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Zachary had been silent the whole time while he was driving back to her apartment. Seeing this, Yasmin felt that she couldn't stop him if he suddenly decided to do something unimaginable. She figured that it would be better if she kept silent, so she just looked out of the window the whole ride.

The truth was, Zachary could not stop thinking about what he had seen earlier today. While Yasmin was standing on the sidewalk, he saw her talking and laughing with another man. Not only that, when she drank coffee and chatted with that man, there was a gentle look on her face. Her eyes were affectionate when she handed the coat to him. Her face even blushed slightly when the man stroked her hair. It was as if she was enjoying the intimacy.

That memory was like a magic spell. It tortured Zachary's heart, hurting him and tearing him apart. Just the thought about it had made him feel angry, so he drove faster.

"Why did you suddenly decide to go here?" Yasmin turned to Zachary and asked. She was bewildered as to why he chose to go to her place.

As soon as Zachary parked the car in the parking lot, Yasmin opened the door and walked upstairs without waiting for his response. To her surprise, he followed her all the way up. It seemed that he wanted to go to her apartment as well.

Zachary had not said anything until now. When Yasmin opened the door to her apartment, he entered without even asking for permission.

"Zachary, are you an idiot?" Yasmin asked as she saw him enter her room like a robber. With an inexplicable look in his eyes, he looked at her, and his gaze frightened her a little. "Zachary, get out! I'm going to sue you for trespassing on my apartment! Get out now!" she insisted.

"I've made up my mind." Zachary finally spoke after being silent for a long time. Ever so slowly, he walked towards Yasmin while she took a few steps back until she reached the wall.

"What do you mean?" she asked with a trembling voice and raised eyebrows.

Seeing that Yasmin was wary of him, Zachary gritted his teeth and admitted the truth. "I've decided to tie you up with me. I don't want to let you go. I don't know if I'll be able to bear it if I did. It doesn't matter what you think of me. I want you so bad."

His gentle yet decisive words echoed in Yasmin's ears. She lifted her gaze and tried to see if he was joking, but he was not. His bright eyes were serious, affectionate, and forbearing, and not an ounce of sarcasm was in it.

His straightforward and domineering love confession caught her off guard that she felt her heart skipped a beat.

"Zachary, you really are an idiot. You already have a girlfriend! Why are you talking nonsense?" Yasmin finally calmed down from her outburst, and she continued weakly, "What I hate the most are men who aren't faithful in their relationship."

'Although I don't want to let you go either, you already have someone. I don't want to ruin your relationship,' thought she inwardly. Yasmin seemed to have lost her courage that she could not look at him in the eye. 'If what you've said is true, how are Patricia and I supposed to deal with this?'

"What are you talking about? I don't have any girlfriend."

Zachary was extremely confused with what she was saying. He was expecting that if she were to reject him, it would be because she did not like him back. However, what she was saying did not make sense. It seemed that they were not on the same page.

"Isn't Patricia your girlfriend? Zachary, do you ever think about how she would feel if she found out about this?" Yasmin asked with a sneer.

Zachary finally understood what she meant. "Yasmin, I assure you, I don't have a girlfriend! Patricia is my cousin."

He looked at her astonished expression and continued in an exasperated voice, "You're so focused on your boyfriend that you forgot about my feelings. Have you ever thought about what I feel?"

Hearing his words that laced with great sadness, her heart was filled with shock, anger, sorrow, and at the same time, joy. Mixed feelings came flooding to her all at once as she processed what he had just said.

"Are you telling the truth?" she asked weakly while staring into his eyes.

Zachary looked back at her. For a moment, they were just gazing into each other's eyes without saying anything. Then, he nodded slowly.

"I see. I'm so stupid," Yasmin murmured to herself.

Before Zachary could ask her why she was grinning like an idiot, she suddenly jumped into his arms. The warmth of her body made his heart skip a beat.

'What's going on? Why did she jump into my arms?' Although he was very confused why Yasmin's expression changed suddenly, he still stretched out his arms and h.ugged her tightly.

"It turned out that we're both idiots! Why didn't you tell me earlier?" Yasmin asked in an aggrieved tone while pounding Zachary's hard c.hest with both hands. "I don't have a boyfriend either. I lied!"

She finally stopped pounding his c.hest and calmed down after a moment. "Why didn't you tell me earlier? I've been worried all day long. I thought a woman picked up the man I liked..."

Although Yasmin's explanation was vague and somewhat broken, Zachary understood what she meant in an instant. He put his hands on her shoulders and turned her around. Now, she had no choice but to face him. "I love you, but... is it true that you love me back?" he asked nervously.

"Why are you so stupid? I told you the answer already! Why do you have to ask such a stupid question?" Upon saying that, Yasmin looked at him discontentedly and grumbled, "It's all your fault. You lied to me first."

For a moment, Yasmin seemed to be in a daze. Then embarrassment came to her in an instant. She just realized that she had just spoken out all her thoughts and expressed her love. Although she was used to being upfront, she still felt embarrassed, especially that this confession was only a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"Yes! I am stupid!" Zachary now understood everything. It turned out that everything was just a big misunderstanding. In the blink of an eye, his frustrations were replaced with happiness. It was not too late for them!

He felt so exhilarated that he had no idea how to express his joy into words. Yasmin was about to talk back at him, but on the spur of the moment, he k!ssed her. Her heart pounded in delight the instant their I!ps touched. Of course, she k!ssed him back and expressed the same joy.

Because they did not know how to express their feelings in words, they expressed them into a passionate k!ss.

At first, Zachary's k!ss was only gentle and light. However, it deepened as Yasmin reciprocated his k!ss. Before he knew it, his tongue was sweeping into her mouth, and he could no longer control himself. He did not want it to end right there and then.

The most hard-won happiness in the world is finding out that the person one loves also loves him back. They may have gone through a lot, but they are fortunate, especially if they have been able to settle their misunderstanding in time and do not miss the person they love.

Zachary and Yasmin, who were madly in love with each other, could not help but release their fervent feelings that they had hidden for so long. As the two of them were immersed in their deep and passionate k!ss, they did not notice that they had already reached the bedroom.

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After a relaxing night's sleep, Zachary awoke on the beautiful morning of the second day. At the moment, his mood was as pleasant and enthusiastic as the sunshine shining in through the window. He had seen Yasmin in his arms and her long-lost beautiful, serene sleeping face when he opened his eyes.

Zachary couldn't help but stretch out and touch her sweet, delicate face. He was even more mesmerized by the genuine touch.

"Hmm, no, let me sleep a little longer." Yasmin pushed off the big hand on her face and covered her face with a pillow, grumbling unhappily. At the time, she was still sleepy.

Yasmin realized like nothing was behind her as soon as she turned her back on Zachary. She was stunned awake by a fear of falling into the solid floor of the room. She was relieved to be instantly wrapped in a warm embrace.

"Can you tell me what's wrong with you?" Zachary took advantage of the opportunity to keep Yasmin in his arms and asked her a question. His charming smile centered on her.

Yasmin focused her eyes on Zachary's dazzling face. Her face turned red as the crazed memory of last night came flooding back to her mind.

The sensations of satisfaction and distress were unimaginable. From eight or nine p.m. last night until two or three at midnight, Zachary seemed to have made passionate love to her. Yasmin even remembered not getting the energy to beg for rest at the end.

Despite the presence of a handsome man in front of her, Yasmin, who had always been inclined to good-looking men, was not enthralled by his good looks. She decided to retreat in silence. Zachary started to expose his weapon again as if he was ready to make his attempt once she'd felt Zachary's n.aked body under the soft blankets. Yasmin thought it was a brilliant idea to flee now. She sighed as though she didn't want to experience it any further.

"Do you really want to slip out of bed, goofy little woman?"

Yasmin frowned softly and averted her gaze. Zachary, who was as clever as he came, was well aware of what she was up to. He blandly gripped Yasmin in his arms and fl!cked her forehead with a hand when she tried to get out of his embrace.

Zachary's points were so convincing to Yasmin that she couldn't help but agree. When she took a step back just now, she was about to fall off the bed. Zachary, after all, was too large for the bed and took up too much space. As she realized it, Yasmin slapped Zachary's hand away from her and glared angrily at him, who was laughing meanly as though he was mocking her.

She found herself in a tight corner. She would fall into his arms as soon as she stepped forward. On the other hand, she might fall out of bed if she fell back. Early in the morning, it was quick for men to become horny. Her body,

however, was still throbbing and in pain. Yasmin would rather fall out of bed than have se.x with him.

"You sc.umbag! Don't you dare touch me any longer!" Yasmin gr0aned as she realized her escape had been in vain. "What makes you so horny early in the morning? My wa!st and back hurt, and I feel like the rest of my body is crashing. Don't get near me!"

she warned sternly as she realized that she couldn't free herself from Zachary's embrace. Even if she fell out of bed, she would neither be able to get away from Zachary's hands, and she might even be in extreme pain. Afraid of Zachary pushing her to make out again, Yasmin remained in bed and didn't dare to make a hasty decision.

Zachary chuckled and taunted, noticing that Yasmin could still scream at him with tenacity. "It seems that you haven't lost any of your strengths. Why don't we try it again?"

"Please, Mr. Estrada, I was mistaken. Just let me go... I can no longer survive your unstoppable I.ust!" she instantly begged in a pathetic tone as she looked at Zachary, who was smirking while squeezing her cheek.

Zachary, who had been happy with his se.x life the night before, grinned at Yasmin's puppy dog eyes and her unintended compliment. He was glad to have proven his virility to his beloved woman.

"I recall someone telling me I was gay." as if he was speaking to the air, Zachary said.

"It was a misjudgment of mine to confuse a straight man as gay. It was completely my fault. I did not mean it, I'm so sorry." Yasmin appeared apologetically as she reacted instantly.

'You must be kidding me! If Zachary was really gay, there would be no straight men in the world after what had occurred last night.'

When Yasmin pointed out what Zachary had meant, she attempted to answer him that it was he who had said this before, but now he put the blame on herself. On the other hand, Yasmin decided not to risk her life as she was already in jeopardy after considering the benefits and drawbacks in her heart.

Zachary shrugged but said nothing when he heard this.

He didn't think about Yasmin, who was having se.x for the first time. He simply realized he had been too eager the night before. He was just teasing Yasmin, and he had no intention of doing so again on this lovely morning. After all, he cared about Yasmin's physical pain and knew he'd have plenty of occasions to have se.x with her in the future.

Zachary couldn't help but play to torment her as he saw that his lovely girl was planning to flee and complain all over again.

"Don't be afraid. I guarantee I'm not going to hurt you." Yasmin was soothed by Zachary as he caressed her long black smooth hair, which concealed her pretty face.

All was genuine at this point. Zachary quietened down while lying in the same bed as the radiant beauty. 'It's astounding to have you here.'

"Will you tell me who that guy was from yesterday?" Zachary abruptly shifted the subject as he asked Yasmin. His expression was perplexed.

Zachary's heart swelled with jealousy all of a moment. He gulped a little madly as the scene of Yasmin speaking and laughing with another man flashed through his mind.

Yasmin was still pondering the reliability of Zachary's promise. "What man?" she asked as soon as she heard his question.

Yasmin hadn't had many interactions with men lately, apart from work, so she was also completely baffled.

"Oh, are you referring to Jeffery? He was an upperclassman I knew when I was in college. Is he absolutely attractive?" Yasmin hesitated for a moment, feeling Zachary's intense glare, and thought about what had happened a day before, then she said gently.

Zachary sniffed heartlessly when he heard her reply. He then fl!cked Yasmin's forehead. "I'd like to ask you an earnest question. What is the nature of our relationship now?"

"Wait. What? I'm not sure. It's a hard question," Yasmin answered sincerely and nodded after some contemplation.

That, in Yasmin's judgment, was a significant issue to delve into deeply. The previous contract had been shredded up, and Zachary hadn't told her about their connection, even though their disagreements had been cleared and they had made out. As a result, she felt compelled to be conservative, and she was reluctant to embrace the relationship openly.

Zachary was at a loss for words after apprehending what Yasmin had just said. 'She openly admired another man after having a se.xual and intimate relationship with me, and she was also doubtful about our relationship. How offensive!'

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"Oh my God! How can you be so stupid? Look at how things are going on between us. Are you still unsure about our relationship?" Zachary gazed at the innocent look on Yasmin's face and sighed in exasperation. "You're such an idiot. Listen, I'm your boyfriend and your future husband. Do you understand?" he asked in a serious yet helpless tone.

At that moment, Yasmin felt his sincerity, and at the same time, saw the determination in Zachary's eyes. As she realized that she liked his somehow domineering confession, her heart pounded in excitement. "I understand, my dear boyfriend," she replied in a straight face.

"That's good," Zachary replied in satisfaction while gazing into her eyes and h.ugging her tightly in excitement.

His hand slowly inched into Yasmin's voluptuous body and gently caressed it. "So, who do you think is more handsome now?"

Yasmin's mind went blank for a second. It turned out that Zachary hurried to label this relationship just so he could ask this question. He was jealous, but he did not want to admit it. So childish!

"Who else? My boyfriend, of course!" she answered while suppressing her chuckle.

"That's right! You've got more sensible after being with me," Zachary commented leisurely.

He had to admit, the man who Yasmin talked to yesterday was good-looking. However, he knew that he was far more handsome than that man. Finally, he felt so much better and had even regained his confidence. He was finally back to his old self, a narcissist.

Meanwhile, Yasmin sighed inwardly and mused, 'You are drawing me close unexpectedly. I now could clearly feel your manh00d. How could I not make a smart choice?'

Zachary's hand was stroking her back softly. The warmth of his touch on her skin brought shivers to her spine. Yasmin thought that she h ad better not act rashly, so she asked him something instead, in hopes that it would distract him. "Tell me, what's the deal between you and Patricia?"

Zachary revealed everything about Patricia's plan. In the end, he concluded, "I wanted to make you mine as soon as possible, so I asked her what to do. I didn't expect that she was unreliable."

"So you think that you're the victim here?" Yasmin asked, her eyes narrowed and eyebrows furrowed. She understood everything, but she still could not help but feel aggrieved by the turn of events. "You made a fool out of me. How dare you defend yourself?"

Needless to say, Zachary and Patricia worked together to play a trick on her, and they did it so impeccably. As someone who had no idea that she was being played at, Yasmin had been so heartbroken, thinking that she had no chance of being with the man she liked. She even forced herself to reject him which, in all honesty, was both physically and emotionally draining. Now, Zachary had the gall to defend himself and put all the blame on someone else. How shameless!

"It's my fault, darling," Zachary admitted. Although he knew that he had been in the wrong, he could not help but drift away from the main issue, especially when her body was next to his. He could not stop stroking her smooth skin to ease his excitement.

"Anyway, Zachary, you have to keep your words. We've stayed in bed for so long. It's time to get up. I also have to go to work, you know?" Yasmin said while pushing him away gently. He had pinned her under his strong c.hest, making it almost impossible for her to get out.

"Apologies, my darling. I couldn't control myself. You're too scrumptious," Zachary retorted. While staring at him warily, Yasmin moved away from him slightly so that her soft and fragrant body was no longer touching his.

"Cut the crap. Let go of me. I'm going to take a shower."

Yasmin felt that it was futile to argue with him when he used her endearing body as an excuse.

"Go ahead. Do you need my help?"

Zachary finally let go of her. As he lay on the bed, he leisurely watched her as she frantically tried to find something to cover her body.

Feeling that he was watching her with amus.ement, Yasmin stared daggers at him. 'How am I going to take a bath when you're watching me?'

All of sudden, she realized that he had already seen her n.aked body. Because of this, she figured that she should just accept that fact and let him appreciate her beauty openly. If she did that, he would get a taste of his own medicine!

Yasmin stopped searching for the clothes. She merely paid a glance at the scattered clothes on the floor and instead swaggered out of the bed. After fetching clean clothes from her wardrobe, she walked to the bathroom confidently. Just as she reached the door of the bathroom, she turned around and winked at Zachary, who seemed to be in a daze.

'Look at you, you savage beast! Let's see if you can still smile like that!' At last, Yasmin proceeded to the bathroom in satisfaction.

Once she was out of sight, Zachary unconsciously touched his nose. Although he felt hot, fortunately, he did not have a nosebleed. How could she be so confident of her hot body that she even swaggered in front of him? Not to mention, her fair skin was full of red marks from their lovemaking last night, which made her body look more tempting. At that moment, he felt that he was going to have a nosebleed.

The complacent look on her face while she was n.aked replayed in his mind over and over again. Not only that, he had been deeply attracted to her when she winked at him. 'Once you get enough rest, I won't let you gloat so much.'

Zachary finally decided to get dressed. He picked up the clothes on the floor and put them on. Then, he glanced at the bl00dstain on the white bed sheet. He imagined how happy he was now and how amazing his future would be. He could not stop smiling at the thought of it.

"I've helped you have your leave of absence. Let's have breakfast first," Zachary said while looking at Yasmin, who had just come out of the bathroom.

Yasmin was very hungry. She sat at the table without even waiting for him and began to eat her breakfast, which she munched with satisfaction. She glanced at Zachary's handsome face and exclaimed inwardly, 'My life is so good! I'm so lucky to have a considerate boyfriend.'

"Don't you need to take a shower?" she asked in confusion while eating the porridge Zachary had prepared.

"I did. I took a shower in the other room. I'm just not as slow as you are."

As Yasmin heard his retort, she could not help but complain in her heart. 'It's your fault! You made me so weak that when I soaked in the bathtub, time passed by so fast. I suppose everything happens for a reason.'

Sensible as she was, she knew that she had better keep quiet, or else the consequences would most probably be serious. Because of this, she figured that it was better to continue eating as if nothing happened. "I want to catch up on my sleep later. What are you going to do by then?"

"Have a good rest then. I'll go to the company later but come back at noon to accompany you."

"You don't have to do that. I'm fine. Just go ahead with your work." Since Yasmin did not have to go to work today, she would spend her entire day sleeping in peace. How she wished Zachary would not disturb her while she was resting!

"Don't be so moved. I've already made up my mind, and there's nothing you can do to stop me. I'm leaving now. I'll surprise you tonight," he said with a smirk.

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Giving Yasmin no chance to retort, Zachary successfully disrupted her plan.

He walked over to her, bent, and placed a gentle k!ss on her delicate l!ps. Gazing into her eyes, he announced, "This is the morning k!ss. From now on, you will receive at least three k!sses a day. I'm leaving now!"

She was too stunned to react. When she regained her senses, it was too late. Zackary had left, closing the door behind him softly. When she got over her initial shock, warmth spread through her I!ps and she smiled. Gently, she touched her I!ps which had moments ago been devoured by Zachary.

'It turns out love tastes sweet and brings warmth,' she thought, the smile never leaving her face.

On day one of their relationship, Zachary quickly sorted out his business affairs. At noon, he came back and woke up his sleepy girlfriend. Giving her time to get changed, he took her to a high-class restaurant for lunch. This was followed by a series of other activities. They watched a movie, went shopping and also took some photos.

When the two of them went to the theatre, she was surprised to see he had booked a ticket for a r0mantic comedy movie. Yasmin didn't enjoy the movie much. Instead, she changed her focus and looked at Zachary. She was snuggling against him. He was elated at the attention he was receiving.

That was exactly what he wanted. Looking at Yasmin and her loving caresses, he was deeply delighted.

Later that afternoon, although Yasmin hadn't gotten enough fun yet, Zachary said he had a surprise for her at home. So she decided to see what it was.

When she finally entered her apartment, it wasn't happiness but shock that she felt. Her eyes widened as she gazed at her apartment which was beyond recognition. The wall between her apartment and Zachary's apartment had vanished. Instead, it was a wide room. In the middle of the room, there was a brand-new luxurious double bed. Her poor little bed was nowhere in sight.

"Are you satisfied? I suppose we can call this our temporary bridal chamber," Zachary whispered in her ear and he h.ugged her from behind.

He was aware she liked her small apartment, full of their memories. But he had to be practical. After all, it was too small for two people. Without consulting her, he decided to merge these two rooms.

'Do I have a choice to say I don't like it?' she thought to herself, foreseeing the miserable future that would come from living together. She saw Zachary's eyes, they were burning with desire.

"It's alright. But I am surprised how the landlady allowed such a thing to happen," Yasmin said, trying to look calm and composed.

"I didn't have to take her permission considering the whole building is mine," he responded with a tinge of haughtiness.

"Well, sounds like being rich means being stubborn and getting whatever you want." Yasmin let out a helpless sigh. There was no need for her to pick an argument. After all, what's done is done.

"Why do I get the feeling you didn't like my surprise?" Zachary finally asked. He had expected to see a delightful smile on her face, but that never came. He was beginning to worry now.

"No, it's not that. I like it very much," she said quickly. Yasmin's biggest concern was attachment. If she stayed with him day and night, she was bound to get too fond of him. However, after considering this matter for a little while, she concluded it was a good thing. She looked up at Zachary. She noticed he was eager for her approval. She flashed him a genuine smile.

In the end, this decision turned out to be useful. After they began to live together, the benefits began to show one after another. In the morning, Zachary would wake her up. He would drop her off at work. What was more, he insisted on picking her up. Every day, he would take her to grand places for dinner and nourish her with good food and love.

He also allowed her to live a carefree life in the daytime. At night, however, he enjoyed his privileges. Sometimes, Yasmin complained that he gave her special treatment because he wanted his favors returned at night.

All in all, they were enjoying this change. Except for their working hours, the couple spent almost all their time together. Love nourished the two of them. One glance was enough to tell they were glowing with happiness.

Ashley was in the United States. She remained in the affiliated hospital, located in the headquarters of the Dragon Gang.

She hung up Yasmin's call when she noticed Joseph was calling her too. He hadn't contacted her for days hence she felt a surge of excitement at the prospect of talking to him.

"Ashley, I've been very busy lately and couldn't talk to you. But I have called you now to ask you to return. Go back to your family. They will take good care of you." His magnetic voice came from the other line. It was gentle and full of love.

Hearing this, Ashley remained silent for a while, soaking in his voice. Once she regained her senses, she said, "Joseph, I don't want to return home. Can't I just stay here? You are free to do your job. I won't bother you. I just want to be near you."

After the calamity the two of them had faced, Ashley figured he wasn't an ordinary man. His ident!ty was becoming clear to her. She knew Joseph's life revolved around danger. She also knew he couldn't remain with her all the time. He would always have responsibilities he had to look after. However, none of this deterred her from wanting him. She was willing to stand by him, no matter what.

Hearing the voice of his beloved, Joseph felt a pang of sorrow in his heart. He couldn't let her sacrifice her life for him. He repeated the oath he had taken in his heart. After a short pause, he said in a calm voice, "Please listen to me, Ashley. You need to go back home. It's much safer there. If you remain here, you could be hurt again."

She detected firm resolve in his voice. But she continued to insist. "I'm not afraid of anything! As long as I'm with you, I can face anything," she said b.ravely.

Ashley couldn't suppress the feeling of panic that was rising in her heart. It felt like there was an imperceptible crack between Joseph and her. Once the two were separated, the crack would develop into a chasm.

This man had given her a unique sense of security. He also taught her to love deeply. She was willing to devote all her life to him. The truth was, she was afraid of nothing but being separated from him. She got the feeling he would try to push her away.

He cleared his throat and said, "Ashley, listen to me. I promise to come to you as soon as my work here is sorted." He went on, "I have booked you a flight ticket for the day after tomorrow. I advise you to be very careful."

'You said you don't mind devoting your life to me, but I do. I am afraid of polluting your innocent world. I'm afraid being near me will drag you into more dangers. You have a whole life ahead of you. I can't selfishly snatch it for my own happiness,' Joseph thought, feeling a wave of emotion wash through him. With one hand, he grasped the phone tightly. With the other, he tried to touch Ashley's beautiful face reflected on the monitor screen in the monitor room.

Ashley understood he had everything planned. There was no room for refusal. She consoled herself saying perhaps Joseph wasn't lying. He was too occupied with work and couldn't spare time to take care of her. It was best if she went back to a place where she had friends and family.

After a moment of silence, Ashley agreed to his proposal. "Okay, I promise to do as you say. But you have to promise me something. Tell me you will come to me as soon as your work here is done." She paused for a while and when she spoke again, her voice had a tone of melancholy. "I am going to be waiting for you."

'I will wait for you all the time...'

"Okay," Joseph said flatly and quickly hung up the call.

He couldn't say no to her. 'I am sorry, Ashley. I can't give you a peaceful life. I don't deserve this. Please don't wait for me. I hope with time, your memories of me will fade away.'

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After a while, Joseph felt his phone vibrate suddenly. He clicked on it and saw it was a message from Ashley that read, "Joseph, did something happen? Please tell me. I'll support you no matter what."

He lifted his gaze from his phone and looked at Ashley on the monitor. She was sitting on the bed staring at her phone, waiting for his reply. How he wished he could rush into the ward, h.ug her tight, and soothe her heart that was longing for him.

Sadly, he could not. The more hopeful she was, the more disappointed she would be in the end. At the thought of this, Joseph's eyes were filled with pain.

Unable to do anything, he put his phone into his pocket and walked out of the monitor room. He would not feel painful if he could not see her, would he?

Meanwhile, Ashley was staring blankly at her phone and reflected on Joseph's tone when he spoke to her just now. Although she did not want to admit it, she got hurt by his cold and unfriendly att!tude. 'What happened to him? Why was there an invisible gap between us all of a sudden?'

Ashley was immersed in her thoughts for a long time. She did not even take her eyes off from the screen, thinking that Joseph would reply any second. She waited patiently for his response. Even if she just received a single word, she would be more than thankful for that.

At that moment, Lydia suddenly arrived, interrupting Ashley's thoughts. "Ashley, it's time for lunch."

Ashley came to her senses at once. She raised her head to look at Lydia and answered, "Oh, okay!"

Upon saying that, she picked up the spoon and began to eat. Except for the bandage on her right arm, all her other injuries had already healed after several days of recuperation.

Lydia, who was standing next to Ashley, could tell from Ashley's poor appet!te that she was in low spirits. According to Lightning, Ashley was finally going home two days from now, though Lydia did not want Ashley to leave. They had gotten along well and were now friends. As days passed by, she grew to like Ashley more.

"Ashley, when are you going to go back?" Lydia sat on the edge of the bed and looked at Ashley, who was eating quietly. She opened a conversation in hopes that she would be able to ease the sadness in Ashley's eyes, even just for a while.

"The day after tomorrow. Why? Is there something wrong?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to know. I know that you have to go back sooner or later as a tourist. It's just that I didn't expect it to be so soon. I don't want to say goodbye to you just yet."

"It's so sudden, I know. I don't want to leave you either."

"It's okay. You can come visit us in the future. We'll wait for you," Lydia encouraged warmly.

As long as Ashley came, she and Joseph's feelings would definitely be rekindled. After all, their hearts were intertwined with each other.

Lydia had already found out about Joseph's intention. It turned out that he was deliberately pushing Ashley away from him. Although his fellow subordinates could not interfere with Joseph's decision, they knew that such a beautiful and virtuous woman should not be missed. Besides, it was obvious that Joseph and Ashley loved each other, and that was the most important thing.

Of course, they had been trying to change Joseph's decision before it was too late. However, his cold eyes rendered them powerless. As a result, they tried a different approach and went to Ashley instead. The problem was they could not state clearly what their real ident!ty and their purpose were, making their task more difficult to accomplish.

"Okay. I'll see you when I have the chance." Ashley accepted Lydia's suggestion with a smile.

Lydia's enthusiasm enlivened the quiet atmosphere while Ashley ate. They poured their hearts out for a while, and it made Ashley feel better. Once they were done, Lydia told her what to do and what to eat while Ashley was recovering. With that, Lydia took the used plate and let Ashley rest.

As Ashley was left alone in the room, she picked up her phone and sent Joseph a message again. "I want to see you before I go home," it read.

Although it was her last attempt to see Joseph, he did not respond. At last, the day before she returned home came. She decided to spend her day by going to his villa. She hoped that she would find him there, but she did not.

The housekeeper let her in. Ashley found that the place was very clean. Also, it seemed that there were no traces that Joseph lived there. She went to the bedroom and found the booklet that Joseph had gifted her. It rested inside the bedside drawer, and she took it away.

In the past two days, Joseph seemed to have disappeared off the face of the earth. He did not answer her calls nor reply to her messages, making it very difficult for Ashley to look for him.

She finally sensed the seriousness of the situation. Joseph was avoiding her, but she did not know why. He did not give her any explanation as to why he was doing that. She deserved an acceptable reason, did she not? Every night, she looked at the new photo album on her new cell phone. Her once happy memories were now mixed with melancholy and longing. Unable to hold it any longer, she burst into tears.

A tall, lean man entered Ashley's ward in the middle of the night. Through the dim light that made its way inside, he looked at Ashley's side profile while she was curled up in the quilt. As he gazed at her, his eyes turned red, and tears welled up in his eyes. 'I'm so sorry. You're finally going home tomorrow. Please forget me and live a good life. You're better off without me. You deserve to be happy with someone better for the rest of your life.'

In her sleep, Ashley felt that there was a scorching gaze fixed on her. She awoke all of a sudden but saw nothing but darkness.

The feeling of disappointment loomed on her once again. It reminded her of the time when she had been kidnapped and locked in a dark place. Although she was full of despair at that time, the thought that the person she loved dearly would appear kept her sane. Sadly, Joseph did not come this time, and she was disappointed yet again.

Tears welled up in Ashley's eyes. She sat upright and h.ugged her knees in extreme sadness. There was nobody else that could console her except herself. She realized that she had become fragile and weak recently. At the thought of this, tears streamed down her face uncontrollably. "Joseph, why didn't you come to see me? Why?!" she muttered.

Little did she know, Joseph was right outside, peering through the tiny crack at the door. He saw Ashley sitting helplessly on the bed like a fragile doll. He could even hear her faint sobs from time to time. He clenched his fists so hard that his fingernails dug in his palms. For once, he hoped that it would at least help relieve the pain in his heart.

Joseph and Ashley were expressing the bitterness in their hearts. Ironically, they were so close yet so far that they couldn't hear each other.

After quite some time, Ashley finally calmed down and lay down again. Once her breathing became steady, Joseph turned around and slowly walked away.

Early the next morning, Ashley boarded the plane that would take her home at last. Of course, she had professional escorts that would ensure her safety as she returned home. Just like when she came here, she was alone in a foreign country with only simple luggage. The only difference was that she had lost her heart to a man in this journey.

The instant Ashley stepped on the plane, she turned around and looked back at the vast airport one last time. She hoped that she would see a familiar face in the crowd, but the man she was searching for was nowhere in sight. She turned her head in disappointment. Once she was on the plane, she put her phone in airplane mode. Even in the end, she was unable to see him, and he still had not replied to her messages.

'I'm about to travel a long way, but I didn't see you anywhere. I'm scared. Don't you understand what I'm feeling?' Ashley cried silently.

'I'm always by your side, but I'm too ashamed to show myself to you. Can you forgive me for my cruelty?' Joseph thought while looking at the boundless blue sky. His tall figure and lonely demeanor stood noticeable in the bustling crowd in the middle of the airport.

"Ashley has already boarded the plane with the escort. When she returns home, please take care of her as promised," Joseph reminded Mike on the phone dispiritedly. After a moment's silence, he added, "Thank you."

"I know. I'll take good care of my sister. You too take care of yourself," Mike reassured after hearing the reluctance in Joseph's voice.

The two excellent men had reached an agreement for the woman they both loved.

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Half a month had passed inadvertently for other people; but for Ashley, who had just broken up with her boyfriend, the days had passed dreadfully slow.

The day Joseph broke up with her was still fresh in her memory. Ashley received a message from him the day after she just got home; it was a short message, but it was enough to break her heart. "I'm sorry, Ashley. I love someone else now. Let's break up."

There were even two attachments with it; one was a picture of Joseph with a woman Ashley didn't know, and the other was a picture where the two were sleeping on the bed.

In the first photo, they were both smiling happily under the rays of the sun; while in the other photo, they were snuggling in each other's arms on the bed. These photos were taken the day before she came back, which broke her heart even more.

As soon as she saw these photos, she dialed Joseph's number. "How could you..."

"Haven't I made myself clear? You shouldn't call me anymore, because we're over.

You are a sensible woman. You should know that I don't like to be bothered."

Before Ashley could even respond to his cruel explanation, Joseph had already hung up the phone, ruining the slightest hope she had.

'Why did you suddenly change your mind? Why now, when I've already fallen deeply in love with you? What did I do wrong?' These were the questions that Ashley wanted to ask him, but she didn't have the strength to do so. She threw her phone away, but it was not enough to release the pain in her heart.

Tears immediately streamed down her face. The pain was excruciating that she felt her c.hest literally ached.

"Ashley, dinner is ready." A series of knocks on the door interrupted her silent cry. She knew very well that it was her brother, so she wiped her tears.

Taking a deep breath, she replied, "I know. Go ahead, I'll be there in a few seconds."

"Okay. I will wait for you." It could be told from the tone of her voice that she was crying, but Mike held back his own emotions and quietly waited outside her door.

Mike had already received a message from Joseph, saying that he had broken up with Ashley just as planned. He was worried that she might do something stupid, so he rushed to her bedroom as soon as he got off work.

In order to make sure she'd come home in peace, Joseph and Mike decided that it was better to break up with her once she was home.

What Joseph didn't know was that, in the past two days that Ashley was at home, she kept checking her phone to see if she had any message from him. And every time she found nothing, her eyes were filled with disappointment and sadness. At some point, Mike had an urge to take his words back and just let them be happy together, but he didn't.

It was just sad that even though Joseph and Ashley were both deeply in love with each other, and were both suffering as of the moment, Mike had no choice but to break them apart.

"Mike, let's go." Lost in his thoughts, Mike was startled when the door suddenly opened and Ashley's soft voice came into his ears.

"Okay." They went downstairs one after another, Ashley walking ahead of him.

"Mike, I want to start working in the company starting tomorrow. Arrange a position for me."

"You just came back. Why don't you take a few more days off? Work can wait, there's no need to rush. Our parents will be coming home tomorrow, and you should spend time with them since we both know how much they miss you." Only God knew how hard Mike was trying to act normal, as if he didn't know anything.

It was strange because as he carefully observed her, he saw that except for her red eyes, everything else seemed normal. She didn't overreact like he had expected, which confused him.

How could she look so calm and unaffected after she just suffered from a heavy blow? Mike wanted to know more, but he stopped himself from asking. He could only console himself by thinking that it was better to see her turn pain into power and motivation to work harder than to see her destroy her own life because of a broken heart.

Even so, he couldn't be so confident, because he knew that things could go wrong once a person got bottled up. It was inevitable for someone heartbroken to do something harmful to himself or herself. Therefore, he needed someone he could trust to look after Ashley. Naturally, Mike's first thought was their parents, who were clueless about the real story.

"It doesn't matter. Let me go to work tomorrow, so I could familiarize myself with the company affairs as soon as possible. I want my job back, okay?" With the way she talked, it was as if nothing had happened.

Glancing at her, Mike couldn't help but think that the aloof and independent Ashley he used to know was back, as well as her heart that used to be incapable of loving someone.

A part of him was still afraid that she might not have recovered as fast as she seemed, so if diverting her attention to work would help her move on, then he would have to agree to her request.

This was why Ashley had been working in the Guzman Group for half a month now. She had dedicated all her time to her job.

Her life had become quiet, just like before she had met Joseph.

Maybe it was because she had been devoting almost all her time and energy to work that in just a short period of time, she was able to contribute to the Guzman Group. Thus, all the employees who had thought she only got into the company because she was the daughter of the Chairman, were convinced with her sk!lls. She finally gained their respect, without her parents' help.

In the evening, Ashley always spent time with her family. She was happy that her relationship with them strengthened as time went by.

"Mom, we are home." Upon announcing their arrival, Ashley looked for her mother, who was watching TV in the living room.

Simone Finch was an elegant woman. It seemed as though time did not leave any trace on her body. She was still as beautiful as before, and her figure did not change at all, which could make other women envy her.

Sitting on the sofa, Simone turned to look at her wonderful children who just came back from work. "Mike, Ashley, come and sit here with me. Your father is almost done in the kitchen. Let's watch TV first while waiting for the dinner to be ready."

"It looks like Mom is happy with Dad's special treatment." As he spoke, Mike sat down on the spacious sofa in front of his mother.

Speaking of his father, Jack Guzman, Mike regarded Jack as a typical wife slave. It didn't have to be said but Mike had already noticed since he was a child that his father, who was known to be dignified and arrogant, couldn't say no to his beautiful wife. He always prioritized Simone's happiness rather than anything else.

For decades that the two had been together, an unwritten rule was already established: as long as Jack was at home, Simone didn't have to do any of the housework. This explained why their father was the one busy in the kitchen, while their mother was leisurely waiting in the living room.

Only at times like this could Mike taste his father's delicious food, because if there were only him and his father at home, he was always the one in charge of cooking their meals.

"You b.rat, don't talk like that. Why don't you find a lover yourself? You are already in your late twenties, but you haven't found a woman yet. Both your father and I feel ashamed of you." Sensing the resentment in his tone, Simone hit him hard.

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"I'm sorry, mom. I shouldn't have said that. I should learn from my dear old father and treat my dear old mother with more respect."

Mike felt so helpless every time his parents would bring up the topic of him getting married. Although they kept on saying that they couldn't wait to see him walk down the aisle, they never really took it seriously and just enjoyed traveling the world together. However, as soon as they came back from their travels, they would start urging him again, sounding as though they were getting disappointed of him.

In fact, as he grew older and found out more about what love was, Mike became more and more envious of the deep love his parents shared. He admired his parents' relationship so much that he started yearning for a future married life that was similar to what they had. Unfortunately, he still hadn't found the woman that was right for him, so he had to put off getting married.

For so long, Mike had been waiting for someone he could fall in love and spend the rest of his life with.

At long last, Mike found the girl who almost made his heart leap out of his c.hest, though he didn't really get the chance to see her face in the dim light.

From that day, Mike started searching for that girl so he could find his own happiness. And he firmly believed that he would find that happiness soon.

"You insolent b.rat! Who are you calling old? Do I look old to you?" Hearing what Mike said, Simone was a little offended and got angry.

After that, Mike felt a pat on the back of his head. Once again, his mother's way of comprehending things left him at such a loss.

"Ha ha..." Sitting between the two, Ashley couldn't hold back her laughter when she saw her brother being chewed out for no reason.

"Mom, you're not old at all. In fact, you even look younger than me." Ashley wrapped her arms around her mother's shoulder and complimented her youthful appearance in a cheerful tone.

Indeed, Simone wasn't old. Because she got married early and had an early childbirth, she gave birth to her eldest son, Mike, at the age of 22. Right now, she was only in her forties. Add to the fact that she was well-preserved, and with her husband taking good care of her, she still looked young for her age.

The marriage between Jack and Simone was what you would call an arranged marriage. Jack's mother was a good friend of Simone's mother. So, when the

two of them got pregnant at around the same time, they made a verbal agreement to have their children marry each other.

Back then, as someone who just came back home from overseas, Simone, who was only 20 years old, believed that she should be free to choose whom she would marry. Needless to say, she was dead set against the arranged marriage that she had to go through. So much so that on the first day she came back to Ob.raria, she looked for her fiancé, Jack, and threatened to break off the engagement.

At that time, Jack was still working. He was a young and arrogant man, and this was the first time he had ever seen the young and stunning girl whom his parents had often told him about. Although Simone's beauty took his breath away, he didn't like her arrogant tone and also didn't want to be bound by marriage so early.

As a result, the two of them, who almost hated each other's guts, gathered their parents later that day and insisted on breaking off the engagement. Their parents kept trying to persuade them over and over again, but to no avail as they just couldn't change their mind. In the end, they had no choice but to agree, albeit reluctantly.

Perhaps fate moved in mysterious ways. Because of business reasons, the two of them got to meet with each other a couple of times. Little by little, the handsome and carefree Jack, found himself getting attracted to the shrewd and independent Simone.

Thanks to Simone's beauty and elegance, there were a lot of suitors around her. This ruffled Jack's feathers, so he cunningly drove them away one after another. Luckily for him, Simone was quite dense when it came to things like this, so no one succeeded in getting close to her at all.

After working with each other for more than a year, the two of them got to know more about each other, and Simone, the arrogant woman, gradually became bosom buddies with Jack. She became so comfortable around him that she slowly opened up to him about her breakup, disappointment, troubles, and a few other things.

Jack would always willingly lend her an ear. Thanks to this, he found out that not long after Simone came back to Ob.raria she had broken up with her

boyfriend whom she had met abroad, and that she was often hara.ssed by other people at work just because of her good looks. Of course, he also knew how difficult it was for a woman to be in charge of a big company...

However, Jack, who seemed like he could handle everything that was thrown at him, also had his own troubles and didn't have anyone to confide in. As the two of them grew more fond of each other, he found that he had fallen in love with this smart and beautiful woman before he even realized it. He had no idea when exactly he had fallen for her, but she didn't seem to notice anything at all, nor did she seem impressed in any way.

One night, the two of them got wasted after having a few drinks and opened up to each other. Perhaps it was because of the alcohol, or perhaps it was because of their hearts pounding loudly on their c.hests when they moved closer to each other that the two of them got carried away and ended up making love...

After a night of giving in to their carnal desires, Simone, who woke up first, thought that what they did when they were drunk would ruin the genuine friendship that they had. At that moment, she didn't know how she was supposed to face Jack, so she decided to leave first before he woke up and stayed away from him.

However, when Jack woke up and noticed that Simone wasn't by his side, a totally different thought crossed his mind—since the two of them made love last night, he had to take responsibility.

For this reason, Jack didn't stop giving chase to Simone for a long time no matter how hard she tried to avoid him. One was in high spirits and kept on getting back up every time he got knocked down, while the other was anxious and kept running away.

Simone thought that Jack only confessed to her and chased after her because of his sense of responsibility for what happened that night. This kind of cheap love was something that she didn't want. However, when she realized that those really were Jack's honest feelings, Simone inevitably fell in love with him as well. She was charmed by his excellence and gentleness. And she fell even more in love with him because of his sincerity and persistence that would not give an inch.

Three months later, Jack got the results of Simone's pregnancy test. After getting the blessing of their parents, the two of them tied the knot.

From that day forward, their happy life became even more wonderful...

"Ashley, like you said, I just look young. But, do you think that I'm old?" It would seem that Simone took what Ashley said the wrong way and misinterpreted her compliment.

Hearing this, the siblings were left utterly dumbfounded. As expected, it was inappropriate to comment on a woman's age. Middle-aged women didn't want to hear the word 'old'.

"But, I guess you're right. You two are adults now. I just have to accept the fact that I'm getting old," Simone sighed after a moment of silence.

Just as the siblings were at a loss for words again, the head of the family, who was wearing an apron, suddenly came out of the kitchen holding a dish in his hand. Without even trying hard, he lightened up the mood inside the room and said, "Who dares to say that my wife is old? My wife is as beautiful as a flower. Who can possibly compete with her?"

Hearing this, Ashley and Mike glanced at each other and thought that it would be better to just keep their mouth shut.

"Mike, what are you looking at? Come over here and help me prepare the tableware."

Mike still couldn't escape his father's sharp eyes. Receiving a different treatment compared to Ashley, he thought that there was no point in moping about it, so he just shrugged it off and walked into the kitchen right away.

When Mike came into the world, the Guzman family developed this way of thinking that boys should experience life's trials and tribulations, and that girls should be raised in a pleasant and prosperous environment. This principle had been practiced by the Guzman family ever since. And the founder of this principle, Jack, was a dab hand at implementing this unwritten rule.

To put it simply, Jack, the head of the family, had some hard feelings for Mike and always envied him.

Because Simone was pregnant at the time they got married, Jack, who had only experienced making love to her once, was asked to keep a distance from his wife. After Mike was born, Jack had to wait another year before he could feel his wife's touch again. As a first-time mother, Simone got so preoccupied

with the newborn baby that the man who had always stayed by her side ended up receiving little to no attention at all.

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Jack was enraged that his son Mike was perceived as a treasure by his wife. Meanwhile he, a hardworking husband, was neglected. Jack actually forgot the fact that it was because of the unborn Mike, he could have married his wife as quickly as possible.

As a result of this immature intention, Jack deliberately forced Mike to stay away from his mother and neglected him for ages.

"It's dinner time, Honey, Ashley. Let's eat," Jack shouted at his wife and daughter in the living room as all was prepared at the table.

"Dad, the meal you make is always fantastic." Ashley got a lot of food on her plate, and she didn't forget to compliment her handsome and capable father, as she often did.

She relished the comfort she was experiencing at the time. She adored the excitement of a family get-together. Only her closest relatives would now sustain her with such a warm feeling.

"Continue eating more if you like it. Just say it, and I'll do the cooking for you," Jack said to Ashely with a smile. He was overjoyed when his daughter complimented his cooking.

He was very impressed with himself. After getting married, Jack started to learn how to cook. He'd learned the best of it now.

Simone took a piece of meat and put it on Ashley's plate at this moment, stating, "Ashley, eat more. You seem to have lost weight after a trip."

"Thank you, Dad and Mom. You're the best!" Ashley chuckled and shifted her eyes to Mike. "Mike, you can eat more food. Managing a business is tough."

"You're right. You are really the best sister." In response, Mike promptly nodded in agreement.

This scene essentially occurred every day at the home of the Guzman family in the preceding years. Simone picked up food for her children and took good care of them; Jack picked up food for his wife and daughter and tenderly reminded them; brother and sister took care of each other.

"Mike, feel free to eat more. Don't accuse me of being partial." To prove fairness, Simone also picked up a piece of meat and put it on his plate.

"Right. Only my gorgeous mom and lovely sister are the best in the whole world," Mike said with a smile on his face.

"Savor your meal, you piece of sc.um. You can talk about something if you actually cook on your own." For a brief moment, Jack put down his fork and squinted at him.

There was a moment of silence in the dining table.

As father and son, they would unwittingly dispute from time to time, as if they were rivals in their past lives. But in the end, Jack was still victorious. This was a scene that both the mother and daughter were accustomed to.

Mike was required to clean the table after the meal, while Jack left an order that said, "Ashley, come with me."

Ashley went into her father's study room. She took a seat after taking a look around. "What's up, Dad?" she asked.

"Be honest with me, Ashley. What have you seen and experienced throughout your travel?" Jack stared at Ashley and asked directly.

"Nothing pretty much. The environment was friendly and the surroundings were lovely when I was in Mexico," Ashley answered in a whisper as she lowered her head, avoiding her father's gaze.

There was a lot of great stuff there. But the scenery was less appealing than memories.

"Have you had any interesting encounters?" Jack persisted with his questions as if he was performing an interrogation into his daughter.

Ashley glanced at her charming kindhearted father after a brief pause and asked, "Dad, what do you want to say?"

"Well, when you return this time, I assume you're a little down. Is there any way you might tell me what happened?"

While Ashley acted naturally in past days, she only changed her workplace from the Synder Group to the Guzman Group and transferred her residency to the home. When Ashley was alone in silence, the Guzman family's parents noticed the discomfort on her face after careful observation.

As he saw the wistfulness and exhaustion in her eyes as of this moment, he felt really sorry for her and expressed it.

His simple question carried all of her distress to the heart. Ashley was overwhelmed by her father's compassion. "Thank you for your concern, Dad," she said happily. "I was in a relationship in this adventure, and now I'm in peace."

The straightforward response confirmed Jack's suspicions. Jack, who adored his daughter, asked in a cold tone after verifying the response, "Tell me, who dares to discard my lovely daughter?!"

He had always been hesitant to allow his daughter to marry another man when she became older. She was not only honorable and exquisite in Jack's eyes but also sweet and thoughtful. 'The man must be disgraceful to dare hurt my precious daughter like this.' Jack had already exploded into a fit of anger at this point.

He had always believed that his daughter was not a risk-taker or an expressive woman. She had, nevertheless, unveiled her vulnerable nature, and whoever had hurt her would not be forgiven and forgotten.

Ashley rushed to her feet when she saw her father's furrowed brows and quickly soothed him. "Dad, don't get upset. All has been done. It's all in the past."

"What country does he travel from? What precisely does he do?" He calmed down when he realized Ashley's worries and asked coolly.

"Ob.rarian, a businessman," Ashley answered honestly.

"What's their company's field? What's his name?"

"Dad, it's all ended. It's useless to keep talking about it. Why don't we talk about something delightful? Tell me where you and mom went, Dad!"

"You've been independent since you were a child, Ashley. Your mother and I are not troubled about you, but we hope you do not hold any bitterness to yourself. Keep in mind that we will always be there for our baby girl."

Jack didn't press Ashley to continue the conversation as he knew she didn't want to. To comfort her, he reached out and caressed her hand.

"I do understand, Dad. Thank you. Don't be worried or anything. I promise, I am doing great now."

"That's alright. There are a lot of amazing men on the planet. There's no reason to be worried because my daughter is so perfect."

Ashley couldn't help laughing when she heard Jack's proud speech. "Daddy is utterly right. Daddy is the best."

Before leaving the room, the father and daughter shared comforting smiles and conversed for a few minutes.

Her family's concerned looks greeted her as soon as she vacated the room. Her outlook had shifted for the positive. She had the same family warmth even without eternal love.

She had been calm at home after that personal conversation, according to Mike's assumptions. It was not until then could he set heart at rest.

He planned to set up a connection between his sister, Ashley, and his buddy, Zaiden, as it has been said that the best way to repair love wounds was to let her fall back in love with someone new.

Mike offered to visit Zaiden on the third weekend after she arrived from her overseas trip.

She had guaranteed Zaiden that she would see him as soon as she returned, but for several reasons, she couldn't. Willingly, she went with her brother because she had nothing else to do.

In the law firm newly set up by Zaiden, Mike said, "On the weekend, Mr. Bennett, you're still managing to work."

Zaiden was working when he recognized a man's voice and lifted his eyes to the entrance. "Mike, why didn't you tell me in advance you would come?" he asked with a swift smile on his enchanting face.

Zaiden, who had stood up to greet Mike as soon as he finished speaking, saw a glamorous woman walk into the room. To him she said in a lovely voice, "Zaiden."

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"Hi, Ashley! You look so different now. I almost didn't realize it's you. I'm so happy to see you here," Zaiden said with a smile after being stunned for a second.

It had been a long time since they last saw each other. The naive and innocent girl he once knew had grown. With a black shawl and fluffy curly hair, she was now tall and charming. Her outfit consisted of a short sweater and high-wa!sted trousers. Her smile and appeal were delightful to the eye.

"It seems you've learned how to talk to other people properly after being a lawyer. I'm so sorry I haven't gotten to see you sooner." She smiled and handed the gift bag to Zaiden, who remained astonished in front of her.

The last time they saw each other was many years ago. Changing from a casual boy with fashionable outfits, he now looked like a businessman in a suit. His handsome face became more mature. He looked sophisticated and charming.

After taking the gift, he placed it in the corner of the desk. "I'm so happy that you're here. Please feel free to stay here as my guest.

Come sit here," Zaiden said after cleaning up the newspaper on the guest seat.

Since it was Saturday, only the director, Zaiden, was in the office to complete some cases. As a result, he gestured for his visitors to take their seats before heading to the tea room to make some drinks.

Mike began questioning his sister about Zaiden as the latter was leaving for the tea room.

"What do you feel about that man, Ashley?"

"Hmm, he's interesting. He seems serious and regal."

"Two days after you left for your trip abroad, Zaiden returned. It only took him less than two months to build the reputation of his law firm. That man is truly remarkable," Mike praised as he glanced around.

"He remains one of the brightest minds I know." Ashley had nothing but admiration for Zaiden's achievements.

"I believe a great future lies ahead of him."

"Before he returned from the United States, he had had a successful career in there. He surely will build a reputation for himself in here. You compliment him too much, Mike. Moreover, it's rare for you to have a high opinion about another person," Ashley stated in a stern voice.

For a moment, there was silence between them.

Mike's attempt to gauge his sister's mindset by praising his friend backfired when Ashley noticed such an unusual behavior from him.

"What's the topic of your conversation? I thought I heard my name." Zaiden finally returned from the tea room. With a smile, he approached them while holding a tray.

"I'm telling her about your outstanding achievements. It won't be long before your reputation spreads across the world." Mike grabbed a cup of tea and took a sip.

"You're quite generous with your praises. Nonetheless, a person like me without any background can't possibly compete with established businessmen like yourself," Zaiden replied with a smile as he took a seat opposite the siblings.

Since the two men were praising each other, Ashley rolled her eyes. "Fine. I understand that you are both successful individuals. I'm the only one who hasn't attained anything yet."

"Don't think about yourself like that. You are still a wonderful woman. It's just that you prefer to keep a low profile." Zaiden smiled sincerely at Ashley, who looked quite elegant at the moment.

His remarks seemed sensible. Despite her noble background, Ashley was a down-to-earth girl who wasn't hungry for success. She was a good worker and finished every task she was given. In whatever she did, she didn't expect instant satisfaction and achievement.

A chuckle escaped Mike's I!ps after hearing his friend praise his sister. "That's right. Zaiden seems more familiar with you than I am."

"Haha. It's more lively now that you two are here." Zaiden tried to lighten the mood after realizing Ashley's silence. "You should come more often when you have more free time."

Meanwhile, he and Mike were together several times during the past month. As such, they were updated with each other's life. Since Ashley wasn't often with them, Zaiden wanted to talk about her.

Although she spoke from time to time, Ashley mostly just listened to the two men. She retorted a few phrases now and then, addressing Zaiden, whom she hadn't seen in years. She asked him about a few things she was intrigued about, such as his academic experience, career path, plans for the future, and so forth.

Meanwhile, they also asked her about her travel stories. Ashley went into great detail about some of the places she had visited, and she expressed little about her own thoughts and emotions during those trips.

Mike held Ashley's relationship a secret from Zaiden. Instead, he sat quietly and listened to a brief summary of the tour.

For nearly an hour, they reminisced about the old days. Finally, they realized that it was time for lunch. The three of them decided to eat together at a nearby restaurant.

Zaiden was as gracious and humble as he had been many years earlier.

Ashley, the pretty young lady, was as harsh as ever in Zaiden's eyes. Nonetheless, she also grew up to be gentle and graceful.

After lunch, Ashley went back home. After entering her room, her phone rang. She noticed that the caller ID was "Grandpa".

Her mind couldn't help but fall away when she saw it. They wrote this note when she and Joseph were deeply in love. Back then after a conversation with Leonard, she noticed that Joseph casually deleted the first word of the caller ID, which initially read as "Joseph's Grandpa".

Although she never wanted to remember such things, her memories flooded her mind. At that moment, she remembered Joseph's handsome face. He told her, "Let nature take its course," before saving Leonard's number on her phone with the nickname, "Grandpa".

This scene was still fresh in her mind, as though she had just seen and felt it. His slim fingers quickly pressed out two new notes on the phone's screen: "Grandpa" and "Husband", which resembled Leonard and Joseph, individually.

Unfortunately, even the eternal love she believed in couldn't survive the trials of time.

Lost in her thoughts, the phone continued to ring for a while. Finally, she answered it. Although her relationship with Joseph had ended, Leonard should still be respected as an elder.

"Good day! Miss Guzman, I am John Lee, the butler of Marshall family. Do you still remember me? I'm really sorry for disturbing you." Ashley recognized the troubled man's voice as soon as it echoed from the phone.

After introducing himself, John reported, "Mr. Marshall became ill out of the blue. According to the doctor, he was emotionally troubled. He needed the appearance and presence of his family. Unfortunately, Mr. Marshall is currently abroad. I'd like to ask about Miss Guzman's availability to visit and take care of Mr. Marshall."

John couldn't reach the two family members. Joseph was on a business trip, and Zachary's phone was shut off. Worried, the butler called Ashley because of Leonard's emergency illness and the doctor's orders.

Since he was Leonard's personal help, John was already aware of Joseph's separation from Ashley. He did, however, rise to the challenge to call the only future granddaughter-in-law that Leonard accepted.

A concerned look painted her face when she heard of Leonard's condition. "Mr. Lee, you don't need to be sorry. Please provide the hospital's exact address. I'm going to visit Leonard as soon as possible."

John was so pleased to hear her answer on the phone that he immediately gave the hospital's complete address. Finally, he did not fail to convey his grat!tude. In a relieved tone, he said, "Thank you so much, Miss Marshall! The moment Mr. Marshall wakes up, he'll be delighted to see you."

Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 130 - Tips

"Hello, Mr. Lee. How's Leonard doing?" Ashely asked in a soft voice as she didn't want to wake Leonard up. As soon as she entered the ward, she found Leonard lying peacefully on the bed. John was standing beside him.

"Please come with me, Miss Guzman." John lightly bowed to her with respect before modestly directing her to step out of the ward.

"Since this morning, Mr. Marshall hasn't eaten much. About a half-hour ago, he suddenly fainted. I'm terrified." John uttered every detail of what happened to Leonard. "Mr. Marshall passed out because of hypoglycemia, according to the doctor. He was in a terrible mood for a while and didn't even eat much, which contributed to his lack of bl00d sugar. It's recommended not to agitate him. Moreover, it is preferable if his family is with him.

Unfortunately, Mr. Marshall is out of the country. Meanwhile, we can't contact Mr. Estrada. So, I decided to call you. I hope you understand the current situation." As he struggled to explain apologetically, John's face showed signs of anxiousness.

"It's no big deal, Mr. Lee," Ashley said politely as she tapped John's shoulder after hearing the whole situation. "Leonard is struggling from an illness. I should have visited him as a junior. That man has been nothing but kind to me.

Moreover, please don't be so reserved with me, Mr. Lee. Calling me Miss Guzman sounds so distant. Please feel free to call me by my name. I'll go inside and watch him. That way, you can go outside and buy some food. Maybe some nutritious porridge."

"I understand. Thank you so much, Miss Guzman. No, I mean, Ashley," John replied with a grateful smile.

As soon as she reached the ward, a sigh escaped John's I!ps. He headed downstairs for a nutritious porridge.

Ashley was a positively exceptional and loving young woman. Regrettably, Joseph took her for granted. He even left her for another woman. Meanwhile, John was still in distress. In his head, the memory of Leonard's agitation last night was still clear.

After knowing that Joseph had won the heart of Ashley, who himself had regarded as the perfect granddaughter in law long before, Leonard had seemed cheerful lately. Whenever he was free, Leonard often talked to John about the marriage between Ashley and Joseph. He even discussed plans for the wedding, where the couple would stay, and similar arrangements. Out of excitement, he even prepared possible names for his great-grandchild.

Last night, Leonard decided to call Joseph, as he hadn't heard from the latter recently. With a bright smile, he asked about his grandson's relationship with Ashley.

"Joseph, you seem to have a hectic schedule lately. It's been a long time since we last talked. Is Ashley with you? How are you two lovebirds doing?" Several questions escaped Leonard's mouth after Joseph answered the call.

"There's something you need to know, Grandpa." However, Joseph ignored his grandfather's questions. Instead, he seemed to be in a serious mood.

"What is it?" Leonard said in a curious voice.

"Ashley and I are no longer together. She flew back home two weeks ago." Joseph remained calm on the other side of the call.

Since Leonard wasn't sure what he'd heard, he exclaimed, "What are you talking about? Did you do something stupid to Ashley? What did you do wrong?"

"Please, Grandpa, calm down. Don't get mad. We broke up since I'm not the guy for her."

"This is nonsense, Joseph! What on earth have you done? Tell me the truth!" Leonard persisted in his questions, dismissing Joseph's pointless answers.

There was a short minute of silence afterward. Joseph was contemplating how to explain himself. Leonard was not going to stop until he had a plausible explanation.

"I have fallen in love with another woman." Joseph swallowed a lump in his throat.

Falling for another person was the most common reason for ending a relationship. Joseph had no choice but to use this excuse again as his grandfather wouldn't just ignore the issue.

It would probably be best to completely cut off everything related to Ashley now that they were no longer together.

"How could you do something like that? Joseph, you're a sc.umbag! Such behavior is not welcome to our Marshall family. Do you have any idea how much pain you've caused Ashley? How can you do such a horrible thing?" at that moment, Leonard cursed as he heard his explanation.

For a moment, there was silence between them.

Finally, Leonard's voice seemed full of authority and wisdom as he said, "Joseph, listen to me. Ashley is such a good girl. Cherish her while you can or you will regret things in the future."

"I'm sorry, Grandpa. I'll deal with it okay? Just don't be mad," Joseph said apologetically. He felt bothered when he noticed the sudden change in his grandfather's mood.

'I'm sorry for troubling you like this, Grandpa. I know that Ashley is a decent woman. Forgive me for not telling you the truth. Nonetheless, I need to let her go.'

When he heard what his grandson said, Leonard growled, "Joseph, don't you dare marry another woman aside from Ashley. Otherwise, forget that I am your grandfather. Don't ever come back to the Marshall family again."

Although Joseph wanted to retort, Leonard immediately ended the call.

'Don't worry, Grandpa. Ashley is the only girl I will marry.' With longing eyes, he stared at his phone. On his screen was a picture of him and Ashley, both smiling and happy.

Meanwhile, Leonard remained agitated after ending the call.

John was playing chess with Leonard at that time when the phone call happened. After the call, chess pieces were thrown to the ground by Leonard. Immediately, John understood what happened during the call.

He was about to comfort his master. To his surprise, Leonard opened up about Joseph's breakup with Ashley. A sigh escaped Leonard's mouth every time he badly criticized Joseph.

Only John saw how Leonard was devastated by the news. The old man seemed helpless and depressed. However, all he could do was listen to his master.

Most people, when they got old, received their spiritual happiness from something they treasured. For Leonard, it was his grandson's relationship with Ashley and the hope that the two would live happily forever. Unfortunately, all of Leonard's dreams disappeared all of a sudden. The seventy-year-old man became helpless and gloomy.

Leonard became depressed and lost his appet!te. Finally, he fainted in front of John.

It was only after Ashley arrived at the hospital that John breathed a sigh of relief.

After entering the ward, Ashley tucked Leonard in his blanket. All of a sudden, he finally woke up.

As he came to his senses, he looked around him. After a few seconds, he remembered fainting back home. Therefore, he concluded that he must be at the hospital.

"Ashley, what are you doing here?" Leonard asked with a smile after noticing Ashley in front of his bed.

"I came to visit you, Leonard." Ashley noticed that Leonard's eyes slowly became clear. She gave him a tender smile and said, "Leonard, just take a good rest. I'll always come here to visit you."