.’ Joseph looked at Ashley, whose eyes were closed as she enjoyed the k!ss with affection.

His kiss, which was gentle at first, grew deeper by the minute. Ashley could not help but indulge in it. She subconsciously wrapped her arms around Joseph's neck and kissed back passionately. It was as though she were intoxicated and unable to control herself.

As their hearts got closer to each other, everything seemed to explode all at once.

Joseph had just received her enthusiastic and anticipated response. In an instant, his wildness ignited, and his tongue madly swept through her mouth, making Ashley weak in his arms.

Without breaking the long and fervent kiss, he carried her to his bedroom upstairs. Only then did she realize that she was being pressed on the soft cushion. Meanwhile, he seemed dissatisfied with a simple kiss. With his body on top of hers, he began to circle her fair neck to her clavicle with his mouth. He then buried his head in the pit of her neck and got inebriated by her womanly smell. He gently nibbled her delicate clavicle while his hands fumbled on her body. His warm touch made Ashley tremble with excitement.

"May I?" Joseph asked in a hoarse voice while looking at her as if in a daze.

Ashley noticed the enthusiasm in his eyes and body. She was deeply touched that even though he was drowning in desire, he did not forget to ask for her permission at the last second. It showed how much he respected her as the woman he loved.

To his surprise, Ashley shyly shook her head in refusal. It's not that she did not want to surrender herself to him but because she just had her period. She did not notice it until she went to the bathroom a while ago.

Joseph could not help but frown as he saw her, whose face was beet red, shake her head in response. For a second, she saw a hint of displeasure in his eyes. "I... I'm on my period," she whispered embarrassingly.

His displeasure instantly turned into delight. It turned out that she was willing to make love with him if only she was not on her period. Nevertheless, he was petrified on the spot. Not being able to do what he wanted, especially when he was ready, irked him.

Ashley could not help but chuckle as she looked at his sullen expression. Although he seemed frustrated, he looked so adorable.

At first, she thought that once Joseph calmed himself down, he would take the initiative to let her go and fall asleep like he did the other night. However, it seemed that she underestimated his sexual desire. After a moment of silence, he started to kiss her again, but this time, even deeper.

For nearly thirty years, Joseph had been looking forward to satisfying his sexual desire. Finally, he was holding his beloved in his arms and enjoying their flirtations as much as he could. Before Ashley could recover her energy, she suddenly felt her body sink into the cold and heat alternately.

Feeling Joseph's fiery desire and stimulation, her mind went blank. Before she knew, she was trembling and out of breath.

It was not until Joseph saw the traces of their steamy moment on her voluptuous body did he stop.

Ashley felt as if she had just been through a great ordeal. She slowly opened her eyes and saw Joseph's perfect figure and his tantalizing eyes staring at her. Her charming face flushed in embarrassment. Only then was she able to reflect on the passionate scene they just had. She wanted to cover her body with the quilt at the memory of it.

Figuring out what she wanted to do, Joseph looked down on her body and held her slender waist. "Honey, why are you always so shy? It seems that you need to practice more," he whispered seductively into her ear.

At that moment, lust flashed on Ashley's beautiful face. For Joseph, who had not had her sweet taste for a long time, it felt as though it was a fatal temptation. 'How could she be so beautiful?' he marveled in his heart as he teased her again.

The sudden warmth of Alice's lady parts made her feel weak and powerless. Meanwhile, Joseph's hard manhood pressed against the upper part of her thigh. Once again, she could not resist him as she fell back into his enchantment.

Only after several rounds of flirting did she realize that Joseph was extremely amorous at the moment. He seemed like a hungry wolf who could not wait to

devour his prey whole. Fortunately, their pants were still on, or else she would have succumbed to him already.

Sadly, Joseph could not have sex with his beautiful girlfriend. Nevertheless, he did not stop their sensual conquests. After all, he could not do anything but curse her damn period for arriving at the most inconvenient time.

Even though it was uncomfortable and felt like torture, he was still delighted. Ashley felt the same way. In fact, she could not help but chuckle every time he rushed into the bathroom after being amorous with her. Seeing him reap the consequence of flirting with her every night was hilarious.

About five or six days later, Joseph received the news saying that something had happened at the gang headquarters in the United States. He did not want to leave his girlfriend alone in a foreign country, so he decided to take her with him. Sadly, their sweet love journey had to come to an end.

Truth be told, Joseph never told Ashley of his shady background. Well, he did not want her to get involved in this, so what was the point? Not only that, but he was also afraid she would look at him differently. He was just doing this in order to keep her mind and life pure and untainted.

On the way to the United States, Ashley sensed a change in Joseph's mood. The look of pleasure in his eyes these past few days had been replaced by solemnity. Something wrong must have happened there.

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Since Joseph did not want to tell her, Ashley did not dare to ask about it. After all, she believed that he could handle everything well. What she needed to do was stay by his side and support him in silence.

Back when Joseph initially learned that an accident occurred and he had to go to the United States urgently, he gave her two choices. She could either go home on her own or go with him to the United States. Of course, she chose the latter without a second thought. She figured out that the reason why he made her choose was for the sake of her safety. After all, Mexico was a troubled country, and it might not be safe for a foreign woman to stay there alone. Judging from Joseph's somber expression, she knew at a glance that what he had to deal with was of great importance.

The reason Ashley wanted to stay with him, instead of being comfortable at home, was that she wanted to see him safe and sound with her own eyes. For some reason, she had an intuition that this trip was unusual. The restlessness in her heart disturbed her from time to time, and she was sure that she would only calm down once everything had been resolved.

On the way, Joseph and Ashley talked as if nothing had happened.

The latter noticed that Joseph was trying to conceal his emotions, so she asked softly, "Can you tell me anything about your time in America?"

She knew about it when she checked his background so that they could talk about the contract. She found out that he lived in the United States for a long time. Besides, he had just talked about tourist attractions there. Ashley, who was a travel enthusiast, was curious about how he lived abroad.

She was looking at Joseph expectantly, so he answered slowly, "I went to America when I was 8. I studied and lived there for many years and returned home when I was 21. You probably know the rest."

His answers were simple, but Ashley felt that that was not all. She felt that he was hiding something, but she did not know why. At the thought of this, she curiously asked again, "Did anything interesting happen when you were there for so many years? Tell me."

"I don't think so. The most interesting thing that had happened in my life was meeting you," Joseph replied. His tone, which was calm yet somber, turned light at the mention of her. Then, he looked straight ahead and seemed to be engrossed in deep thought.

He stayed in America for many years alone. Although it had become a familiar place to him, it remained strange and foreign. Well, except for his constant growth, nothing interesting had indeed happened to him while he was there.

However, there was one vague memory in his mind when he first arrived in the US. He was only 8 years old at that time and had just been diagnosed with mild autism. In his first two years there, he had a great and loving relationship with one of his grandfather's best friends. Unfortunately, the man got into an accident, which led to his untimely demise. As a result, the old man's descendants drove young Joseph away and sent him to a local host family.

Fortunately, Joseph was smart and independent since he was a child. He did not even tell Leonard, who was in Ob.raria that time, that he had been driven away. There was no need for him to say it anyway. Besides, he was the one who managed his own finances when his grandfather sent him his allowances. Because of that, that unfriendly family who drove him away could not take advantage of him. As a result, he did not live a hard life when he left.

Because of the help of various kinds of people in different social statuses, Joseph realized the ugliness of the humanity. Everything evolves on money, and the wealthiest man is the king. At the age of ten, Joseph met a very important person in his life, who contributed a lot to his current dark background.

One rainy night, as he was walking in the dark alley towards the house of his host family, he saw a tall, mysterious man lying in the pool of his own bl00d. The man was gasping for breath and calling for help but could only do so under his breath. Seeing it, Joseph approached the man slowly. The place was so dark that he could only see that the right part of the man's c.hest and left leg were bleeding profusely. He also saw in the man's murderous eyes were a glint of desperation to survive.

At that moment, Joseph seemed to see his own shadow from the person. Arrogance, indifference, and an inexplicable sense of familiarity arose in the bottom of his heart. Because of those feelings, he did not leave the man once their hands were clasped together. Instead, he helped the man up and supported him on his shoulders. Side-by-side, he led the injured man to a bas.ement in the alley in front of them.

The rain slowly washed away the trail of bl00d. The figure of the slender young man and the injured man disappeared in the night.

It turned out that the man had been shot in his c.hest and leg. Joseph hurriedly ran to the nearest pharmacy and bought hemostatic and anti-inflammatory drugs, and paink!!lers. When he returned, the man had already taken out the two bullets by himself. Joseph proceeded on cleaning, treating, and bandaging the wounds. There was a deafening silence between them as he tended the man.

Although it was dark, a faint light shone in the bas.ement. Thanks to this dim light, Joseph was able to see the wounded man's face. He was a middle-aged man and had the features of an Asian-American. He had a fair complexion, and his eyes were black. Except for a faint scar on his face, he looked stern

and powerful but arrogant. Judging from his injuries, someone must have wanted him dead.

The man was extremely pale and must be silently enduring the pain. Joseph admired his willpower. Even so, he did not say a word. After all, they had just met by chance, and he was only providing aid.

It was after midnight when Joseph finished treating the man's wounds. By that time, his host family had already closed the door. Just as he was about to make a makeshift bed on the ground, the man spoke. A hoarse but cold voice sounded in the narrow basement. "Hello. My name is William Ramirez."

"Joseph Marshall," Joseph replied indifferently.

William sat down weakly near Joseph. With his sharp eyes, he gazed at the young man who was a few feet away from him. For a moment, he stared at the young man's dark, cold eyes, and the admiration in his heart emerged. 'Why would it not? This young man did not fear me despite seeing me bloody on the cold, hard ground. This man would definitely become a successful person in the future.'

"Thank you for saving my life," William sincerely said while looking at Joseph.

"You're welcome. You're just lucky I passed by," Joseph replied calmly.

"Are you from Ob.raria? My mother is from Ob.raria. 'Ramirez' is her maiden name," William said in broken Ob.rarian. When he spoke, his tone became relatively soft, unlike his demeanor.

Joseph's cold appearance and calm demeanor gave William a familiar vibe. He had a hunch that the outstanding young man who helped him was the person his mother had described when he was young. Thanks to Joseph's willingness to help, William opened up.

Hearing the injured man's story, the coldness in Joseph's demeanor somehow subsided. "Yes," he replied softly. He was happy that he finally heard someone speak his native language after two years. He decided to converse with the man, which in turn gave him a sense of belongingness.

The two chatted for a while and fell asleep not long after.

Joseph did not dare to ask about the man's background. He did not even ask when the man would leave. William did not reveal any information about himself anyway.

Joseph took care of the man in the humble and dark basement for about five or six days. They eventually became familiar with each other and formed an unlikely friendship.

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In the beginning William only had a general understanding of Joseph's life. However, the more time he spent with him, the more certain he became that Joseph wasn't such a simple young man. As time went by, he began to appreciate Joseph's abilities and decided he deserved to learn more. When this proposal was put forth to Joseph, he thought it over and finally nodded his head in agreement.

During this period of time, Joseph too had observed William. He had already worked out that William wasn't a simple man. He was revered among the people. If he accepted this man's proposal, he was bound to be transformed into an extraordinary person. This was once in a lifetime opportunity. Joseph, who had already glimpsed the ugliness of this world, thought it was best to improve himself.

From then on, Joseph's admiration for William expanded. With this man's guidance, a drastic change could be seen in Joseph's life.

When everything was going smoothly, William disappeared from Joseph's life for almost a month. To Joseph's relief, William showed up. However, there was a change in his master's demeanor. A murderous light was present in his eyes. He told Joseph he had an important matter to discuss. He wanted to send Joseph to a special training agency.

Joseph agreed instantly. He began a new life. During the day, he was indulged in theoretical knowledge such as culture and language. And at night, he underwent long hours of training, prepared to excel in fighting skills. High-efficiency training was imparted here. It was a hundred times more rigorous than what was taught outside. Joseph hardly had time for any recreational activities. He was toiling all the time. In spite of the difficulty, he managed to get excellent grades. After five years of rigorous hard work, he was done.

Before Joseph had gone to the training agency, William made it clear he could return and become the leader of the Dragon Gang in the United States. If Joseph accepted William's skills after finishing his study, he would succeed William as the leader of the Dragon Gang.

When Joseph stepped into the outside, he was a changed man. He was tall, strong, and stripped of his childishness. He stared at the world with cold eyes. He harbored a murderous heart.

On his return, William regarded his prodigy with satisfaction. Joseph was now ready to take the thorny road.

"As I expected, you have finished your training in half the time it would have taken a normal student to do. My next step will be to imbue you with all my skills." He gave a deep sigh of contentment and patted Joseph who was now as tall as him. His eyes twinkled with pride.

After five years of diligent work, Joseph was going to start a brand new life. For the next three years, he continued to show astonishing talent and obtained his doctorate in MBO from a top American business university. And in the process, he was also titled as the youngest man in the world to receive this prestigious degree. William, on the other hand, continued to pass on his skills and learnings to Joseph. He was constantly making valuable connections while at the same time clearing out the external enemies and reorganizing the internal affairs. William's desire was to provide Joseph with a relatively stable gang.

He wanted Joseph to be accepted by the gang. To make this job easier, he took Joseph as his adopted son as soon as he turned sixteen. As expected, this slowly established Joseph's position in the gang. He was given the code name Jason.

When the gang members learned Jason could be the Dragon Gang's heir, they felt a pang of jealousy. Most of them made their aversion to him evident, provoking him openly. Some felt envy to a stronger degree and wished to do away with him. As a consequence, Joseph had been constantly threatened and chased by people at a very tender age. William was aware of this but he made no attempts to get involved in this brawl. He knew all about Joseph's capabilities and knew his help wasn't needed. As for those who overestimated

their own abilities, they could be used as stepping stones for Joseph to establish his name, Jason, in the criminal underworld.

As time went on, Joseph wasn't provoked just by his gang members but also by outsiders. His movements were deft and quick. He managed to wipe them out one by one. His years of training were finally being put into practice. Gradually, his ruthlessness became known to everyone. People knew if they messed with him, they wouldn't go unpunished.

In a matter of few years, a shiver would run down people's spines at the mention of the word Jason.

During one of their talks, Joseph gave William his word, promising he would take over the Dragon Gang on his twentieth birthday. By then, they would have known each other for ten years. Unfortunately, before William could peacefully retire and hand everything over to his heir, internal strife erupted in the Dragon Gang. One of the originals, who had initially fought for power, disclosed William's whereabouts. It wasn't long before the Mafia, the Dragon Gang's strongest opponent, had William assassinated.

When this news reached Joseph, he felt unbearable agony. He knew he couldn't sit idle and cry. He had to take action. Driven by sadness and rage, he quickly reorganized the internal affairs and eliminated the chief culprit who had betrayed William by giving away his whereabouts. Then he set forth to attack the Mafia. He did this in repeated succession and finally, the Mafia was no longer a big name. They were defeated.

Joseph had a few more months to wait before he turned twenty. However, when the time came, he took up the job he had promised. His ruthlessness and invincibility were well known in the criminal underworld. Even the government knew his name. His code name, Jason, instilled the same fear that the Grim Reaper would instill. During the two years when Joseph was the leader, the Dragon Gang began to develop rapidly. It also brought a new trend, whitewashing its history in the process. Unlike most gangs, they never partook in drug dealing, prostitution, robbery, and other acts that went against morals. Instead, Joseph was busy establishing companies and markets, with the name Dragon Gang, all over the United States. His extraordinary business skills made this an easy task for him. Six or seven years had passed and these companies were growing rapidly and gaining fame.

After a series of reorganizations and reforms, the Dragon Gang, which used to be the leader of the gangs, became what can be only described as invincible.

One strange thing about the group was that no one had seen Jason. His name was popular, but his face was still a mystery to many. Jason's unique style of doing things made it next to impossible for the other gang members and the government to get a hold of him.

When Joseph was twenty-one, an emergency called him back home. Due to Leonard's illness, he was compelled to take over the Empire Group. When he took up business, it became evident his success wasn't limited to the underground world. He soon became the world-famous businessman. However, he didn't neglect his gang. While he worked as a businessman, he continued to increase the power of the Dragon Gang. It expanded and reached every country in the world. The people who had been trained by William were the trusted subordinates who were in charge of the general affairs. Every time a major event showed up, it was quickly reported to Joseph. He was the sole person who could take decisions.

Now, after nearly seven years of luck, things were starting to get chaotic. Some dishonest gangs had emerged with the aim to destroy the Dragon Gang. This time, four drug dealers in Mexico had dared to mess with Ashley. Joseph gave the perpetrators the punishment he thought they deserved. After years of recuperation, the Mafia had returned for revenge. They schemed with some large and small gangs in Mexico, trying to provoke the Dragon Gang. As time ticked by, the situation began to get more dire. Jason, the leader of the Dragon Gang, was their target and they would do anything to lure him out.

The urgency and seriousness of the situation lay in the fact that his opponents had already obtained his whereabouts after careful investigation. Joseph's biggest concern was that if he delayed in getting rid of his opponents, the safety of the people close to him could be threatened. After all, this was a common method used by merciless gangsters.

Ashley was the only ray of sunshine in his life. He had spent gloomy years before he found her. He wouldn't let anyone lay a finger on her.

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Joseph was scared that if Ashley knew something about the fact, it would be much more harmful. At the very same point, he was terrified that he would repeat the same mistake as his adoptive father did. Unfortunately, William, who had fallen in love with a woman when he was young, got abandoned

determinedly under family and mental strain after she uncovered his real nature. That was why he didn't dare to tell Ashley his true identity even when he had no choice but to pull her into danger.

He couldn't bear the thought of losing his true love, Ashley. He had no choice but to tie her to his side because he loved her. He tried to conceal his true identity from her because the affection was too deep for him.

When Ashley realized Joseph was gazing at her inquisitively, a glimpse of happiness showed on her face. She didn't want to waste the entire day listening to condescending sweet words. Instead, she was pleased with a few genuine confessions. As a result, she can't help but smile when Joseph told her that "The most interesting thing that had happened in my life was meeting you." She was overjoyed that those kind of words came from an indifferent guy like Joseph.

When Ashley saw Joseph's attractive features had dimmed out of nowhere, she couldn't help but be anxious. Still, she managed to cover her worries with her smile.

Ashley softly patted Joseph's hand with her own. "You should not be concerned. I am certain in your capacity to deal with any situation."

Ashley didn't ask any more questions even though he didn't aspire to tell her what had happened. She just believed he had his own preparedness or formidable reasons.

Joseph's fear faded when he heard her honey's compassionate and encouraging words. He reached out one hand to caress Ashley's head with a glowing smile on his face and replied, "You don't have to be concerned. I'm assured that I'll be able to handle it."

"That's great!" "No matter what happens, I will be with you and support you wholeheartedly," Ashley said softly, smiling and nodding completely, as she saw that Joseph had retrieved his confidence.

Joseph couldn't contain his happiness when he heard this. This commitment was the most important thing to him that he always desired. When she declared her undying love for him, Joseph felt compelled to tell her all. However, he reasoned that it would be less risky if she knew less about it, so he decided to keep it gently hidden from her lest it disturb her quiet life.

“Thank you so much, Ashley.” Looking at Ashley, Joseph expressed his gratitude from the depths of his heart after a short pause.

There was still an overwhelming amount of excitement when two people in love were together, no matter how dull or complicated things were. Joseph and Ashley let go of all the burdens after their individual expressions of sentiment and conversed peacefully on the way.

The two arrived at an expensive house in America under the name of Joseph in the night. After arranging everything for Ashley and notifying her not to go out too much, Joseph left for business.

Ashley had not predicted Joseph’s hours disappearance. She didn’t know Joseph had arrived until she recognized the familiar and comfortable embraces of him on the cold midnight.

Joseph didn’t do anything particularly exceptional overnight. He just hugged Ashley in his arms and fell deeply asleep, as they had for the first three days of their relationship. She figured he was incredibly exhausted and went to sleep quickly after feeling his heavy breathing behind her, so she kept quiet and behaved as his “pillow”.

Since Joseph always went out early and returned late for the next two or three days, the time they spent getting along with each other swiftly became limited. On the other hand, Ashley woke up early every day just to prepare breakfast for Joseph, and no matter how late it was, Joseph would return to sleep with her. For the two of them, this was a shared experience. They could only get a good night’s rest if they could sense each other’s warmth.

Joseph’s agenda was really packed in the days following their return to the United States. That night, he directly went to inquire about the gang’s recent significant events and meaningful increase, as well as the development of other large teams who were involved in the incident. Joseph started to prepare and administer a response procedure on the second day after acquiring a clear perception of them.

Joseph and his gang had propelled a solid counter-offensive in the last two days. He first sent his forces to wreak plunder on the other gangs’ main operating bases, if not wholly destroy them. The small teams that took part in

the stimulus were quickly dealt with and annexed. Finally, in his gang's boss's name, he conveyed an invitation to the notable gangs for a head meeting.

He expected ideal outcomes from short combat, as well as the deterrence of other groups. He decided to let everyone know that he had arrived. So, Joseph had dedicated his entire heart and soul to planning and preparing the enemy's elimination for the preceding three or four days.

Joseph's gang did a lot of damage to the Mafia, as it also surrendered and was betrayed by other gangs. These results showed that Joseph's strategy had worked out as anticipated in a short period of time. Small gangs with Mafia links were almost fully extinguished. Since they were frightened of Joseph, some of the other major units refused to attend the conference. Finally, they decided to stay away from the Mafia and return to their respective homes.

A surprising incident happened just as the matter was about to be solved convincingly.

After being crushed, the despairing Mafia endeavored to revenge. They planned and sent a team of skilled assassins to capture Ashley. Remaining at his desk while dealing with business, Joseph emitted a terrifying aura as the pen in his hand was clasped when they told him about the abduction. This made all of his assistants shiver in fear.

"Sir, stay clear. It's impractical for you to arrange to face them alone." As he saw that Joseph was preparing to meet with the Mafia alone as soon as he got the report, Wind, a strong middle-aged man who had been in charge of the gang in recent years, declared his concern.

"He is right. The Mafia had the audacity to summon you this time to save Ashley on your own. They're dead set on luring you out for nefarious intentions." When the guy codenamed "Lightning" who had received training together with Joseph in their early years and had been Joseph's trusted friend saw Joseph's downcast expression, he shifted his normal lighthearted voice and addressed his concerns sincerely.

"You all stop talking. I must go this time," Joseph said coldly before the others could react and give their opinion to stop him.

"I'll go with an invisible tracker later," he informed the other men around him after a short stop. "You make a precise layout based on my location, but you

can't act impulsively without my consent. I'll entrust the gang to you if I'm not able to return."

Everyone believed their leader had made up his mind after hearing Joseph's serious and determined remarks. They could only watch Joseph leave while calming their worries.

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The Mafia announced that they wanted the leader of the Dragon Gang to go to the agreed location alone. They also wanted him to bring the deed of the land he had recently acquired and 200 million US dollars. That was not all though. The Dragon Gang must transfer ten percent of its market shares to the Mafia. Only then would the Dragon Gang be allowed to rescue the hostage.

The grudge between the Mafia and the Dragon Gang had always been the reason of their conflicts. They were neck and neck in everything. They competed for the market and even the position of the leader of the gangs. For many years, the Mafia, which was slightly behind Dragon Gang, had always regarded their rival as a thorn in their side. The assassination 8 years ago ushered in the Dragon Gang's insane revenge. If it were not for the Mafia's deep roots, they would have already been exterminated long ago. That heavy blow caused their status to plummet. It did not help that the Dragon Gang had had a vigorous development ever since Jason took office. Since then, the Mafia fell behind the Dragon Gang by so many levels.

Because Joseph was not the one who had been in charge of the overall situation in the Dragon Gang headquarters in America for many years, he was unable to eliminate their opponent. However, unbeknownst to everyone, the Mafia was slowly recovering and secretly preparing for revenge. They would gather in secret and intimidate the major gangs so that they could fight against their true opponent, the Dragon Gang. Until recently, a large gang in Mexico had encountered a sudden and brute attack from the Dragon Gang, where they were defeated and had suffered a great loss. Little did they know, the Mafia had been watching Dragon Gang's every move. They immediately contacted the defeated party and proposed cooperation.

The two sides cooperated at once. Their partnership resulted in obtaining useful information about the said raid. It turned out that its four drug dealers

had offended the leader of the Dragon Gang. As a result, the responsible gang went through a disaster.

According to one of the drug traffickers who had narrowly escaped that night by watching the whole incident in a nearby forest, the other four drug dealers saw two foreigners camping in a deserted area in the suburbs. All of a sudden, they felt an urge to commit a routine crime—rape, to be exact. But before they could carry out the plan, the tall man, who happened to be the woman's companion, beat them to a pulp all at once. The four offenders were then dragged into a car by his men. At last, the news came that those four had been decapitated and the force behind them was also cracked down.

The surviving drug dealer trembled in fear as he recalled the scene of that night and his partners' miserable demise. To make things worse, they had offended the Dragon Gang, the most influential and formidable gang in the world, in the process.

To the Mafia's surprise, they failed again. How could it be? They immediately jumped at the chance to provoke their rival blatantly the moment they heard that the Dragon Gang had no leader. They really hoped to eradicate their long-standing enemy in one go. However, Joseph's timely return foiled their conspiracy.

After so many years, the Mafia was in trouble once again. As a result, they launched an all-out counterattack against the Dragon Gang. After tracking the enemy, they found out recently that their rival's leader was canoodling with a woman. Knowing this, they sent an assassin to kidnap the woman. She would serve as a bargaining chip to turn the tables in their favor.

Obviously, the Mafia got greedy this time because they believed that they had put Jason, the leader of the Dragon Gang, at a disadvantage. They thought that this would be the best opportunity to retaliate. Eliminating Jason as soon as possible was the ultimate goal of the Mafia's high-level officers.

Truth be told, the Mafia made the right choice. Ashley had been captured, so Joseph would definitely not ignore it. Even if he knew that there were dangers ahead, he would go alone without fear.

However, Joseph could not help but feel an unprecedented fear and regret when the Mafia called him. He should not have left Ashley alone at home.

Even though he had sent someone to protect her, it was not as safe as staying by his side. Now, the last thing he wanted to happen had happened. Nevertheless, it was futile to regret. He must save her no matter what, even at expense of his own life. At the thought of this, he tightened the grip on the steering wheel and blamed himself for everything. There was nothing he could do but pray for her safety.

He drove to the agreed place as fast as he could. As he did so, his eyes were filled with coldness and wrath. If the Mafia dared to hurt the person he loved the most, he would certainly kill every single one of them until their organization crumbled to dust! Unable to do anything at the moment, he mustered all his strength to suppress the fear in his heart. He looked at the boundless sky overhead and prayed, 'Lord, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't have met the love of my life. She's the only person in my life that has made me feel loved and happy. Please don't take her away from me like this. I'm willing to trade everything I have, just make her safe.'

Ashley, I'm sorry. I promised you that I'd keep you safe forever, and I failed. You must be so scared, but please wait for me. I swear I'll tell you everything about me once we get out of there, even if you will leave me. I just want you to be safe.' He fervently prayed while he recalled their beautiful memories together.

On the other side, Ashley slowly opened her eyes, only to see that her arms and legs had been tied and her mouth was covered with a special tape. There were two tall men in black standing by the broken door in front of her. She remembered that she had been kidnapped. Looking at the vast wasteland outside the gray door, the heaps of scraps everywhere, and an enormous concrete pillar behind her, she guessed that she was in an abandoned factory in the suburbs.

She recalled what had happened earlier. That afternoon, someone rang the doorbell, so she opened it to see who it was. There was a suspicious man in a black suit standing outside. Before she could ask him the purpose of his visit, the man purposefully knocked her out. Now, she finally regained her consciousness and found herself locked up in a dilapidated and abandoned factory in the middle of nowhere.

She tried to calm herself down. Judging from the situation, the kidnapers only tied her up and did not hurt her. She figured that this must be a kidnap for ransom. Being scared sh!tless would not solve anything, so she had better be calm. Besides, her omnipotent boyfriend would probably appear and save her.

Ashley guessed that these people were aiming at Joseph. She had just gone abroad and, unlike him, kept a low profile. She could not have offended anyone, could she? These men must be his business rivals. They must have thought that they could earn money, at the same time, intimidate Joseph by using her as a trump card.

While she was observing the surroundings and furtively trying to break herself free, a tall man entered from the broken iron door. The man's gaze and malicious aura was so intense she could feel it about a meter away.

Seeing that the two men, who were guarding the door, nodded their heads respectfully as the man entered, Ashley guessed that the man must be the leader, the mastermind of the kidnapping. She lifted her gaze and looked at the man. He looked like a typical American man with his hooked nose, blue eyes, blond hair, and white skin. She must admit, his facial features were somehow above average. Judging from the few wrinkles on his face and youthful smile, he was about 30 years old. Except for the horrible aura around him, he could be regarded as a handsome foreigner.

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The man with a gloomy face finally said, "Not bad!" Touching his chin, he nodded at the beautiful woman in front of him.

These words didn't make any sense to Ashley. She stared at him until the corners of his mouth lifted into a devious smile. A hint of danger flashed across his eyes, which made her feel how unsafe, but she didn't show any fear.

There was no greed in the man's eyes, but they were filled with viciousness, hatred, and even pleasure. Therefore, she thought she had not been abducted for a simple reason. Because people who wanted to kidnap and blackmail others would not have such expressions. They would most likely be indifferent.

Just as fear was beginning to creep into her heart, the man spoke again. "Jason's woman is really interesting." After saying this, he squatted down and tore off the black tape that sealed Ashley's mouth.

“My name is Zack. Nice to meet you.” The man, who introduced himself as Zack, stared at her as if he was waiting for her reaction.

But Ashley was not interested in anything about him at all. The only thing that caught her attention was the name he mentioned. Who was the “Jason” he was talking about? And why did the hatred in his eyes deepen when he mentioned this name? Most importantly, why did he kidnap her?

More and more questions popped up in Ashley’s mind, but she didn’t know the answers to them. What she was sure of was that she was abducted not only for a simple business dispute, but for gangland revenge. However, she couldn’t believe that this man was referring to her boyfriend Jason.

Noticing the confusion in her eyes, Zack asked, “Do you want to know the reason why we brought you here?”

Ashley knew that the man asked this question in purpose, but she still nodded to show her desire to know. After all, she knew that she had to obey the kidnapper to understand the situation, so that she could have more chances of survival.

Luckily, it worked. Zack raised his chin, and looked at her with satisfaction. “It’s your boyfriend’s fault. We have been good friends for many years, but he always refused to meet me, so I invited the person he cares about to come here. I hope you don’t mind.”

The way he said this sounded as if it was not a big deal, but it was enough to send a chill down Ashley’s spine. Indeed, the Jason this man hated was her boyfriend. What was going to happen to her now? What kind of bad luck did Joseph catch?

Never did she imagine that horrible scenes in the movie could also happen in real life. Now it was clear that this kidnapper wanted to use her to lure Joseph out, and they would both be in danger. At this time, apart from fear of knowing the truth, Ashley was more worried about the safety of Joseph.

“I don’t know what you are talking about.” No matter how nervous Ashley was, she tried to sound as calm as she could.

Hearing this, Zack couldn't help but sneer. "Beauty, are you saying you don't understand my language, or my words?"

Although she appeared to be calm and composed in front of him, he knew that she was just trying to avoid the question. He didn't mind wasting time with Ashley, anyway. After discovering Jason's weakness, he was sure that his plan would not fail.

'Jason, let's wait and see. It's time for me to wash away my shame. When that time comes, I will make you and your woman pay the corresponding price.' Thinking of this, Zack narrowed his vicious eyes at Ashley, who was sitting in silence.

The longer he stared at Ashley, the more he felt that his old opponent had good taste when it came to women. This woman in front of him didn't only have the beauty of an oriental woman, but also the calmness in dealing with unfavorable situations. She could even be considered the best among other women. 'What would Jason look like if I had sex with her?' How ironic it was. He was praising her, and was thinking about twisted things at the same time.

The reason why Zack was acting like this was because of what Jason did when he took over the Dragon Gang. He almost massacred the whole Mafia, and his father, who was the former leader, was also killed. It stained their reputation, and they had been despised everywhere. Remembering the hardship they had gone through over the years, his hatred grew even stronger.

Being blinded by hatred and profit, Zack had forgotten the fact that the Mafia assassinated the former leader of the Dragon Gang first.

In the past few years, Zack had always regarded Jason as his enemy and strongest opponent. Day and night, he had been trying to trample on him and lead the Mafia to the top of the world. However, it was not an easy thing to do, because of Jason's brilliant tactics and tight security.

Therefore, he was glad when he found out that Jason loved this woman very much. Zack believed that with the help of this woman, he could make him surrender, and his long-cherished wish would finally be fulfilled. When he thought of the scene that his biggest opponent bowed to him, his complacency and scheme were once again filled his distorted heart.

The remaining uncertainties he had vanished. Now that he knew Jason's weakness, he should use it to give him the most painful torture, and then eliminate him as soon as possible.

Without waiting for her answer, Zack stood up again and told something to his people outside the room. Ashley's eyes and mouth were covered again before they left the abandoned factory building.

At the same time, Joseph received a call from a stranger and got the news that the appointment was changed.

The arrogance in the stranger's voice made him clench his jaw. He drove along the deserted path at the fastest speed, hoping that he would still catch up with them.

But the appointed place was already empty when he arrived. He inspected the whole place and an unexpectedly clean pillar caught his attention. Upon closer look, he saw Ob.rarian characters written on the concrete pillar. "Safe. Don't worry."

These words meant Ashley was safe, but the way it was written only showed that she was restrained. Through these three words, Joseph could imagine how terrified and helpless Ashley had been when she had been tied up and brought here. His heart ached and his fists clenched unconsciously. He knew that she was in danger in the hands of the Mafia.

After carefully investigating the surrounding, Joseph drove back to the headquarters of the Dragon Gang at full speed.

When his men saw his figure approaching, they were surprised. They obviously didn't expect that their leader would come back so soon. Wind asked with concern, "Sir, how did it go?"

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Joseph's henchmen knew in an instant that the leader's future wife had been kidnapped. Back then, when they learned that their ruthless and formidable leader had finally ended his bachelor life, they were ecstatic. They used to be worried that their current leader would be as lonely as the former. If that happened, the whole Dragon Gang would have no successor.

After getting along and cooperating for many years, the members of the Dragon Gang admired the ability and courage of their leader. Under Joseph's leadership, the Dragon Gang did not only have a great status and influence, but also world recognition. The gang flourished into a great organization that were popular in the underworld and the police. Those who were close to Joseph knew what kind of person he was. He always made careful decisions that were centered on lessening casualties and protecting their lives. He was a very considerate boss to his subordinates, making them faithful to their organization.

Now, the leader's future wife, whom they had been looking forward to for many years, was kidnapped by the Mafia. A group of henchmen namely, Wind, Rain, Thunder, and Lightning were disdainful upon learning what the Mafia had done. However, they were more worried about their leader's feelings and behavior. Since their leader must be extremely worried for his woman, he would definitely save her and not care about anything else. Although they wanted her to be saved, they did not want their leader to be in danger.

"Search everywhere, even if it meant searching the whole world." Instead of answering everyone's questions straightforwardly, Joseph handed Wind a clear plastic bag and said, "This is the copy of the footprints collected on the scene. You must find out this person's whereabouts with this clue immediately. You must look into the railways, airports, and other traffic spots, like highways. Also, we should stop attacking the Mafia, so they'll stop retaliating and hurting people again."

Joseph collected the said footprint sample half a meter away from the pillar. It showed that it was most probably the footprints of the top leader of the Mafia who came to check on the hostage. However, that was only a hypothesis and was yet to be verified. This person's whereabouts were of great importance in order to trace Ashley.

'Ashley, do you know that your message makes me happy and anxious at the same time? Give me some more time. Wait for me patiently, I beg you,' he whispered in his heart. The truth was, he did not know where to begin with. With that, he walked through the crowd and entered his office. He needed to clear his mind and make sure everything was going well.

Everyone saw that Joseph immediately went into his exclusive office with a somber look on his face. Because of this, they did not dare to delay the dissemination of the tasks, and they left at once.

Several days later, the Dragon Gang was still searching for the Mafia's leader, but to no avail. Everyone in the Dragon Gang was so anxious, except for Joseph, who looked surprisingly calm. He had spent most of his time making plans in the office, and in the evening, returned to his mansion as usual. Everyone noticed how awfully calm he had been. Joseph was so keen on finding Ashley that he had no time to take care of himself. Stubble had even appeared on his chin which was unusual as he had always been meticulous in his appearance.

With only eight days left, everyone knew that they could not give up, even if they were looking for a needle in a haystack.

Zack, the current leader of the Mafia, was known for being vicious and merciless. He was the only one who could bring the Mafia back to life after it had been destroyed many years ago. Now he could hide in a safe place without being easily found by the Dragon Gang for days. Thus his ability should not be underestimated.

The whole Dragon Gang spent their whole day analyzing and processing the information nonstop. After comparing thousands, if not millions, of portraits, they found out that Zack had not gone abroad and was only hiding somewhere in the United States. Since the key investigation sites were being updated every day, they found Zack near the border of the United States and Mexico—in the basement of an abandoned residential building. Unfortunately, when Joseph and his subordinates arrived there, the place was empty.

However, their efforts were not futile. On the wall was a declaration of war with Zack's signature. It read, "Jason, your woman is pretty good! I'll give you ten days. If you can't find me, you'll never see your lovely girl again. Never." Joseph was both angry and worried. Now that Zack was desperate and had no way out, who knew if he would go berserk any time? Joseph was afraid that Zack would do something unimaginably dire.

Joseph's icy cold eyes swept through the threatening message. Unable to do anything, he punched the wall, and blood dripped down on it. He hated himself for not being able to protect his beloved and letting her suffer. Sadly,

the pain he suffered from punching the wall was nothing compared to how he was feeling right now in his heart.

Everyone was watching Joseph, but nobody dared to make a sound. It was not until after a moment did Joseph turn around and walk out of the door. As he did so, everyone else followed him out. They all understood the feeling of being played, and they were furious. They swore to themselves that they would eliminate the Mafia no matter what.

Knowing that he had to calm down after his outburst, Joseph had no choice but to suppress the anger and regret in his heart. Once he was calm, he led his subordinates back to the headquarters. All of a sudden, he received a message on his mobile phone that was specifically meant for gang business. As he read the message, he could not help but smash the phone into pieces in frustration.

Joseph received three photos of Ashley. She looked gaunt, and her eyes were blank. In one of the photos, her pale face was covered with blood. At last, he received a text that read, "Come here alone in ten days, or else you will pay the consequences." His heart skipped a beat upon seeing this, and he panicked for the first time. 'No! Ashley is waiting. I can't let anything happen to me. Please hold on...'

On the other side, Ashley was locked in a plain room. A faint light made its way inside through the curtain. Only then did she realize that she had just been transferred to another place. Several days had passed. Only during mealtime could Ashley move her hands and feet freely in the narrow space. Outside, the sky had never changed. It was still dark and gloomy during the day with a dim yellow hue.

She had no idea how many days had passed that she had been living in darkness and starvation. Every time she felt that she was on the verge of giving up, her beautiful memories with her family and Joseph would dispel her intense fear. As long as she was alive, there was hope. She would not let the darkness in front of her knock herself down.

As she gazed outside the window at the long-lost sunshine, she felt that a long, long time had already passed. Her once smooth, slender wrists were now full of deep purple bruises. 'After so much darkness, my light will come,' she thought to herself. She sat on the edge of the bed and looked out of the window again. Her blank eyes had now become clear and bright. She believed that her lover would bring her light, which had been stolen from her.

Her love for Joseph was what kept her alive in her days of captivity. She believed that he would never let her down. 'Don't worry. I won't blame you even if you're a second too late. Having you in my life is more than enough.'

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Ashley sat in a daze, glancing out of the window. The sound of the door opening brought her out of her reverie. Zack walked in. The room was flooded with warm and golden sunlight. He squinted his eyes, his coldness concealed under the power of the sun. Ashley flashed him a quick glance and continued to gaze out of the window.

It was the second time he had come to meet her. Ashley couldn't help but wonder the purpose of his visit. Zack was the sort of man whose expression couldn't be read. It was difficult to tell what was brewing in his mind. All she could do was wait for him to reveal his intention.

The truth was, this wasn't exactly the second time he had seen her. There was a micro monitor set up, through which he got glimpses of what she did.

The Dragon Gang had stopped attacking the Mafia's industry. Zack was quite occupied these days, dealing and sorting the affairs behind the scenes. He was eager to make a comeback. Due to all these reasons, he hardly had any time in his hand to deal with Ashley. In fact, he hadn't had a chance to confront her ever since she was transferred from the abandoned factory.

With the little spare time he had, he would sit in the monitoring room, trying to detect changes in Ashley's demeanor. He was disappointed to note that this woman, presumably the stepping stone for his revenge, could face adversity with courage. What surprised him the most was how quiet she was.

He went through the videos, hoping to catch her scream or behave nervously. But he found nothing! She was as calm as a millpond. It wasn't just her actions, even her eyes reeked of serenity. Ashley was provided with a mattress. She ate quietly, then gazed a little out of her window then went back to sleep. She didn't cry for help nor did she request the gatekeeper to untie her.

The more Zack observed her, the more mysterious he found her to be. Most women would have gotten scared at his psychological tactics that had

combined hunger and darkness. Frightening environment and weakening of physical energy was the best tactic to break people's psychological defense. Unfortunately, his well-laid-out plan didn't work on this mysterious woman.

Instead of anger, what Zack felt was curiosity. He wanted to learn more about her, not simply because she was his rival's love, but because she had an intriguing personality.

"Why didn't they behave tenderly with a woman? Your beautiful wrist is wounded," Zack said as he went up to her and sat down on the edge of the bed. When he saw her wrists were bruised by the rope, this pitiful exclamation came out of him.

Pretending like he wanted to inspect her wrist, he went forward to grab her hand. Ashley dodged his touch. She found his concerns to be disdainful. He was pretending like he had nothing to do with her current situation! His hypocrisy made her sick.

Without beating around the bush, Ashley went straight to the point and demanded, "Where am I? What on earth do you intend to do to me?"

Listening to her cold voice, Zack wasn't offended. Instead, he flashed her a patient smile. "I've told you, I have kept you here, hoping an old friend of mine will come to visit us." His gaze never left her pale but strikingly beautiful face. After a short pause, he muttered, "It won't be too long. He will be here soon. And after that, you will never be apart."

Zack had a hunch that Jason would show up soon. After all, he was the most powerful man in the world. He could easily find out their whereabouts. 'Little does he know, this place is full of traps. Once he steps here, he can't go back alive,' Zack thought to himself, envisioning Jason's destroyed body. He relished this thought. A twisted smile crept on his face.

Originally, Zack's plans had been to extort money from the Dragon Gang for Ashley's release. He intended to put the Mafia back to its feet as soon as possible. However, seeing Ashley opened up old wounds. His jealousy towards Jason, who had been a kind of celebrity in the criminal underworld for many years, gushed out like a tide. All of a sudden, his plans became more wicked. He wanted to see pure pain in his enemy's eyes. 'What can be more painful than watching the love of his life suffer and even die?' Zack thought to

himself. What's more, if Jason lived, Zack couldn't make his mark. Eliminating his enemy from the face of the earth would be the best way to secure his future.

So, in the end, Zack decided to take pleasure in his enemy's pain. He had been too busy with his own affairs in the past few days. However, he sent a few shots of Ashley in miserable condition, hoping it would lure Jason into coming. 'A trap has been laid with a perfect bait,' he thought to himself. Now, he had to sit back and wait for Jason's arrival.

'We have 8 more days to go. Let's see how much Jason loves her,' he thought to himself with a wicked smile.

Ashley, on the other hand, was still mulling over Zack's words. 'He said we would never be apart,' she thought, trying to fight down her rising terror. She knew what his words meant. From his behavior, she had gathered the man in front of her was psychologically abnormal. It was obvious he was using her to get a hold of Joseph. At this moment, Ashley deeply hoped Joseph wouldn't find her. She couldn't bear the thought of him risking his life for her sake.

"It is suffocating in here. I wish to go out for a walk," Ashley said, her calm expression hid her inward panic. Zack's eyes were bright with curiosity. He looked at her like she was some exotic animal. Ashley wished to get some fresh air. In the process, she also wished to scan her surroundings. She knew she couldn't escape but sitting around and waiting for death wasn't an option.

"Okay, but don't try to escape," Zack warned, his eyes boring into hers. His coldness had returned. The softness in his voice had disappeared and he sounded a little harsh.

Ashley couldn't care less about the change in Zack. She was glad he had agreed to her request. She quickly stood up and walked out of the door. As she continued to walk, she glanced around. There was an endless sea before her. And behind her there was nothing but a temporary mobile house. Her hunch was she had been kept captive on a small island, concealed from the outside world.

She walked on the soft beach. The sea breeze swept through her. Bathing in the warm sunshine, she gazed at a distance. Just for a moment, she had forgotten all about the predicament she was in. Instead, she took delight in nature and its beauty.

Standing not far away from her, Zack studied her. She seemed to be taking delight in the sunlight. Her happiness and peace were infectious. He felt a momentary peace by simply looking at her. However, the deep-rooted hatred he had for her lover sobered him up. He shook his head and told himself not to be fooled by her. 'Being kind to your enemy means being cruel to yourself. I have made my decision final. There is no going back,' Zack promised himself.

"You are allowed to walk around your room and the beach area you are standing right now. Everything else is off-limits. Let me remind you once again, if you try to run away the consequences will be bad." Zack spoke in a cold, hard voice. Ashley, who was bathing in sun, was brought back from her trance.

This small island was Zack's private property. Except for this simple mobile house, there was nothing else here. Zack had already set a boundary for Ashley. She was forbidden from crossing it at all times.

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Strangely enough, Zack turned around as soon as he finished speaking, which made Ashley feel relieved and somewhat happy. Honestly, she could not understand what he was trying to do. First, he imprisoned her in a dark place for a few days. Then he transferred her to this mobile house and she was grounded for two days. Now, he gave her some space for her to move. What could be the reason behind this? What was his intention of letting her ease up bit by bit?

'A turbulent wave always comes after a calm sea,' Ashley mused. As she looked at the undisturbed sea in front of her, she sighed in her heart. She did not know who Zack really was. Even so, when they conversed a while ago, she felt that that vile man would not easily give up. However, it really confused her as to why he was treating her better than he usually did. Could this be some kind of a ploy?

Except for a bag of bread, Ashley had nothing to eat. Although she had been given some freedom to move in the island, there was no bathroom for her to take a bath. It was now getting dark, yet Zack had not shown up for more than half a day. Also, nobody was watching her nor delivering food. She felt lonely and helpless as if she had been exiled to this uninhabited island and was left to fend for herself. The sea breeze was getting colder as time went by. As she

gazed at the moon that was slowly rising overhead, the longing and melancholy in her heart grew deeper. The longer she stayed here, the more befuddled she had become.

According to Zack, it was impossible for her to escape. This island was surrounded by the sea, and there was no communication device that she could use. If her situation went on, the probability of her making it out alive was slim.

For several days, Ashley had not taken a shower nor eaten enough. She was now undeniably weak, but her desire to survive gave her strength. After all, there was nothing else she could do but endure this physical discomfort and the hunger in her stomach. She had better try to find something she could eat.

Fortunately, Zack appeared early the next morning and brought Ashley a fishing rod and another bag of bread. For the first time, his appearance brought joy to her. She even felt that this handsome foreign man was somehow nice underneath his cruel temperament. Since she was still in his territory and was in danger of death, she'd better see him in a new light.

Zack did not leave right away. Instead, he stood by Ashley's bed silently and watched her eat her bread. Being watched, especially by the person who was holding her captive, was extremely uncomfortable. There was an indescribable coldness in his eyes when he looked at her today. It made her feel as though she was having her last meal. Because of this, she was no longer in the mood to eat the dry, stale bread.

In order to ease the heavy atmosphere, Ashley, who was sitting on the edge of the bed, raised her head to look at Zack and asked, "Can you tell me something about Jason?"

"Why are you asking me that? He's your boyfriend," he replied with furrowed brows. Nevertheless, he answered her inquiry. "Jason is a well-known leader of a gang. He's cruel and merciless. I suppose you have no idea about this side of him, am I right?"

While eating the bread that had been offered to her, Ashley listened intently to Zack's remarks about Jason. It was true that she did not concern herself about gangs. Why would she? It seemed that that matter was totally unrelated to her. Even if the Jason described by Zack was indeed Joseph, the man who

stayed by her side day and night and was merciless in business, she still believed that the person she loved was warm beneath his aloof demeanor. Needless to say, whatever Zack said would just serve as her reference to know more about Joseph.

Ashley did not mind if Joseph was indeed a gangster. She still believed that he had been sincere with his feelings and that he truly loved her. She had to admit, at first, it was difficult for her to accept that her beloved had something to do with the underworld. Fortunately, she had accepted the truth already. As long as Joseph was still the one she loved, nothing would get in between them and hinder their love for each other.

“Jason killed my father and destroyed my place. How could I not hate him?” Zack continued, noticing that Ashley had not said a word. There was an undisguised hatred in his tone when he spoke.

Ashley raised her head and looked at the man who had clenched his fists. The intense resentment in his eyes frightened her. She was afraid that he would do something unimaginable to her if she said something wrong, so there was nothing she could do but remain silent.

A deafening silence hung in the room for a moment. It was Zack who broke the ice first. “Come with me. I’ll take you somewhere.”

Of course, Ashley had no choice but to follow him out of the room. With a special remote control, Zack opened the door of the electric fence. Then, he turned around and asked her to go in first.

From a distance, Ashley saw a small, dark room in front of her. Looking at it, a foreboding feeling washed over her. She looked at Zack, whose face was expressionless yet cold, and felt as though she was about to step into another abyss. Sadly, she was powerless against him, especially that she no longer had strength. Even at her peak, she was no match for Zack, who was tall, strong, and most importantly, a leader of a gang. If she resisted, it would only intensify his revenge and anger.

Ashley hesitated for a while and weighed in her options in her mind. At last, she followed his order and stepped inside. She had just taken a few steps when she heard the heavy door closing behind her. She immediately turned around and saw that Zack was leaving. She was alarmed at once. But before she could react, two men, who were wearing a set of black clothes, dragged her into the room.

Despite being frail and weak, the two men tied her to a shelf. Everything happened unexpectedly, leaving her no time to process what had just happened. Looking at the cold walls she was enclosed in, Ashley tried to move her limbs but to no avail. The two men were standing about a meter away from her, and their gazes terrified her. She had a feeling that those two were going to hurt her.

The two men whispered in French. Ashley heard them, and her fear became worse.

“Are we really going to torture this delicate woman as the godfather ordered?” a man with a gentle face asked his companion who, unlike him, looked glum.

“Cut the crap. You know we can’t disobey godfather’s orders. Anyway, you do it, and I’ll record you,” the other man ordered.

“Got it,” the sympathetic man answered. He walked to the tool shed behind him and picked up a whip. They could not violate their boss’s orders, or else they would be severely punished.

As Ashley saw one of the men approach her with a whip in his hand, her heart skipped a beat. Horrified with what was about to happen, she closed her eyes and clenched her fists in panic. What was supposed to happen would happen. Since there was no way she could resist being whipped, she had no choice but to endure it as much as she could. It was just physical pain anyway.

The sound of the whip hitting her body echoed in the small, dark room, and Ashley felt a sharp, excruciating pain in her stomach. She cried out in pain, but one of the men seemed unimpressed as he shouted, “Why are you hitting her gently?! Hit her harder, or both of us will be in big trouble!”