

## **Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 151 - Tips**

“If you skip work, I’ll cut your salary in half,” Joseph said calmly.

He was adjusting Ashley’s scarf when he spoke. It seemed that he did not even care, even if Zachary was protesting.

Ashley was at a loss for words. Joseph’s words rendered her speechless.

She had no idea what to say. Joseph was the boss, yet he asked someone else to manage the company while he was gone. But now, even though he was back, he still had the nerve to argue with Zachary, who was working very hard for him.

Zachary was displeased by his blatant threat. “You’re the most shameless person I’ve ever met! You’ve been off duty for so long. Not to mention, I’m currently on vacation. How could you do this?”

Yes, Joseph had promised to give Zachary his so deserved leave. However, he gave Zachary a series of tasks early in the morning. Zachary finished those tasks as soon as he could, so he could finally see his girlfriend. On his way back to the company, he happened to see Joseph flirting with the beautiful woman downstairs. He chimed in, not knowing that it would lead to such an annoying situation.

Zachary was utterly shocked by Joseph’s behavior. In order to pursue a woman he liked, Joseph skipped work and threatened Zachary that he would deduct his salary for no reason.

“I’m the boss and I have the final say,” Joseph replied decisively.

“Ha-ha!” Ashley, who was standing aside, burst into laughter.

Zachary felt helpless. Joseph looked at Ashley meaningfully, and she thankfully got the hint. “I’ll go upstairs to see Yasmin. You guys just continue talking.”

“Be careful,” Joseph said gently as he stroked her hair.

With a smile, Ashley nodded and entered the apartment building.

Zachary never expected that Joseph could be this gentle and affectionate.

'Was this my boss's true color? Or was he just struck by Cupid's stupid arrow?' Zachary wondered. He still could not believe that Joseph had changed. The man was usually stoic and cold!

"Let's go back to the company."

Before Zachary could react, Joseph returned to his usual demeanor not long after.

"Fine. As you say so."

Zachary's voice was low and helpless when he spoke. Once Joseph had driven off, Zachary started his own car and left.

'I see. Joseph is only nice to Ashley,' he concluded.

In Yasmin's apartment, Ashley rang the doorbell. Her friend immediately opened the door to welcome her.

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"Ashley, you're here. I didn't know you'd come over. I thought you'd be resting at home," Yasmin said. She was surprised to see her friend in her apartment.

"What do you mean?" Ashley asked with raised eyebrows.

"Oh, don't be shy. I'm your friend, remember? I understand,"

Yasmin answered enigmatically.

"What are you saying? I'm confused." Ashley expressed her confusion straightforwardly.

With a smirk, Yasmin walked towards Ashley and looked at her from head to toe. She paused for a moment and exclaimed, "It's true! Your face is ruddy, your eyes are bright, and your lips are bright red. You must be in a good mood."

Still, Ashley had no idea what Yasmin was trying to say. “Just say it,” she said impatiently.

“Eh? We really don’t have a tacit understanding, do we? Well, I’m saying that you’ve had quite a memorable night.”

Ashley was speechless. Yasmin’s words now dawned on her.

After a moment of silence, Ashley asked curiously, “How did you know that?”

“My boyfriend told me.” This time, Yasmin did not keep her in suspense. She answered Ashley’s inquiry right away. “Zachary told me everything. Ashley, now that you’ve reconciled with Joseph, I hope you’ll finally be happy. You deserve that.”

The reason why Yasmin knew about it was that Joseph called Zachary early in the morning. They were peacefully sleeping in each other’s arms when Zachary suddenly awoke because of Joseph’s phone call.

At that time, Joseph assigned Zachary two tasks: First, acquire the Synder Group immediately; and second, find an appropriate reason to explain to the Guzman family why Ashley hadn’t gone home last night.

Zachary did not understand why Joseph had asked him to do something urgent early in the morning and why it had something to do with Ashley.

Of course, he asked why. Joseph explained to him that Charlie, the heir to the Synder Group, sexually assaulted Ashley last night. Fortunately, he was able to rescue her in time. After saving his damsel in distress, they spent the night together.

This was the reason why Joseph had asked to eliminate the Synder Group immediately. What had happened yesterday was so sudden that he had no time to inform the Guzman family of the reason why Ashley did not go home. However, he could not tell them the truth, so he decided to assign this difficult task to someone he trusted, Zachary.

Honestly, Zachary was glad to see that Joseph and Ashley were finally back together. Even so, he was frustrated because Joseph had entrusted him with the tasks, even though he had not agreed yet.

There was nothing he could do anyway. Joseph had already hung up before Zachary could protest. Not long after, Yasmin woke up and asked him what had happened.

Zachary explained to her everything. But he couldn't think of a reasonable excuse. In the end, he asked Yasmin if she could think of one for the Guzman family.

Originally, Yasmin disapproved of letting Ashley be together with Joseph, especially when he had been unfaithful. However, what Zachary said later changed her mind. "The situation last night proved something. Joseph and Ashley still had feelings for each other. What's more, don't you think that Ashley is miserable without Joseph? If time will heal the love hurt and help her forget the man she truly loves, then how long will it take? Not everyone can fall in love with another person easily. I think it's better to give them one more chance. Obviously, they're still in love with each other. I have a feeling that they'll be happier the second time around."

What Zachary said was true. Yasmin saw with her own eyes how unhappy Ashley had been after returning from abroad. At that time, she did not know how long it would take for Ashley to be happy again. After all, Joseph's love had already rooted in her heart. What was more, Ashley and Joseph had spent the night together. As an onlooker, she could only wish for them to be happy.

After thinking it over, Yasmin finally agreed to help Zachary. She made a phone call to the Guzman family's landline and politely explained why Ashley did not come home all night. She said that a former colleague of theirs threw a party, and Ashley drank too much by accident. Because of this, they had to go to her apartment because Ashley was afraid that her family would be worried. She also explained that Ashley's phone was in her bag and was out of power. Up until now Ashley was still sleeping because of the alcohol.

It seemed to be a flawless excuse. After a moment of silence, Simone expressed her appreciation to Yasmin.

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"I've already explained to your mother why you didn't go home last night. I said that you got drunk at the party and stayed with me the whole night.

Remember not to be caught in a lie,” Yasmin said, seeing her friend worried and apprehensive.

“I know. Thank you,” Ashley replied with a smile. It turned out that her good friend had already helped her solve the pressing problem. She did not have to be anxious anymore.

“Look at you. You seem so happy. How do you feel about your first romantic night last night?” All of a sudden, Yasmin shifted the topic which caught Ashley off guard.

Ashley looked at Yasmin’s mischievous expression on her face. She wanted to reply, “Last night wasn’t the first time!” but she did not have the courage to do so. If she said that, her gossip friend would definitely question her until dawn and would not stop until Ashley told her everything.

“As someone who’s experienced, don’t ask me such a question, okay?”

“Fine. I won’t ask you anymore. But, look at yourself! You were very happy last night, weren’t you?” Yasmin asked while looking at Ashley with a scrutinizing gaze.

Ashley did not know how to respond.

‘Do you really want me to tell you how I feel? How could I be happy? I’m still sore, and my muscles ache.’ She was already accustomed to Yasmin’s straightforward character, but her friend’s words still rendered her speechless.

“By the way, have you heard the news? Let me show you something.”

Yasmin finally stopped making fun of Ashley when she saw that her friend was a little embarrassed. She picked up the remote control on the table and then turned the TV on.

A breaking news was currently being broadcasted. It turned out that the Synder Group had been taken over unexpectedly. To make things worse, the groom of the wedding had disappeared.

The wedding scene was being broadcasted live as well. The wedding, which should have been lively and magnificent, was chaotic and empty. The bride and groom and their families were not there, except for the few guests who

seemed bemused to what was going on. The reporter interviewed one of the staff, and the latter was complaining about the situation as well.

All of a sudden, the screen switched to a live broadcast of the Synder Group's office building and that of the Synder's villa. Neither the CEO nor the senior executives were there, and the company was in a total disaster.

Needless to say, a huge debacle was happening in these places at once. However, the media reporters still did not have any substantial information. Speculations were spreading like wildfire. Some even said that Synder Group had become the thing of the past. This sudden acquisition had caused the Synder family to suffer a crushing defeat.

The ultimate topic of the event was the takeover of the Synder Group by the Empire Group. Fortunately, the representative of the latter promised to the media that they would hold a press conference to give a detailed explanation to everyone.

Seeing the whole fiasco, the media could not help but wonder, 'The sudden takeover of the Synder Group is the fulfillment of the Empire Group CEO's previous declaration to expand the business territory, so it wasn't a surprise. But why did the heir of the Synder Group disappear at the same time?'

"They deserve it! Charlie should die for his lechery!" remarked Yasmin while watching the news report.

Seeing that Ashley was watching TV in silence, Yasmin continued, "Fortunately, you're fine. Otherwise, Charlie would be damned a thousand times more, and it still wouldn't be enough!"

Although Zachary did not explain in detail what had happened to Ashley last night, Yasmin had imagined it. She was worried, and at the same time, furious.

All of a sudden, Yasmin realized that her friend might recall her horrible experience and affect her mood. Because of this, she turned the TV off and said, "Let's not talk about that jerk. Let's talk about something happy."

"Okay. You go first," Ashley replied at once.

The main reason why she was silent was that she was thinking about how Joseph would deal with Charlie. The acquisition of the Synder Group and Charlie's disappearance might have been the result of his wrath.

After experiencing the horror last night, she held a deep resentment towards Charlie. He was despicable and a pervert. He deserved to be punished!

As if in a daze, Ashley looked at Yasmin with bright eyes. Seeing this, the latter enthusiastically said, "I want to ask you something. Afterwards, I'm going to tell you a good news. I'm sure you'll be happy!"

"Go ahead," Ashley agreed readily.

"Do you plan on having a future with Joseph after all you've been through? Aren't you concerned about his betrayal?"

As a matter of fact, Yasmin had always wanted to ask this question. She was just worried that her friend would be hurt if she did.

Ashley and Joseph had unexpectedly returned to what they were. Not only that, they were going to traverse the path of happiness in the future, hand in hand. Ashley should not have any misunderstandings in her heart by then. Onlookers are the only ones who can look at things without bias. They see situations clearly and can also prevent people from getting hurt.

Ashley thought for a moment and then replied solemnly, "He said he didn't betray me. I believe him."

"Why do you trust him so much? Nine out of ten men can't be trusted," Yasmin said. Astonishment was written all over her face.

"I just do. Besides, he has his own reasons," Ashley replied firmly.

She had realized and understood Joseph's painstaking efforts after hearing his side. The pain that she had felt before was now gone.

She would have known last night if he had been insincere, would she not? Everything was all in the past. She did not mind that she had been hurt. After all, the love that they had was impossible to let go.

"You're hopelessly in love," Yasmin retorted with a sigh.

Ashley did not deny Yasmin's comment. It was true, after all. "How about you? If Zachary were to have another woman, would you forgive him and give him a chance to start over? Would you stoop so low as to love him for the second time around?"

"Well, if he dares to find someone else, I'll beat him to death," Yasmin answered without beating around the bush.

"Can you answer my question truthfully? Besides, do you have the strength to hurt him, much less beat him?" Ashley was dissatisfied with her friend's response and felt that it was not at all the truth.

Yasmin paused for a moment to think about it. "Well, if his heart hasn't changed, I'm willing to try again."

Forgetting someone you have loved is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to do. However, if you still love each other, forgiving is the easiest thing to do.

"You're hopelessly in love too, you know," Ashley concluded.

Yasmin ate her words in the end. She must admit, she did not like it. Nevertheless, she turned to Ashley and shifted the topic. "You haven't answered my question yet. What are you going to do with your future?"

"I think we can be together in the future. That being said, I still can't forgive him easily," Ashley finally answered, an expectant look in her eyes.

Suddenly, Yasmin's eyes lit up upon hearing Ashley's words. "Very good! Don't easily forgive a man who has wronged you, or else he won't remember it in the future."

"Thank you for your support. By the way, didn't you say that you have a good news that you'll share with me? What is it?" Ashley changed the topic decisively before her friend could make a long speech to prove her point.

"Wait a minute. I'll go back to my room to get something." She stood up at once and added with a smile full of mystery, "Be mentally prepared."

"Go ahead. I'll wait." Although Ashley was confused, she remained calm and waited for her friend to return.



A minute later, Yasmin walked out of the room with a piece of paper in her hand.

The indifference in Ashley's face suddenly turned into delight and excitement after she fetched the paper and finished reading it. "Are you pregnant?!"

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Ashley was holding the piece of paper in her hand. It seemed to be the test result which stated that her friend was 4 weeks pregnant. Ashley was extremely astounded. Her best friend was going to be a mother!

"I don't want to be pregnant," Yasmin groaned. For some reason, she still could not accept the fact that she would become a mother soon.

She had been sleepy these past few days and had a voracious appetite, which was kind of unusual for her. Fortunately, her boyfriend, Zachary, was concerned about her well-being, so he convinced her to go to the hospital for a check-up.

The result of the physical examination came not long after. According to the results, she was not sick, nor was there anything wrong with her. On the contrary, it was a good news. She was pregnant. However, Zachary and Yasmin had different reactions about the diagnosis.

It took Zachary a long while to accept the result. Once it dawned on him, he excitedly hugged Yasmin and expressed his joy.

Meanwhile, Yasmin was surprised and ecstatic at the thought of her baby. She imagined how busy she would be in the near future.

"You're going to be a mother, aren't you? Then, why don't you have the aura of motherhood?" Ashley teased upon hearing Yasmin's whine.

"You don't understand. Being pregnant means getting married as soon as possible. I don't want to step into the grave of love so early," Yasmin replied with a somber expression.

"Zachary is a great man. Besides, he's very considerate towards you. You shouldn't use the word 'grave' this way."

“Still, I don’t want to get married yet. Children are noisy and annoying.”

“Yasmin, don’t forget that you’re already 25 years old now. It’s not early for that age to get married and have kids.”

“Don’t say that! I’m still young!”

“Okay. You may be young, but you’re going to be a mother soon,” Ashley reminded.

In Yasmin’s mind, she was still young. She looked at Ashley, who seemed to be having fun teasing her, and took her hand. “Ashley, you’d better get pregnant too as soon as possible. That way, our children will play together when they grow up. We can continue having fun!”

Hearing Yasmin’s far-sighted words, Ashley helplessly retorted, “Do you think pregnancy is easy just like a hen laying an egg? And you shouldn’t always think of having fun after you have a child. If someone else hears you say that, they’ll think that you’re a stepmother.”

“Screw you! If this child dares not to recognize me as his mother, I swear that I’ll turn on the stepmother mode once he comes out!” Yasmin touched her flat belly with her hand gracefully. Her voice softened when she spoke again. “Ask Joseph to work harder to make you pregnant so that I won’t be lonely.”

Ashley was speechless for a moment. “Don’t think about me yet. I’m not going to be pregnant anytime soon. When your baby is born, remember to take me as his godmother. If the mother doesn’t love him, I will.”

As a matter of fact, Ashley was fond of children. Whenever she imagined her hypothetical child with Joseph in the future, Ashley’s eyes revealed longing and wishfulness without her noticing.

In all honesty, she was a little envious of her friend. Yasmin was about to become a mother soon. When would Ashley’s turn be? All of a sudden, the crazy scene last night flashed through her mind. She realized that last night’s lovemaking might have had planted a seed. At the thought of this, the corners of her mouth twitched.

“Take care of my baby when the time comes,” Yasmin agreed happily.

On the other side, Joseph and Zachary had already reached the building of the Empire Group. Joseph entered the CEO's office first, followed by Zachary.

"How is it going?" Joseph, who was sitting on the CEO's seat, asked Zachary, who was opposite him.

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything."

"The acquisition of the Synder Group has been done. The media has announced it to the public. As for the other thing, I left it to my wife. She was the one who explained what had happened last night to the Guzman family. It was successful." Zachary's tone, which was formal at first, turned into a proud one at the mention of Yasmin.

Truth be told, it was not difficult for the Empire Group to acquire the Synder Group. After all, preparations had already been done a long time ago. However, Charlie's behavior unleashed Joseph's wrath. The Synder Group would have had the same fate of destruction just by last night's incident alone.

The breach of contract with the Synder Group and the slander on Ashley were what caused this turmoil. As a result, Joseph bought a lot of their shares through various channels, which were then transferred to the Empire Group. Eventually, the Empire Group had become the biggest shareholder of the Synder Group.

Joseph held a press conference and announced that he would acquire the Synder Group soon. The Empire and the Guzman Group cooperated and cut off the clients of the Synder Group, whose reputation was seriously damaged.

In just a few months, everything was going according to Joseph's plan. As expected, the Synder Group was finally struggling, and bankruptcy was only a matter of time. Funny enough, Charlie's actions aggravated the Synder Group's destruction even more.

"Well done. I'm relieved that you did your job well," Joseph remarked. It was rare for him to commend Zachary's efficiency. Then, he added, "You'll be in charge of the Synder Group's state of affairs."

With eyes wide in shock, Zachary protested, “No! Joseph—I mean, Mr. Marshall, you’ve promised that I can have a vacation. You’re a man of your words, aren’t you? You must keep your words!”

Joseph was a cold and resolute man. It seemed that Zachary’s flattery was of no use to him. “A good employee follows the boss’s orders all the time,” he said in a cold and low voice but enough for Zachary to hear.

At a glance, Zachary could tell Joseph, who was a workaholic in the past, had become dissolute. Handing over heavy affairs was very likely to pave way for Joseph to date women. Although Zachary had known him for a long time, he could not help but be annoyed by Joseph’s despicableness.

Yes, it was unusual for Joseph not to actively manage the company. The truth was, he wanted to have more time for Ashley so that he could become her formal boyfriend and marry her as soon as possible.

As the CEO, he had the power to assign tasks to his employees with ease. He would rather have Zachary work on it. After all, the latter was the most efficient employee in the company.

Zachary realized that flattering Joseph was useless. Because of this, he told Joseph the truth why he had been adamant on having a vacation. “Joseph, my wife is pregnant! Our parents are asking us to go back to Olkfield and get married. Please let me go for once! I won’t even ask for your big red envelope. I just want to have a marriage leave.”

There was no doubt that Zachary was so excited about the pregnancy. He had already regarded himself as a married man, even before the wedding. The wife that he had mentioned over and over again was none other than Yasmin.

Also, when he spoke, there was an unconcealed joy and complacency in his tone. Meanwhile, Joseph looked as though he was still struggling to go along his way. Seeing this, a sense of accomplishment arose in Zachary’s heart.

Zachary’s reason for his leave was shocking, and at the same time, convincing. It actually caused a ripple in Joseph’s calm heart. Zachary was going to get married soon. What was more, he got his fiancée pregnant before they got married. All of a sudden, Joseph felt that Zachary was actually more efficient than he was.

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“You are so efficient!” Joseph couldn’t help but compliment Zachary.

“I know. But I must remind you: you have yet to succeed, so you need to work extra hard. Keep up or you’ll get left behind!”

“Zachary, you don’t want your vacation anymore, do you?” Joseph threatened. He was barely able to mask the agitation he felt due to the way Zachary was blatantly ridiculing him.

Zachary put on a flattering smile. “Forget about it. I hope you have a baby soon!”

“I will!” Joseph answered instantly.

He thought to himself, ‘All women like children, don’t they? If Ashley is pregnant, there will be a high chance that she will get back with me!’

The thought of making Ashley pregnant filled his mind, and his mood instantly became better.

Upon hearing what Joseph said, Zachary decided to not make any more comments. Instead, he focused on getting his well-deserved leave. “Do you think I can take my leave now?”

“Sure,” Joseph answered nonchalantly.

Zachary let out a sigh of relief. “Thank you! I’ll be off now then. I need to get home and take care of Yasmin.”

He headed towards the door with a huge smile.

“Wait!” Joseph suddenly called out.

Zachary stopped in his tracks. “Yes?” he responded, turning around slowly. ‘Is Joseph going to go back on his word?’ he pondered as he knitted his eyebrows. Somehow, his heart started beating a lot faster.

Joseph opened and shut his mouth a few times. Finally, he bit the bullet and said, “Tell Yasmin to talk to Ashley more about the benefits of having a child.”

Joseph had despised Yasmin even though the two of them had never met before. But she finally had some use to him now.

Zachary chuckled a bit. Joseph, an all-business man, was asking him for help. He was feeling proud of himself.

But he knew better than to let this how. With a smile, he replied, "Sure. I can tell from Ashley's gentle demeanor that she adores babies very much, so that's not the problem. I think the big question right now is whether you have the ability to get her pregnant."

Despite Zachary genuinely wanting to comfort Joseph and show how willing he was to help him, Joseph found what he said offensive and condescending. With a scowl, he order, "Go now. Go take your leave!"

Zachary was stunned by Joseph sudden hostility. "Are you okay? I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings but I think what I said is very reasonable. Right now, the key point is whether you can do it or not. You know what, forget it. I'm leaving now."

As Zachary tried to explain what he just said, he realized where he made his mistake. What also made him understand that he messed up was Joseph's sharp stare. He indeed hurt the man's ego, and so the best he could do was to go on his way.

After Zachary left, Joseph looked busy. He was writing on pieces of paper, but he was actually not working. He was planning on how to woo Ashley.

He wrote, "I will be Ashley's boyfriend in ten days and we'll get married in half a year. I need to visit her every day to make sure that she is familiar with me and to drive away her pursuers. Meet her family as soon as possible. I need to take to Mike to let him know how I feel about his sister. And I must get her pregnant so we'll get married as soon as possible!"

Joseph was anxious to woo Ashley after knowing Zachary was going to marry and his girlfriend was pregnant.

He checked the whole thing and everything looked like nicely planned. If there was something he was proud of himself, it was his attention to details.

That afternoon, after chatting with her friend and having a meal in Zachary's house, Ashley drove Yasmin's car back home. Her car was still parked in Joseph's villa.

As soon as she entered the house, Jack walked up to her and asked in a concerned tone, "Ashley, why did you go to drink? How are you feeling now?"

Looking at her parents' worried eyes, Ashley felt guilty to have made them worried.

Before Ashley could say anything, Simone said, "It's good that you're back. Next time, if you are upset, just tell us. It's easy for a drunken girl to get into trouble out there. Remember to invite Yasmin to our house next time. You should thank her for taking care of you for a whole night."

"Thank you, Dad and Mom!" Her parents truly cared for her and understood her. She couldn't be happier.

"Silly girl, don't be so formal with your parents. You have a hangover. Go back to your room and have a good rest," Jack advised his daughter kindly.

"I love you two so, so much! But yes, I'm a bit hangover. I'll go back to my room now," Ashley responded with a smile.

As soon as she was out of earshot, her parents began whispering to each other.

"Why do I feel that Ashley is in a good mood today? I haven't seen her laughing so happily for a long time!" Simone said.

Jack answered, "I noticed that, too. Has she forgotten about bastard already?"

"Yeah, I guess so. I'm just so happy to see our daughter look so happy and confident."

"Yes. She's finally happy again. I'm going to ask Mike who the hell dared to dump my daughter. I'll teach that man a lesson he'll never forget!"

Jack knew his daughter: it was not easy for her to recover from a heartbreak. There weren't many things he could do, but he could make sure that the man who hurt Ashley wouldn't come back.

“Our kids will take care of themselves. It’s not appropriate for us to interfere with their affairs. When Ashley figures it out, she will be happy. I think Zaiden is a good man.”

Simone was open-minded. Young women always meet jerks and players. She understood that it was a part of life, and so she never meddled in her daughter’s love affairs.

“Humph, I don’t think so. Whether or not Zaiden is a good man remains to be seen.”

“You just don’t want your daughter to get married, do you?”

“So what? If someone wants to woo Ashley, he needs to pass my tests.”

Simone chuckled.

Joseph didn’t know that the biggest obstacle on pursuing Ashley was not her attitude, but his future in-laws.

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At night, in the Marshall’s house.

John, the butler, saw Joseph’s car driving into the parking lot in the courtyard. He immediately alerted Leonard, who was taking a walk within the premises of the villa, and said, “Mr. Marshall, Mr. Marshall is back!”

“I know,” Leonard answered indifferently. However, it seemed that he had no interest in Joseph’s arrival as he just stretched himself and continued walking.

“Mr. Marshall, don’t you care about the sudden acquisition of the Synder Group by the Empire Group today?”

Leonard, who had been disdainful of having a cold war with Joseph, had ignored his grandson for almost a week. As an onlooker who was looking at Joseph and Leonard, John tried to give Leonard an out.

“It’s none of my business. Joseph has his own reasons for that, and nothing about it concerns me.” Obviously, Leonard remained stubborn as a mule and unwilling to accept John’s notice.



Ever since Joseph had returned and taken over the Empire Group, Leonard retired with ease. The business was no longer his concern. After all, Joseph was the one who garnered the world's attention and praise. Leonard no longer needed to worry about the company and its affairs.

John was speechless, so Leonard reassured him, "I've told you that you don't have to worry about us. Only if he softens his attitude and takes the initiative to admit his mistake will I forgive him. I've warned him enough not to hook up with other women abroad. Now that he has done it, I will only accept his word if he promises that he has cut off with that woman."

Leonard's words made John put his hand on his forehead in exasperation. Joseph and Leonard were so stubborn. If things went on like this, when would they get along?

John pondered for a while and then advised, "Mr. Marshall, why don't you think about it in a different angle? This matter has a foregone conclusion anyway. Although Mr. Marshall had been unscrupulous for having an affair with another woman, it's better than having none. This way, you won't have to worry about trivial things like carrying on the Marshall family's lineage."

Although John had good intentions in his words, Leonard misinterpreted him. "If that happens, I will forbid those women to bear the child of the Marshall family. It doesn't matter if they have had. I won't acknowledge them anyway."

John could not help but sigh. 'How could he be so stubborn?! Where is Leonard, the one who used to clamor about having a great grandson?' He was at a loss for words.

"I wonder why Ashley hasn't come to see me since Joseph returned." Leonard lowered his head and sighed with melancholy.

John could not help but heave a sigh as well. "Who is really your grandchild, Mr. Marshall or Ashley?"

"Well, they're supposed to be my grandchildren. But now, I'm convinced that Joseph isn't," Leonard answered without hesitation.

He recalled Ashley's thoughtfulness and Joseph's cold demeanor and felt disgusted with the fact that Joseph had no plans on admitting his mistakes nor

being reconciled with his grandfather. It was a shame that Leonard would rather have Ashley be the head of the Marshall family.

While John was mourning for Joseph's low status in Leonard's heart, a low and gentle greeting came in. "Grandpa, Mr. Lee."

"You're just in time. I have something to tell you," said Leonard to Joseph. As he spoke, he slowly sat down on a chair by the path.

"I have something to say as well," answered Joseph as he sat down next to Leonard.

It was the first time that Joseph had taken the initiative to get close to Leonard after a long time. Surprised, Leonard moved his chair away from Joseph and said in a serious tone, "You go first."

Leonard expected that Joseph was finally going to admit that he was wrong for loving another woman. As a result, he decided not to waste his energy on warning Joseph not to have children outside and just gave Joseph an unfriendly attitude.

Joseph ignored his grandpa's childish temper and instead asked, "Grandpa, are you thinking about Ashley?"

Truth be told, Joseph was walking in the garden a while ago and overheard John and Leonard talking about who was his grandfather's grandchild. Joseph was very happy to have heard that.

"Yes, I miss Ashley. Is there a problem?" Leonard admitted frankly.

Then, he heaved a sigh and added, "Sadly, a blind man drove her away. Do you know who I'm pertaining to in my sarcasm?"

For a second, Leonard's strong resentment radiated in the huge courtyard. Unfazed, Joseph asked, "Grandpa, do you want Ashley to come to our house?"

"What's the point? She won't even see you after all you've done to her." Without beating around the bush, Leonard admitted the truth. "Sometimes, I wish you wouldn't come back. That way, Ashley would come and see me. Seeing your face irritates me."

As soon as Leonard finished his words, John, who was standing aside, felt a chill down his spine. He presumed under normal circumstances Joseph would be silent, and his aura would seem that it had dropped a few degrees in a second. Leonard, on the other hand, would not be any better. He would exude a disdainful temperament, which he had suppressed for so many years. It seemed that an even colder war would ensue after their dispute tonight.

Meanwhile, John was still thinking about how to ease the atmosphere before the dispute between the two broke out. To his surprise, Joseph chuckled faintly. It would not have been noticeable if John was not observing them intently. "Now that you've made it clear that you can't stand my presence here, it seems that I don't have to bring Ashley here to see you in the future."

Leonard was silent for a moment as though processing what Joseph had just said. "What did you say? What do you mean that 'you don't have to bring Ashley here in the future'?" he asked suspiciously.

"I said what I said." Compared with Leonard, who now seemed to be overjoyed, Joseph was expressionless.

Fortunately, John came to his senses immediately before Leonard's look of suspicion faded away. Then, he happily explained to Leonard what Joseph had just said. "Mr. Marshall, Mr. Marshall is saying that he has finally been reconciled with Ashley. Don't you think so, Mr. Leonard?"

Although the news was unexpected, what mattered was that it came. With an icy cold gaze, Leonard turned to Joseph and asked, "Is it true? My dear grandson, I'm not in good health. Please answer me clearly."

"Grandpa, it's not your fault that you're getting older. However, you should pay attention to your words. One second you were annoyed when you saw me, and the next second you said that I was your dear grandson. You're so fickle," Joseph remarked when Leonard suddenly became nice to him.

"You bastard, you're not happy when you don't piss your grandfather off, aren't you?" Leonard did not get the answer he wanted, but he finally understood. He stood up from his seat and patted his grandson on the back of the head jokingly.

"Ahem. Mr. Marshall. Please calm down," John reminded when he saw that Leonard was too excited. He still had not gotten over Joseph's jests, especially when it only came once in a while.

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“Explain and make it clear to me.” Leonard had calmed down a little. He took his seat and began to address his grandson.

“There is nothing to explain. It’s as clear as the day. My wife will only be Ashley.” After being slapped, something awoke in Joseph. His face was set in determination.

Once these words left his mouth, Leonard regarded his grandson warily. “What about the woman abroad? Don’t you think it’s unfair for Ashley to be with someone who isn’t loyal to her?” Leonard reasoned.

John gaped. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

Leonard had put everything rather too bluntly. He had expected Leonard to be overjoyed. Instead, he seemed suspicious.

Joseph was rendered speechless at his grandfather’s straightforward manner of speaking.

‘Am I really your grandson? Rather than encouraging me, you are discouraging me!’ he thought to himself, exasperated.

Leonard continued to gaze at him, a frown creeping on his face. He was waiting for an answer and Joseph had no choice but to give one. Clearing his throat, he said, “Grandpa, it is evident from your words that you don’t consider me important. You have no affection or—“

Before Joseph could finish his sentence, Leonard waved his hand impatiently. He had no patience for his grandson’s tricks. “Cut the crap! Answer my question instead of trying to gain my sympathy. Tell me! What about the woman you hooked up while you were abroad? Do you intend to date two women at once? Why are you doing this to Ashley? Can’t you just let her forget you?”

It had been two days since his grandfather’s attitude towards him had changed. However, for some reason, the words he spoke now felt very belittling. In spite of himself, Joseph felt a pang of pain in his heart. Shrugging it off, he said firmly, “Is that what you think of me? Grandpa, believe it or not, there is no woman abroad! There is only Ashley.”

“Tell me the truth!” Leonard demanded again, not believing him.

“I am speaking the truth,” Joseph replied back with great seriousness.

There was something genuine in his expression. When Leonard next spoke, his tone had softened. “It doesn’t matter what I think. I want to know about Ashley. Does she trust you?”

“Yes, she does.” Joseph nodded.

A brief silence ensued. Leonard thought about it and felt a sudden jolt of happiness. To show his approval, he kindly patted his grandson’s shoulder and said in a vigorous tone, “I was right. The Marshall family has never raised a playboy nor will they ever do. I am glad to hear this.”

As soon as he finished speaking, a gust of cold wind blew past them, making everyone shiver.

“When will you marry her?” Leonard asked, his mouth crinkling into a smile, the former Leonard who barely spared a glance at Joseph disappeared. He went on, “I am eager to hold and play with my great-grandson.”

Hearing this, Joseph said, “Next year.”

“What? Next year?! What’s the need to delay it?” Leonard’s smile disappeared to be replaced by a doleful frown.

“Mr. Marshall, please calm down. This year is coming to a close. Next year will start in about two weeks,” John explained quickly, worried that Joseph would once again be attacked by his grandfather.

“Grandpa, what has happened to your sense of time?” Now it was Joseph’s turn to taunt his grandfather.

“You b.rat, you know how to piss me off! Quite an expert at that. Let me remind you, it’s because of you my memory has degraded. I am constantly worried about you,” Leonard said and snorted.

“Yes, everything bad that happens is my fault,” Joseph admitted, not in a mood to fight again. He went on, “Things between me and Ashley haven’t

become official yet. If you are eager to play with your great-grandson, then tell me what you would do.”

Joseph had indirectly implied he needed help. Leonard stared at him haughtily and said, “Why are guys these days such a chicken? When I was young, I chased after your grandmother and finally won her heart. I took no help from anyone. I can only tell you one thing. Follow a do or die attitude!”

Listening to yet another taunt, Joseph was furious. ‘I don’t need anybody’s help. I only said that because you look so bored, in need of an activity to keep you occupied,’ Joseph thought to himself but remained silent.

Leonard shook his head and said, “Well, look at you. You are so weak. I will call Ashley over here. I hope you know what to do after that.” Seeing his grandson had lapsed into a sullen silence, Leonard decided to cheer him up.

“Grandpa, it’s quite windy out here. Let’s continue this discussion at home,” Joseph suggested, taking in his surroundings. The bright moon rose into the sky. It was quite late and the wind started to get violent. The flowers in the garden were swaying under its power.

Everyone was in good spirits tonight. Joseph was eager to have a good chat with his grandfather. He wanted to revive their strong relationship which had weakened over the past few days. In the process, he also wished to ask him about ways to win Ashley’s parent’s hearts.

All in all, they enjoyed a joyous conversation. The atmosphere became warm and harmonious.

It was late night. Zachary and Yasmin were in their apartment.

“What were you discussing with sister-in-law today?” Zachary, who had just taken a shower, climbed onto the bed and asked.

Yasmin knew there was only one girl he referred to as sister-in-law. He was talking about her friend Ashley. She thought for a few moments and said, “Nothing much. Just a casual talk.”

“Is that all? Did she mention something important?” Zachary pressed curiously. He wanted to know if Ashley had mentioned his friend.

“Actually, yes. She asked me a question that I thought was quite serious,” Yasmin said. She knew the reason behind Zachary’s question.

“What question?” he asked, staring at her confusedly.

“She wanted to know if I would forgive you if you had another woman.”

“What did you say?” Zachary asked, staring at her a little apprehensively.

“It doesn’t matter what I said. I want to know whether you will do something of that sort one day!” Yasmin closed the parenting book she was occupied with. Her gaze was fixed on him now.

Seeing that Yasmin was seriously waiting for an answer, Zachary managed a smile and said, “I love you. Why will I even look at another woman?”

Yasmin wasn’t satisfied. “Be serious for once! Think it over before you give me an answer. I want nothing but the truth.”

Yasmin had seen the world enough to know that nine out of ten men were playboys. Even though Zachary sounded firm, she was dubious. At present, they were a new couple. But with time, his feelings for her could change. She didn’t believe in fairytales. She believed in reality.

“Yasmin, how can you doubt my genuine love? This is not right. Don’t test my patience. If I get angry, the consequences won’t be pretty!” As expected, the smile left his face. Instead, he got a little bit serious and pinched her face.

Yasmin patted his hand resting on her face and said fiercely, “Zachary, I remember the promise you made. You told me if you ever cheated on me, I am allowed to break both your legs. I hope you still remember it.”

“My dear wife, if it ever comes to that, you are free to kill me. No question asked!” he responded. As he moved closer, her delicate and lovely fragrance filled his nostrils. In an instant, his flirtation mode was on.

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Yasmin felt Zachary’s warm breath on her neck and figured that he was thinking about something.

However, she did not stop him this time. She threw the book aside and lifted his head, which was buried in her chest, and gave him a long and passionate kiss.

While he was busy indulging himself in her kiss, she suddenly reached out for a piece of paper from under the pillow behind her.

“Stop. Zachary, look.” Zachary had put his hands into Yasmin’s cotton pajamas, making her gasp in anticipation.

Nevertheless, she remained immune to his charm. While looking into Zachary’s confused eyes, she waved the laboratory report in front of him and asked, “As a father-to-be, have you forgotten what the doctor has said?”

Judging from his looks, Zachary was clueless. Yasmin shook her head in disappointment and sighed. “What a disappointing father! This baby will despise you if you keep being careless, you know?”

“Our baby hasn’t been born yet. How could he look down upon me? Besides, it’s your fault. You must’ve led me in on purpose. Was it interesting to see me burning with desire?” Zachary was unhappy that he was unable to get what he wanted. It did not help that Yasmin was looking at him with a sly smile at the corner of her mouth.

It was only yesterday when he found out that his girlfriend was pregnant. Well, he could not blame himself. After all, he was a man with a strong sexual desire, especially when his beautiful girlfriend was in his arms.

Now that Yasmin reminded him of what the doctor had said, Zachary finally remembered. According to the doctor, they must abstain from having sex in the first trimester of the pregnancy. Zachary looked at Yasmin, who was smiling at him mockingly, and felt that the baby was no longer adorable.

He took a few deep breaths to cool the heat and fervent desire in his body and slowly said, “Honey, won’t you allow me even after the first trimester?”

“What if I won’t? Will you still dare to touch me?” Yasmin asked, not wanting to lose in their little squabble.

Of course, Zachary had no choice but to admit defeat. “No, I won’t. How could I not listen to you?”



“From now on, you have to be more careful. Just so you know, I’m pregnant with the child of the Estrada family. I’ll probably forgive you if you hurt me, but if you do anything that could harm the baby, your parents will be disappointed in you,” Yasmin lectured while pinching Zachary’s handsome cheeks.

“Yes, you’re right. I’ll keep it in mind,” he answered obediently as though he were a student who was being reprimanded by his professor.

“By the way, I want to ask you something,” Yasmin said while looking at him sternly.

“What is it?” Zachary curiously asked.

“Well, studies have shown that the probability of men cheating on their pregnant wife is high. Would you do the same as them?” Yasmin lifted her gaze and stared at him in the eye.

Zachary had heard that question before. To console his pregnant girlfriend, he gently hugged her and whispered words of reassurance in her ear. “Studies have shown that women become sentimental during pregnancy. Aren’t you like that?”

“Shut up. I want to hear your answer.” Yasmin pushed him on the chest and pouted.

Although she did not want to admit it, she noticed that she had become quite an over-thinker when she got pregnant. She was unhappy about it as her thoughts were negative and caused anxiety. For example, she imagined that Zachary was unfaithful to her while she was pregnant. Even though she was sure that he could not do such a thing, she could not help but ask for her boyfriend’s affirmation.

“I will never cheat on you. Never! Mark my words. If I do, do whatever you want to me.” Zachary put his hand on her shoulder and gave her the reassurance she needed.

Yasmin lowered her gaze and did not say anything, so he continued, “I know we haven’t been together for a long time. Even so, you know that I have loved you from the very beginning. If you feel insecure, we can go to the Civil Affairs Bureau right away and get married then and there. What do you think?”

Yasmin, who had become sentimental and worried these past few days, felt reassured upon hearing Zachary's words full of sincerity. She gazed at his earnest face and hugged him by the waist, and said, "I can't help myself from being emotional, but now, I am at ease. I believe in your love for me. Don't worry. I won't ask you this question again."

She had always known that Zachary would be good to her. His unconditional love made her extremely happy and satisfied.

The future is unpredictable. The most important thing that a person can do for now is cherishing the people in front of you.

"Believe me. No matter what happens, I will protect you. Don't forget that you're the one I love the most." Zachary stroked her hair contentedly while she was in his arms and added, "By the way, what was your answer to Ashley's question?"

It was quite a complicated question. Zachary was curious what Yasmin's response was when she was asked whether she would forgive him if he cheated or not. To a certain extent, this could also prove how much she loved him.

"Well, I said that I would forgive you because I didn't want to give up our love so easily," Yasmin answered shyly.

"So, you love me so much. Ha-ha! Don't worry. That won't happen." Now that Zachary heard her love confession, he was satisfied as well.

All of a sudden, it occurred to him that that question had something to do with Ashley. Her answer to that question would determine her feelings towards Joseph. At the thought of this, he gently nudged Yasmin, who was nestled in his arms, and asked, "What was Ashley's answer?"

"I just copied hers," Yasmin replied with a shrug.

"Fair enough. Are she and Joseph getting back together soon?" Zachary asked excitedly upon hearing her response.

"Well, let's wait and see, shall we?" Yasmin replied with the same excitement as him.

'Finally, their misunderstanding has already been cleared up. They still love each other, after all. It's only a matter of time before they officially get together. If this goes on smoothly, they'll be together in no time,' she pondered.

"I'm sleepy. I'm going to bed now." While in Zachary's warm embrace, Yasmin raised her head and looked at him with sleepy eyes.

"Okay, I'll make the bed," Zachary replied dotingly.

Just yesterday, he called Yasmin "a lazy cat" because she was always sleepy. But now, he knew the real reason behind her sleepiness. While gazing at her gentle face, his heart was filled with delight.

'I'm glad I met you and didn't miss the chance to be with you. Thank you for making me happy all the time.' Just before he turned the lights off, he stared at Yasmin, who was sleeping peacefully beside him, affectionately and reflected on his deep love for her.

## **Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 158**

### **- Tips**

The next morning, Ashley rode to work with her brother in his car.

From the corner of his eye, Mike looked at Ashley. He noticed she was eerily calm. "Ashley, do you know that Joseph has returned?"

Since there was cooperation between the Empire Group and the Guzman Group, the news of Joseph's arrival reached Mike pretty soon. In spite of this, he had decided against speaking about it with his sister. However, yesterday, the news of the acquisition of the Synder Group by the Empire Group came out in the public. It was widely reported hence it became common knowledge to everyone that the leader of the Empire Group had personally inspected the new commercial places. He assumed Ashley knew about his arrival.

"Yes, I am aware. What's the matter?" she asked nonchalantly.

"How is it going to be if you come face to face with him in the future?" he asked curiously.

Ashley had kept her intimate relationship with Joseph a secret from her family. It was only natural for her brother, who was oblivious of everything, to be concerned about this.

“Nature will take its course. There is no need for you to stress over it,” Ashley replied in a rather indifferent manner.

She wanted to come clean and confess everything. However, things hadn't become official yet. She saw no point in telling him now. She really didn't want to stress herself over it. From what she knew, Joseph would take care of everything. She simply had to wait for the plans he had.

Mike noticed Ashley was eerily calm and hadn't shown an ounce of sadness at the mention of Joseph. “Ashley, tell me the truth. How do you feel about Joseph?” he asked.

Mike knew the reason behind their breakup. He couldn't let her walk that path again. If the two of them met again, he knew there were chances for them to get together. The flame from the past could be rekindled. He wouldn't let that happen at any cost. It wasn't that he hated Joseph. In fact, Mike liked his character. If it wasn't for his dangerous background, he would have been happy with their relationship. They were perfect for each other.

“Mike, why do you seem determined to bug me with Joseph's name?” Instead of answering his question, Ashley asked him a question. It was beginning to get quite annoying.

“Don't dodge my question. Please answer it honestly,” he insisted.

Her brother had hardly mentioned Joseph after their breakup. She couldn't help but feel a little confused as she watched him talk so seriously about Joseph as of this moment. At first, she was about to lie. However, in the end, she said firmly, “I still love him.”

Having gone through so many hardships with Joseph, her love for him had only grown. She knew he was the man she wished to spend the rest of her life with.

As soon as these words left her mouth, a trace of seriousness flashed through Mike's eyes. He had known Joseph had a big place in his sister's heart. It had been more than a month since their breakup but her love hadn't reduced a bit.

The two of them sat in dumb silence. It was Ashley who finally broke it. "Mike, I have answered your question. It's your turn to tell me why you have decided to ask me these questions today!"

"I asked them to check if my suspicions were right and make sure you lead a happy life." He made no effort to hide his disappointment. He went on, "Joseph is not an ordinary man. You can't expect a peaceful life with him. Ashley, take my advice and forget that man."

On learning Ashley had been injured while abroad, Mike had sent someone to investigate Joseph's background. The things he learned were quite alarming. At first, they couldn't figure anything out. After a thorough investigation, they couldn't find Joseph's files in the primary and middle schools as named in his background information. It felt like such a person had never existed there.

This notched his suspicion even further. Mike wanted to get to the bottom of this and figure out what he had done during his primary and middle school years. If there were no records of it, then how did he manage to become an outstanding student of a well-known university in the United States? Besides, Joseph had said he would look after business affairs after Ashley left. What business affair was he talking about? Why couldn't Mike find out anything about that?

Therefore, according to the investigation done on Joseph and his whereabouts, it seemed pretty clear he had two identities. One didn't have to be a genius to know that this second identity was a dangerous one. It had the ability to cause serious injuries to his sister.

Love wasn't all it took to lead a happy life. Happy life required peace. If being with Joseph meant Ashley's life would be in danger, then it was best if she stayed away from him.

Mike's face grew solemn. Seeing this, Ashley thought for a moment and said, "Mike, you haven't told me anything that I don't already know. I am aware he isn't an ordinary man. However, I don't care."

There was a firm resolve in her voice. Mike remained frozen for a while. Her words reverberated in his mind. She just confessed his identity didn't matter to her! She was so blind in love, she couldn't see anything.

Mike turned and his eyes bore into her. He let out a heavy sigh. 'My sister who knew nothing about love is long gone. Now I am dealing with a woman who is head over heels in love. She has grown up and is capable of forming her own opinion about things. She won't let me intervene in her personal matters,' he thought. He couldn't understand if her growth was a good thing or a bad thing.

Once again he decided to explain. "Ashley, have you really taken time out to consider his dangerous background? Is that what you are going to do? Perhaps you don't care enough about yourself, but what about our parents? They are going to worry about you all the time. Are you so madly in love that your family means nothing to you anymore?"

"Mike, don't you think you are being too harsh and exaggerating things? I admit I might not lead a peaceful life. However, it isn't like you said. My life isn't always going to be in danger. Believe it or not, Joseph is capable of protecting me." After a short pause, she continued, "As for our family, how can you even say such a thing? I care for you all more than I care for anyone! You are wasting your time assuming things. You have no reason to worry about my safety."

Once she was done speaking, she recalled the serious injury she had suffered. That was how she had learned his true identity. Every time she was in danger, Joseph would appear and protect her. No man could give her such a strong sense of security! And the best part was he wasn't a selfish man. He told her his concerns about her. He gave her the option to leave, worrying his dark world would contaminate hers.

How could she leave a man who loved her more than he loved himself? How could such pure love not tug at her heartstrings? She would rather live a short life with him than a peaceful but loveless life with another man. If luck was on their side, then perhaps they could spend the rest of their lives together.

"Ashley, I want nothing but your happiness. I am not your enemy. I want you to see you are wishing for the impossible. And let's not forget he has betrayed you. If a man does that once, there is nothing that will stop him from doing it again!" Mike spoke these words, hoping it would knock some sense into his sister.

“Mike, what’s wrong with you today? Did he do something to you?” Ashley asked, unable to understand the reason behind this hostility.

“No, he has done nothing to me. I am concerned about you and your future,” he said.

“Your words are exaggerating the situation. I don’t think I am hoping for the impossible. And our future isn’t going to be as eventful as you think. On the contrary, after having been with each other through thick and thin, our love has grown more. We will definitely have a happy future.”

Mike stared at her unyielding face and asked, “In that case, you don’t mind his betrayal. So you have decided to let it slide? It won’t be easy to guard him against such a thing. It might happen again.”

“Stop saying that! He didn’t betray me. And even if he did, I know for a fact that he still loves me. I would be willing to offer him a second chance,” she retorted angrily. As Ashley expressed her thoughts, her voice sounded calm and resolute.

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“What do you mean by ‘He didn’t betray’?” Obviously having not got the point, Mike asked in surprise, “Have you been in contact with Joseph?”

Ashley did not expect that that would be the first thing he would ask about. “Mike, that’s not the point! The point is, I’ll give him a chance. You can’t do anything about it.”

Only then did Mike realize that his sister’s stubbornness would not waver, no matter what he said. Joseph’s betrayal was the least of his problems. However, it seemed that Joseph and Ashley were planning to get back together again.

For a moment, a deafening silence filled the air. It was Ashley who broke it. “Mike, you probably don’t understand me right now, but you eventually will. One day, you’ll love someone, and that someone would probably betray you unintentionally. You’ll be hurt, I know. But, that pain means nothing, especially when you both love each other. I’m sure you’d be willing to give her another chance.”

Mike did not deny that her sister's view of love was true. Even so, he felt that her assumption was ineffective to him. Betrayal hurts so much that it seems that starting over is almost impossible to do. Not only that, it has nothing to do with male dignity but the purity of love the two people have.

However, one day in the future, Mike did experience this betrayal and was in extreme pain and desolation. But eventually love conquered all.

"Well, it seems that my dear sister has grown up and can no longer be convinced otherwise. I hope that you'll think about what I've said today. Your choice in love, even your marriage, is like a gamble in life. One wrong move, and you'll be risking everything you've built, even yourself. You should think twice before you make a decision," Mike said earnestly.

"I understand what you mean. But, didn't you say that I've grown up? Just trust me on this. Let me try and see for myself. If I realize that this is a mistake, I'll give up at once, even without you telling me." When Ashley spoke, her eyes were full of determination. It seemed that Mike's words were of no use to her.

"It's good that you understand," Mike concluded with a sigh. He realized that it was futile to persuade her, so he finally stopped.

"Anyway, don't just talk about me. When will you take my sister-in-law home?" Suddenly, Ashley shifted the topic to her brother.

When Mike returned home late not long ago, he told his family that he had a girlfriend. Sadly, Ashley had been preoccupied with Joseph's return that it was only now that she remembered her future sister-in-law. Fortunately, it was a golden opportunity for her to change the topic and talk about her brother's relationship at the moment.

"All I can say is that the future is hard. Don't tell Mom and Dad about this. Dad will surely look down upon me if you do," Mike replied solemnly. On his eyes was anxiety that Ashley could not fathom.

She noticed that he was somehow in low spirits. Seeing him like that, she became even more curious about his girlfriend. "Mike, you should have confidence in yourself. Once you do, you can achieve everything. By the way, what's her name?"



“I’ll only tell you when I’m sure of her. I have to go to work now.”

It turned out that the car had already arrived at the Guzman Group building. It was frustrating for Ashley that he left with such suspense.

However, she did not ask anything anymore. Mike got off the car first, and she followed him to her workplace.

As soon as she stepped into her office, her phone suddenly rang.

When the call connected, Zaiden’s mellow voice came from the other end of the line. “Ashley, are you working already?”

“Not yet. I still have a few minutes left. Zaiden, what’s up?”

“Are you free this afternoon?”

“I think so. Why?”

“Well, I want to invite you for dinner later. I have something very important to tell you. Is that okay?” Zaiden asked expectantly.

Ashley suddenly remembered what had happened the past couple of days. That time, she was not in the mood, so she politely refused his invitation. She told him that she was busy and had work to do. Mike kept asking her why she did that, but of course, there was nothing he could do about it. He could only heave a lonely sigh while he and Zaiden ate alone.

But today, she did not have the heart to refuse him again when she heard his solemn voice, so she agreed after hesitating for a moment. “Sure.”

“It’s settled then. See you. I’ll send the address later. Remember to check it out. You can go to work now, Ashley,” Zaiden joyfully said.

“Okay. See you this afternoon,” Ashley replied with a smile.

A second after the call ended, another call came in.

“Ashley, who were you talking to just now?” Joseph’s magnetic voice exuded a warm feeling as though he was a caring husband for his wife.

“A friend. What can I do for you?” Ashley asked in a hurry.

“Can’t I call you when I have nothing else to do?” he asked back.

“It’s just strange that a CEO, whose free time is only at night, suddenly called,” Ashley retorted.

It was indeed strange. Yesterday, Joseph had acquired a large company, so the company’s landline must be bombarded with calls. However, it seemed that he had a lot of time to spare. Judging from his bored tone, it did not seem that he was actually the CEO of a large company.

“I’m actually very busy at the moment. But no matter how busy I am, I’ll make time for you, my Ashley.”

Although Ashley did not want to admit it, she was flattered that he found time just to flirt with her.

However, she could not help but cringe when she heard his endearment. He was so cheeky!

“Little Joseph, I can tell that you’re really busy,” Ashley said with concern. She did not want him to prioritize her over the company’s affairs, at least during work hours.

“I told you not to call me ‘little Joseph’! Perhaps you want me to relive the beautiful moment between us the night before last night? Or maybe, you’re implying that I didn’t perform well?” Suddenly, the angry wolf in Joseph began to act rascally after hearing her provocation.

Ashley remembered what had happened on that said night just as well. It was so intense and fierce, enough to make the innocent sheep in her blush.

“Where has the cold and reticent Joseph gone?” Ashley could not help but complain about the sudden change in his attitude.

“I act different only in front of you. If you like this side of me, I’ll deliver myself to your house at any time,” Joseph retorted.

‘Did he mean he delivered himself to my house and ate me to his heart content?’ He did not have to tell her what was on his mind. Ashley already knew about it, especially now that Joseph suddenly turned into a rogue.

“You bastard!” she exclaimed. She knew that she was nothing compared to Joseph in terms of being a rogue. Because of this, she decided to cut their conversation short with those two words.

“I didn’t say anything vile, nor did I do anything ugly. I’m not a hooligan.” Joseph defended himself as though he was righteous.

“I don’t want to talk to you anymore. I’m not as idle as you. I still have work to do.”

Ashley decided not to refute him when he said that he was not a hooligan, when in fact, he was one. She figured that she would not win against him anyway. Besides, there was a lot of work that she should finish by the end of the year.

“If you say so. Anyway, I’ll go to you when I’m done with my work. Remember to miss me,” Joseph said with affection.

“I know. Stop nagging me.” Ashley was utterly surprised by his sudden romantic words.

A moment had passed yet Joseph did not say anything in response nor did he hang up the call. “I’ll hang up first,” she said after a while.

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After Ashley and Joseph had finished chatting over the phone, they ended the call. At that very moment, someone knocked on the door of the office.

“Come in, please.”

A young and beautiful female employee of the department came in and handed over a document to Ashley. “Ashley, this is our year-end summary. Please have a look.”

“Just put it on the table. I’ll check it later,” Ashley replied.

For some reason, the woman was still standing there and staring at Ashley with a meaningful look. Somehow bothered by the employee’s gaze, Ashley raised her head and asked, “Is there anything else?”

“Actually, there’s something I want to ask,” the employee answered.

“What is it?”

“Who were you talking to just now? I apologize for the intrusion. It’s just that you were smiling happily, and it surprised all of us. The truth is, I came on behalf of all of the employees.”

Ashley’s office was right next to the office zone of ordinary staff. The said zone was in an open space, only separated by small cubicles. In order for the manager to supervise the employees at all levels, the door of the manager’s office was made transparent.

Because of this, the employees saw Ashley talking on the phone with a big smile. To satisfy their curiosity, they sent a representative to ask about the man who captured Ashley’s heart. They could not help it. After all, that was what they talked about in their spare time.

For two months, Ashley and her subordinates got along well and established rapport. Most of the employees were young, and they to have a straightforward character.

“Why do you ask?” Ashley asked in confusion. ‘Was it that obvious?’ she wondered.

“That’s because we care about you! By the way, your boyfriend is so handsome!” the employee sincerely praised.

Ashley felt even more confused. The people in the company had not seen Joseph yet, had they?

“What are you talking about? I don’t have a boyfriend,” Ashley said, her eyes furrowed in doubt.

“Ashley, don’t be shy. We’ve all been there.”

The employee cast a meaningful look, which made Ashley extremely perplexed. Honestly, she had no idea what she was talking about.

“There’s a handsome man who often comes to see you at noon. I must say, he’s not only handsome but also elegant.” When the employee spoke, there was a hint of envy and admiration in her voice. Then, her dreamy voice turned

serious. “Ashley, that man is excellent, and it’s obvious that you two have an intimate relationship. Don’t tell me he’s not your boyfriend.”

Ashley finally understood what she was talking about. She must have thought that Zaiden was her boyfriend. Although Ashley had no idea where the employee’s claim came from, she cleared it out at once. “We’re just friends.”

The employee was shocked. “Oh no! You should consider him. We’ve been observing that man for a long time and noticed that he has the hots for you.”

Ashley rolled her eyes secretly. ‘It seems that the employees have so much time to spare that they gossip about my love affairs during work hours. They’ve been observing Zaiden for a long time? Sounds like they had nothing else to do.’

At the thought of this, she looked at the employee with raised eyebrows and seriously asked, “Have you been idle recently?”

“No. We’re just concerned about you. We just want to let you know that that man is a gentleman,” she explained.

Ashley could no longer stand the employee’s meaningful gaze. With a serious look, she said, “First of all, my boyfriend isn’t him. Zaiden and I are just really close. Second, it’s work hours. Do your job now or work overtime.”

“Wait a minute. Does that mean that you have a boyfriend? When will you introduce him to us?” Apparently, the employee did not want to give up on the topic, especially now that she had discovered something interesting.

“Why are you so gossipy? Go to work or your annual benefits will not be issued,” Ashley said in a threatening tone, in hopes that the employee would finally drop it.

The employee was stunned for a second as she processed Ashley’s words. “I will!” she answered as she left at once. Once the employee was gone, Ashley breathed a sigh of relief.

She figured that they were great at making blind assumptions. Now that there was no distraction anymore, she devoted herself to the heavy work again.

Half a day passed in a blur as Ashley did her work. Before she left, she told her family that she would not go home for dinner. Then, she went to the place Zaiden had told her about this morning.

The moment she entered the restaurant, she saw Zaiden's figure from afar and walked towards him.

"Zaiden, you said that you had something important to say. What is it?" Ashley asked straightforwardly as soon as she sat down opposite him.

"Don't worry about it. Let's have dinner first. Today's food is your favorite," Zaiden replied unhurriedly.

The dishes were served not long after. As promised, they were all Ashley's favorite dishes.

She gazed at the delicious dishes on the table for a moment. Then, she lifted her gaze to him and curiously asked, "Zaiden, how do you know I love these dishes?"

"I'm glad you love them," Zaiden replied with a smile while deliberately ignoring her question.

Of course, he knew it because he liked Ashley. He paid attention to her dietary preferences when they ate together before.

The last time they went out to buy furniture, Ashley said something that made Zaiden uneasy. Although it was unintentional, she politely refused his invitations since then. She did not reject or avoid him directly, but he felt something was not right. As a result, he decided to express what he felt for her as soon as possible.

"Are you busy with your work, Ashley?" Zaiden broke the ice while she was enjoying the scrumptious meals in front of her.

"Quite so. I have a lot of work that needs to be done by the end of the year. How about you? Is your law firm busy as well?"

"Sometimes. I hope that no matter how busy you are, you don't forget to take care of yourself." Upon saying that, Zaiden picked up a napkin and stretched out his arm towards Ashley. "Don't eat too fast. Nobody is going to take the food away from you."

“Thank you, Zaiden. Please don’t mind me. I’m starving,” Ashley replied with an apologetic smile. Only when Zaiden wiped the food crumbs off the corner of her mouth did she realize that she was indeed eating so fast.

“Of course I don’t mind,” Zaiden retorted cheerfully.

‘If only you know how much I love you. You’re simple and straightforward. What else can I ask for?’ Whenever he looked at Ashley, his gaze was full of affection and concern.