

Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 161

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“It’s okay. Just don’t mind me. Zaiden, have some too,” said Ashley with a smile as she noticed that Zaiden was eating a little.

“Okay,” Zaiden replied. Then, he shifted his gaze from her to the dining table.

The two of them fell into silence. Zaiden’s attention was focused on Ashley, whereas her attention was on the food.

While she was busy eating, Zaiden was busy thinking about how he would execute his love confession to her. He wanted it to be perfect. As he thought of his plan, a smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. Meanwhile, Ashley seemed to make up for the days when she had been hungry. With her head lowered as she enjoyed the food, she looked as though she was not in the mood to care about anything else.

She finished eating after a while. She finally lifted her gaze and found that Zaiden was leaning against his chair and looking at her affectionately.

All of a sudden, the bright light, which illuminated the restaurant, turned into a soft, blue one. What was more, a melodious sound of a piano was heard, making the scene dreamy and romantic.

The sudden change of the ambiance confused Ashley, but at the same, a sense of familiarity dawned on her.

“Zaiden, what’s going on?” she asked while looking at him, who had not spoken for a long time.

As a response, he put his index finger on his lips and smiled, indicating her to wait.

Under the blue light, his features appeared gentler, and his smile widened. It exuded a dreamlike feeling as though a benevolent prince had come.

In such a dreamy atmosphere, Ashley realized that she and Zaiden were the only ones dining in the restaurant. As she felt his scorching gaze on her, she held her breath in suspense. ‘Is he going to...?’

In her bright eyes was astonishment. Meanwhile, Zaiden figured that she had already guessed what he was about to do.

The melodious music now turned into a piece of deep and soft music. Moreover, the blue light just now changed into an orange one.

Under the warm glow, accompanied by the soft music, Zaiden leisurely stared into Ashley's incredulous eyes and said, "Ashley, I think that you have a clue as to what I am going to do. But, I believe that I still have to tell you what I feel. The truth is, I've fallen in love with you. I love you, and I've felt this for a long time now. Would you allow me to take care of you for the rest of your life?"

Zaiden's love confession actually caught Ashley by surprise. She never saw this coming. 'He is in love with me? Why didn't I notice it?'

It was evident on her face that she was surprised. Zaiden stood up and walked slowly towards her. He then bent down in front of her and sincerely asked, "Ashley, can you give me a chance?"

His gesture made Ashley stand up in surprise. "Zaiden, I'm sorry. I only see you as a brother, just like Mike. I...I can't accept your love."

Never before had Ashley anticipated that Zaiden was in love with her. After all, he was like a brother to her. Because of this, she had no choice but to tell him what she truly felt, even though it would hurt him.

Although he figured that she would probably reject him, he was still heartbroken upon hearing her reason.

"Ashley, I don't want to be just a brother to you. I want to protect you as your boyfriend," Zaiden insisted. When he spoke, his voice was serious yet somehow bitter. "Love will come eventually. Just give me a chance to prove myself. I'll wait for you until you're ready to love again."

His affection was apparent on his handsome face. Ashley could feel his sincerity and how much he cherished her. Sadly, she had no feelings for him. There was no place for him in her heart.

“I’m sorry, Zaiden! I love someone else,” she answered in a low voice. “Someone fills my heart already. Love is selfish, I know. Although I don’t want to hurt you, I don’t want you to wait for me for nothing. You deserve someone better, and it isn’t me.”

Truth be told, he had anticipated her rejection. Before he proceeded with his proposal, Mike warned him that Ashley’s heart was broken by her ex-boyfriend. However, Zaiden was stubborn. He did not believe that there was no chance for him, even a little. His heart ached, and it felt as though it would come out of his throat. Even so, he was still unwilling to give up. He thought that he had to fight for the love that he had kept for so many years, no matter what.

“I don’t want someone else. You’re the best woman whom I’ve ever laid my eyes on. I know you have someone that you still can’t let go of. But, isn’t that the past? You have to move forward, too. Let go of what’s pulling you back and start a new life. You’ll be happy eventually. If you still can’t move on, I’ll give you time. If you think that I’m not good enough, I’ll work harder and prove myself. Please believe me when I say that I really love you.”

As he expressed his feelings, Ashley recalled their relationship over the years. She had no idea when Zaiden’s love for her had begun. However, she realized that it was her whom he cared about most. It turned out that she misunderstood him.

It was only then that Ashley understood Zaiden’s true feelings. Unfortunately, she gave away her heart to someone else. There was no longer a place in her heart, even for the excellent man in front of her.

“Zaiden, it’s not that you are not good enough. Please understand that he’s not only my past. He’s my present and future. I’m sorry, but I have to refuse your love.”

Ashley said those words without beating around the bush. That way, he would have to be hurt only once. She actually did him a favor of not wasting his time on her.

Fate was not at fault here. It was just that Zaiden and Ashley met each other at the wrong time. After all, true love comes at the right place and at the right time.

Two excellent men came into Ashley's life at two different times. However, the outcomes were different. It was Joseph who gave her the butterflies in her stomach. He was her true love, the one who gave her the sheer determination to be with him for the rest of her life. Also, he was the right person for her at the right time. Meanwhile, Zaiden was too late when he returned to the city. Someone else was already in her heart. It seemed that they were not destined to be together. He could have been the right person for her, but they met at the wrong time.

Ashley's words were all it took to make Zaiden heartbroken. In an instant, a sharp pain swept all over his body. 'It turns out that I can't accompany you in the future, even after loving you for so many years.'

The beautiful music, which was once romantic, was now full of melancholy.

"I'm really sorry, Zaiden! If you want, we can go back to the way we were before. I don't want to lose such a good brother to me." It was Ashley who broke the silence while Zaiden was left in a daze. "Please think it over. I have to leave."

"Ashley, I'll wait for you no matter what, even if it takes forever," he said in a low voice while watching her go.

Ashley paused for a few seconds but did not say anything. With that, she finally left the restaurant.

There are always people in the world who are hopelessly in love. Zaiden, in fact, was one of them. He was aware that his chance with her was slim. Even so, he was willing to wait for her no matter how long it would take. He had loved her for so many years. There was no way he would give up easily.

However, as he stood under the dim light, one thing was for sure. He did not win his beloved's heart.

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As Ashley walked past the bustling street, she thought about what took place a while ago and felt upset.

For the first time she felt guilty about rejecting someone. This was because she couldn't digest the thought of losing a friend she had known for years. However, the harm was done, and losing him would be inevitable.

Her eyes fell on the tall Empire Group building that stood in front of her. She was in dire need of some support. She fetched her phone from her purse and dialed the familiar number.

"Where are you?" she asked as soon as Joseph picked the call.

"In the company. What's the matter?" he asked.

Joseph had noted sadness in her voice. He was beginning to worry.

"Nothing to worry about. I called you to tell you I am coming to see you," Ashley said casually.

Before Joseph could say something, she hung up the call.

The acquisition case of the Synder Group combined with Zachary's vacation made work-life extremely hard for him. As the leader of the company, Joseph was compelled to toil day and night.

If this had happened in the past, Joseph wouldn't have minded. After all, people called him the efficient working machine. It would have been a piece of cake for him. However, things were different now. He had slowly changed from the machine to a wife pursuer. He was planning to wrap his work as soon as possible, just so he could go back and spend some time with his future wife. This was the only thought that encouraged him to work all day.

When Ashley called to announce she would be meeting him, Joseph was elated. He was about to go down to greet her when his phone rang.

"Joseph, I'm here. Which floor are you on?"

"On the 100th floor. I am coming down to pick you up."

"No, that won't be required. I will be there soon."

"Okay."

After they hung up the call, Joseph walked out of his office, eager to meet his beauty.

After a few seconds passed, Ashley's tall and slender figure appeared and walked out the elevator. He strode forward, wrapped his arms around her thin shoulder, and asked softly, "Why did you decide to pay me a visit out of the blue?"

"What? Why do I get the feeling you have a problem with it?" Ashley raised her eyebrows and eyed him warily.

"That's impossible! I am glad you are here. In fact, I have never been more delighted!" he exclaimed, trying to dispel her doubts.

"Hush! Don't be so garrulous." Ashley didn't like his tone and called him out for it.

"Okay, I will stop. I just happen to enjoy teasing you," he admitted.

Ashley didn't give him a response. She chose to ignore it.

Seeing Joseph was ignored, disappointment welled up inside him. "Honey, I not only like to be garrulous, but also enjoy something else. And that is kissing you."

Before she could understand his words, he made her face him and leaned forward to cover her plump lips with his.

"Let me go! I came here to tell you something serious."

His passionate kiss lasted for a long time. He gave her a break to catch her breath. She took advantage of this moment and protested about his behavior.

Joseph was reluctant to leave her. However, he understood she actually had something to say. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"Have you eaten yet?" As she spoke, she made it a point to maintain a safe distance between them. She knew Joseph wasn't satisfied and wanted more.

"I am not hungry for food. You are enough to satiate me." There was a twinkle in his eyes. He closed the distance between them. He grabbed her hand and caressed her red lips. There was raw desire in his eyes.

For a moment, Ashley was hypnotized by his handsomeness. Snorting, she complained, "Stop it!"

At this moment, all her gloom disappeared. Her heart was thudding against her chest.

There was something about his eyes that made it hard for her to resist. Somehow, she gathered her wits and said, "Leave my hand! I bought you some food. It will go stale and cold if you delay."

"You are so sweet! Come on, let's eat together."

After saying that, Joseph took the food from her, sat on the chair, and pulled her towards him.

She was now sitting on his lap. His strong arms embraced her waist gently. In her ear, he whispered seductively, "It smells so good."

His words left her speechless.

Joseph placed the nutritious chicken soup on the table and slowly opened it. He leaned and sniffed her collarbone. He then let out a deep sigh.

"Drink it alone. I just had dinner a while ago. I don't think I can eat again," Ashley said, shifting her position a little so that he could enjoy the meal properly.

"Okay." Joseph obediently scooped up a spoonful of soup and tasted it. He was impressed. "It's delicious. Where did you buy it from? And how did you manage to reach here so fast?"

"I ate from a restaurant near your company. And then, I went to a soup shop and bought this for you," Ashley said.

"What? With whom?" Joseph's curiosity was piqued. He raised his eyebrows and waited for her response.

"A friend," she uttered rigidly. 'After tonight, I don't think he is going to be my friend,' she thought to herself and lowered her gaze.

Joseph detected hesitancy in her voice. A frown creased his forehead. "A man or a woman?" he asked.

“A man,” she replied quickly.

“So you two had dinner alone?”

“Yes.”

“What did you talk about?”

When Joseph asked this question, Ashley raised her head and looked at his handsome face. She felt a sort of uncertainty. “Do you really want to know?” she asked.

He perceived a note of hesitancy in her voice and his mood became sour. It caused him intense unhappiness. It was decided in his mind that the man she was going to talk about wasn't a good one.

“Yes, I genuinely do.” He put down the spoon in his hand and his eyes looked at her expectantly. She had all his attention.

Joseph wore a dull look on his face. As Ashley noticed this, a hint of caution flashed through her mind. ‘How will he react when I narrate today's incident to him? Will he hunt Zaiden down and kill him? Or will I have to take the brunt of his anger?’

One by one, she pictured how he would react. She was sure the consequences wouldn't be good. As she sank deep in thought, Joseph mistook her hesitancy for something else. He thought she was hiding something from him.

“Honey, what is it that you are thinking about?” Joseph whispered in her ear, bringing her out of her reverie.

“No! Nothing. Are you sure you want to know?”

Noticing the stern look in her eyes, Joseph replied in a low voice, “Yes, I'm sure.”

After saying that, he leaned and bit her earlobe as a form of punishment.

“Oh, move away. I can't tell you like this!” She felt a small pain in her earlobe. His bite had sent warmth throughout her whole body. Using all her strength, she tries to pry his head which was on her neck.

“Stop struggling and start talking,” Joseph said in a hoarse voice.

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Ashley was annoyed with Joseph. She wanted to refute his words and defend herself. However, just when she was about to say something, she felt something hard against her buttocks. She immediately sat still.

“You’re such a temptress!” Joseph complained. “Can you tell me now? What did you two talk about?”

Ashley was nervous and hesitant about her options. ‘Should I say the truth? But if I do, he’ll have sex with me right here, won’t he?’

“Joseph, can I sit over there?” she asked gingerly.

“What do you think?” replied Joseph.

His voice was gloomy and somewhat frightening that Ashley fell silent for a while. “Then promise me you won’t do anything to me after you hear what I have to say.”

“Okay,” replied Joseph coldly.

Afraid that he would go back on his word and break his promise, Ashley grabbed his hands which were on her waist. Then, she cleared her throat and said, “He confessed his love to me.”

“Continue,” he urged.

“That’s it. That’s all we talked about,” Ashley replied innocently.

She looked at Joseph’s unhappy expression, the very same expression he wore the first time they met. She felt helpless at the sight of it. ‘Didn’t you promise you’d get ahold of yourself?’ Joseph thought to himself, ‘They talked about it for such a long time? The man must have said a lot, huh?’ Looking at Ashley’s innocent expression, he tried to calm down and asked, “What was your answer?”

“I told him that I only regard him as a brother. Also, I said that I love someone else,” replied Ashley.

“The last sentence is right,”

Joseph remarked. Judging from his proud expression, she guessed he must have realized that she was referring to him. Ashley rolled her eyes secretly.

“How did he confess his love to you anyway? Was it more romantic than when I did it?” Joseph asked out of the blue.

“It was nothing special, really. After we finished eating, he declared his love for me while music was playing,” Ashley answered as she relayed the events of that night.

Of course, she remembered Zaiden’s heartbroken expression when she rejected him. The memory of it made her sad as well. She must have caused him so much pain. She could only hope that Zaiden would move on as soon as he could.

“What about the other question?”

Joseph noticed the change in Ashley’s mood, so he held her hands comfortingly. “Which of us was more romantic?”

Ashley snapped back to reality upon hearing that. She lifted her gaze and saw that Joseph was staring at her expectantly. His black eyes, although charming, were full of danger.

Seeing this, she answered, “Of course, you were.”

That was the truth. Honestly, she was really moved by Joseph’s romantic confession at that time, whereas Zaiden’s confession did not give her that kind of feeling. Instead of being touched, she felt embarrassed and apologetic.

“Of course,” replied Joseph with pride.

After a while, he asked, “Who is he anyway? Was he the man who you were with in the furniture store?”

Ashley was confused. ‘How did he know that?’ she wondered.

As Joseph noticed that Ashley was perplexed that he knew that, he added, "That was the day I returned. It was a coincidence." Little did she know, the scene had made Joseph heartbroken.

Back then, Zachary told Joseph that there was already someone else by Ashley's side. Coincidentally, Joseph saw that she was shopping with another man, and they seemed to be happy. It was not until then that he realized how painful it was to see her with someone else.

"Oh. Yes, it was him. But as I've told you, I only regard him as a brother. That day, he asked me to go with him to choose furniture. I agreed because I thought that he did not know how to pick the right ones."

"What?" Although hearing her long, reasonable explanation, Joseph pretended that he was confused.

"Why? I just didn't want you to get me wrong," Ashley reasoned out. She had no idea that he was actually happy to hear that.

"I didn't get you wrong; he confessed his love for you. It was a romantic confession, obviously." A sense of jealousy enveloped the luxurious office.

At that time, he really thought that she had a new boyfriend. Although his heart ached at the sight of her with another man, he dared not disturb her peace since he promised he would let her be at peace for the rest of her life. He felt grateful that fate sent her back to him and that she still loved him. It was not long until the jealousy in his heart turned into sweetness.

"Why do I feel that the atmosphere is filled with a sense of jealousy?" Ashley asked with a teasing smile.

"You little fool, I'm jealous! Can't you feel it? You should be punished," Joseph admitted.

Ashley stared at his handsome face. For some reason, she felt excited, and her heart raced. "What are you going to do to me?"

"I'm going to punish you by making you stay with me for the rest of your life." Slick as he was, Joseph took this opportunity to express his love and decided that he would never let her go again.

He imagined that their fate was like two intersecting lines. They could only meet at some point and then drift apart forever.

However, everything had changed. Since fate made them meet again, he would not miss her the second time around.

“Why do I feel that that sentence is a little familiar? I remember when you said that to me last time, but you still abandoned me in the end.”

Ashley remembered how full of sorrowful she was when Joseph broke up with her. The heartbreak she had gone through was unbearable. It took her a long time before she could manage the pain and sadness of their relationship. As she recalled her those painful memories, she could not help but feel sad again.

“I’m sorry. I won’t do that again, I promise,” Joseph sincerely apologized.

However, Ashley remained unmoved, so he pleaded, “Please trust me again.”

“My father told me a long time ago that men are unreliable,” Ashley casually said upon hearing Joseph’s sincere request and apology. “But I think you’re reliable.

I’ll give you another chance. Don’t be too grateful to me. Just prove that I’m not wrong for letting you be part of my life again.”

Ashley said those words in order to liven Joseph, who had a remorseful look on his face.

Ever since that night of dilemma, Ashley still believed in him and loved him just like she did before. She decided to give him another shot at life with her.

However, Joseph had not changed. He was still the shrewd man Ashley had loved before. “Your father said that men aren’t unreliable. Does that mean that your father isn’t a man?”

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As soon as the question left Joseph’s mouth, Ashley tried to defend her beloved father. “Screw you! You are not a man!” she said fiercely.

Her voice was not loud, yet her words were as clear as day.

“Honey, I can’t tell whether you are suffering from amnesia or if you are actually insinuating that I am incapable of satisfying you in bed.” Joseph took a step ahead and pulled her into his arms. “Whatever your reason is, it looks like I have to do something that will prove I am a man.”

As it dawned upon Ashley what Joseph was about to do, she flushed red. She realized she had accidentally questioned his se.xuality. No men could tolerate such a thing! But she didn’t mean it that way.

She put on a smile and remarked flatteringly, “You misunderstood me. You have nothing to prove. I am aware you are a man.”

As she spoke, she tried to break free from his embrace, worrying he would make love to her again in order to prove his se.xual capacity.

He didn’t utter a word but gave her a meaningful look. Ashley explained, “Trust me, that’s not what I meant. You said some bad things about my father. It made me so angry that I spat out whatever came to my mind.”

“Oh? In any case, it goes to show you have a very low opinion of me. I’m really sad.” After saying this, Joseph made a show of disappointment.

The truth was, it wasn’t his intention to insult her father. But he couldn’t help but wonder why a father would tell his daughter that all men were unreliable. Suppose it was true, he wanted to know whether her father was included in that category. After all, he was a man too. His guess was Ashley’s father didn’t want her to marry.

All this made Joseph feel a little low-spirited. In the end, he ended up blurting his doubts, without giving them any thought. Joseph was used to expressing his true feelings in front of Ashley. That was another reason he had blurted it out so easily.

At this point, he was starting to question Jack’s teachings. At the same time, he also realized that it was hard to please his future father-in-law.

Even though Joseph didn't agree with what Jack said now, there would come a day when he would say something the same. When he had a daughter of his own, he would teach her to trust no man but him.

But of course, now that he had no daughter of his own, this wasn't something he would understand properly.

"Come on, he is a father. Don't take it personally." Ashley understood he was dwelling on her father's words. She felt a sense of helplessness.

"You're right. A father and a husband cannot be compared," he nodded.

Ashley watched him, not knowing how to respond.

Just then, he looked up at her and said seriously, "We have strayed from our question. So tell me, am I a man or not?"

"Haven't I told you already? Stop asking again and again! You are such a petty man," she answered bravely, looking at him straight in the eye.

He was leaning closer and there was no way she could remain calm. "Alright! You are definitely a man. A man that I love the most. You aren't just attractive physically, but you have the most generous nature. Are you satisfied?"

He gazed at her. Her long eyelashes were fluttering and her beautiful eyes were wide open. As these sweet words came pouring out of her lovely lips, he was hypnotized. Their distance was shortened and her delicate fragrance filled his nostrils. He swallowed hard and took another step ahead.

"Joseph, you promised me that you wouldn't..." He pulled her toward him and now she was sitting on his thighs. She struggled under his grasp, his greedy eyes scaring her. She placed her hands on his chest and pleaded.

If she didn't stop him, she knew the consequences would be terrible.

"Honey, if you keep moving like this, you will fall down. Stand up. I promise I won't molest you," Joseph said, amused.

"Are you sure?" Ashley asked, a doubtful look crossing her face.

The truth was, she didn't mind falling. She was willing to take the pain. Her biggest fear was being the feast to the wolf that was eager to pounce on her.

“Yes, I am sure,” he said feigning seriousness.

After a little hesitancy, she finally believed him. She adjusted herself and sat upright again. She felt something hard under her. It was his thirsty penis. Now she had no choice but to remain motionless.

They were in an extremely dangerous position. Before she could ask him to set her free from this position, he pressed his lips against her. She felt weak and was in no position to speak.

His kiss went down and reached her neck. Now that her lips were free, she decided to speak. “Joseph, you didn’t keep your promise. You are molesting me,” she protested in a shrill voice.

Joseph was taken aback by her words. For a second, Ashley thought she had succeeded in stopping him.

His mouth twitched slightly and he smiled at her. “I have used nothing but my mouth. Didn’t you notice?” he said.

Before Ashley could grumble again about his behavior, he added, “You can’t call this molesting. Otherwise, your clothes wouldn’t be on your body, don’t you think so?”

Ashley was stunned by his shamelessness. ‘What a jerk Joseph is!’

She noticed Joseph was about to kiss her again now that he was done talking. Ashley raised her hand and pressed it firmly against his thin lips. A serious look passed over her face. “Honey, I have to show you something. It’s going to be a pleasant surprise.”

“What?” Joseph raised his eyebrows and regarded her with curiosity.

“Put me down first, or I won’t tell you,” Ashley said resolutely.

Joseph had to admit he was intrigued by her words. Even if he let her go, she couldn’t escape from him. A hint of slyness flashed in his eyes.

After being under his control for such a long time, she was relieved when he finally freed her. She jumped from his arms and stood five meters away from him.

Joseph, on the other hand, crossed his arms over his chest and leaned back in his chair. He eyed her with enthusiasm.

“I won’t eat you. Why did you jump and go so far away?” he asked, noticing she kept a long distance between them.

“Don’t move! This is something that should be watched from a distance,” she added hastily. The fact he had used the word “eat” made her somewhat nervous. Ashley had to warn him.

“I am not going to move. Start doing your thing,” he suggested with a smile and waited eagerly.

“Keep your eyes peeled.” After making sure that Joseph was going to keep his word, she rolled up her sleeves.

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“Can’t you see? My arms and body are full of your bite marks. These marks are enough to prove that you are indeed a man. Stop being so stubborn. Don’t add up to the problem, and then take advantage of me. This is absolutely not what a gentleman does!” Ashley said while showing the bruises on her wrists to Joseph, who was grinning like an idiot.

She never expected that he would bite her arms. However, what stunned her the most was that he dared to take advantage of her slip of the tongue to get what he wanted. Sadly, she could only complain in her heart how Joseph was like a hungry wolf who had no mercy to her.

At first, she thought that he would own up to his behavior. To her surprise, he did not. Instead, he smiled at her innocently and said, “I did not see anything.”

Joseph did not deny that he got a little wild when they had sex. It was obvious as the bruises on Ashley’s skin could be seen, even from afar. He couldn’t help but begin to tease her.

Ashley did not seem to accept his answer. She put down her sleeves and said in a domineering manner, “I’ve already made it clear. I’m the one who calls the shots! We haven’t even married yet! You have no right to touch me without my permission, or...”

Judging from the looks of it, she understood what he wanted to do right now. However, she could not allow him. Otherwise, she would not be able to go home tonight. She had no idea how to explain to her family, and his sexual desires were too much for her.

She looked determined and virtuous like a queen. It made Joseph smile. "Or what?"

"Or I'll cry and ignore you!" she spat, glaring at him. 'I have plenty of ways to deal with you.

I believe this one will work,' she thought to herself.

Joseph was stunned. It was the first time this had ever happened to him. After all, he was a businessman, in which eloquence was a necessity.

'I'd better stop provoking Ashley, or else I'll suffer in the end,' he mused.

His thin lips were pursed and he was staring at her as though in a daze. She felt complacent upon seeing him like that. "What's wrong? Is there anything else you want to say? That's right. Behave. If I'm in the mood, I'll give you what you want."

Upon hearing her words, Joseph slowly walked towards Ashley, who was smiling confidently. She did not even move when he walked towards her imposingly.

"I want to go home now. Otherwise, my parents will be worried," Ashley said while Joseph was walking up to her.

"Why so early? It's not late yet, is it?" he asked with raised eyebrows.

"It's getting late." Ashley noticed the disappointment in his eyes. "Don't you have work to do?"

Time runs fast when you are with the person you love. It felt like Ashley and Joseph had only been together for a short while. She had promised her family that she would be home by eight, but it was already nine in the evening. Fortunately, her bad mood had already gone.

“No. Anyway, I’ll walk you to your car,” Joseph replied in a soft voice. He then took her bag and wrapped her scarf on her.

Ashley was insistent on going home, and there was no reason for him to ask her to stay. Besides, he knew very well that his future father-in-law was difficult to deal with. Joseph wanted to leave a good impression on Ashley’s father, and asking her to stay would not help.

Ashley must admit, she did not want to leave yet. She was sure Joseph did not want her to leave either. However, she was left with no choice. Fortunately, he was a gentleman for allowing her to do what she needed to do. A charming smile appeared on her face at the thought of it.

Beaming with happiness, Ashley took Joseph’s scarf. Since he was way taller than her, she stood on tiptoe and wrapped it around his neck. She then took his hand and said with a smile, “Let’s go.”

“Sure,” Joseph replied. He was elated that Ashley took the initiative to hold his hand. Of course, he would not waste such an opportunity, so he seized this chance to intertwine his fingers with hers.

They were leaning on each other as they walked with their fingers interlocked. Their shadows reflected on the smooth marble floor of the building as they walked side by side. Wherever they passed, romance was in the air.

Ashley bade farewell to Joseph and was about to get into the car. But he pulled her into his arms and complained, “You haven’t told me when you’ll accept me as your boyfriend.”

In all honesty, he already knew that Ashley had agreed to be with him again. It was just that he wanted to be with her a little longer. She seemed eager to go home, and he could not accept it.

“Didn’t I tell you already? It depends on what I feel.” Ashley lifted her gaze and looked at Joseph, who was looking at her sadly. For some reason, she gave him a mysterious answer instead of a direct one.

“When will you be in a good mood then?” Joseph asked with his eyebrows raised.

Seeing the dejection on his face, Ashley stood on tiptoe again and touched his head the way he liked to do to her. “It depends on your performance. You still need to work hard,” she answered seriously.

“I see. It won’t be long then,” Joseph commented, putting her hand down from his head.

Ashley seemed confused by the confident look on his face. “Do you know what I was talking about?” she asked with furrowed brows.

“Of course. I’m not stupid,” Joseph answered with a proud look.

Before Ashley could retort, Joseph continued, “Soon enough, I will be your husband.”

Ashley was at a loss for words. Joseph’s haughtiness rendered her speechless. They were just talking about making him her boyfriend, but his imagination seemed rather advanced. He was already thinking about becoming her husband!

“Whatever. I’m leaving. You should go back too,” Ashley said after a moment of silence. Although Joseph was still reluctant to let her go, they had nothing else to talk about anymore. Just before she could get in the car, she added, “Don’t just focus on your work. You should accompany your grandpa when you have time. He needs your company too. Do you understand?”

Joseph could not help but smile upon hearing that. That was exactly what a considerate wife would say. For some reason, he felt that it would not be long before she agreed to marry him someday.

“That makes sense. But just so you know, Grandpa likes you more. You should come with me. Let’s visit him together when you have time,” Joseph said in a matter-of-fact tone.

His words were true, though. Although he and Ashley were not married yet, he and his grandpa had long regarded her as a member of the Marshall family.

“Sounds good,” Ashley replied. She did not realize that it was actually Joseph’s little trick.

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Ashley was about to get in her car. However, Joseph didn't let her go. "Honey, aren't you forgetting something?" he asked.

She looked at him with a puzzled frown. Before she could ask him what it was, Joseph bent over and his face was close to hers. It dawned on her that he was asking for a k!ss.

Ashley stood still and stared at him straight in the eye. She knew Joseph was a persistent man. If she didn't k!ss him, he wouldn't let her go. His childish behavior often rendered her speechless. It was hard to believe he was the CEO of such a big company.

They gazed at each other in silence. Finally, it was Ashley who made a move. She surrendered and decided to give him what he wanted. Gently, she wrapped her arms around his neck and placed a tender k!ss on his left cheek. Without giving him a chance to react, she quickly jumped into the car. Once inside, she gave a little girlish giggle and waved at him.

Joseph raised his hand and touched the place she had k!ssed. The cold wind was getting violent, but he seemed undisturbed by it. He continued to smile like an idiot.

It was quite a charming sight. In the bleak and cold weather, a tall and handsome man was standing with a smile. There was a towering building behind. Under the power of wind, his dark scarf fluttered and his ink-black hair swayed. There was something tender about his expression.

Ashley, on the other hand, reached home. On entering, she was surprised to note that all eyes were on her. Her brother and parents were regarding her wearily. It looked like she was on trial for some crime she had committed. She stood frozen.

"Dad, Mom, Mike, good evening!" Ashley greeted, mustering up some courage.

Then, her gaze went to the clock on the wall. "I am not that late," she said, her voice dropping to a whisper.

Ashley remembered the last time Mike had been late. He had to go through an incessant amount of interrogation. She eyed everyone with a trace of confusion and innocence.

“Ashley, come here and sit with me,” Jack said, looking at her with his kind eyes. He didn’t want her to remain standing.

Hearing this, Ashley looked at Mike. He simply shrugged his shoulders. Having no choice, she slowly walked towards her father and sat down beside him. “Dad, Mom, if there is something you want to ask me, then go ahead. Your silence is frightening me.”

“Alright then. I have a question for you. Just answer it frankly,” Jack said, not intending to keep his daughter in suspense.

“Yes, sure. Go ahead, Dad,” Ashley said, pretending to be calm.

She didn’t know what was going on. When Mike and she made mistakes as children, their parents never scold them. They would only stare at them intently and chat with them. In the end, the siblings couldn’t help but admit their mistakes.

Now, she didn’t know what mistake she had made. A thousand thoughts were jostling around inside her mind.

“Have you been in touch with that bastard lately?” Jack asked in a serious tone.

“What bastard?” Ashley asked, unable to understand the meaning behind her father’s words.

“The man you met on the trip. The j.erk who had the audacity to dump you,” Jack explained, his voice softening.

Soon it became clear to Ashley that her father was talking about Joseph. Yet she couldn’t understand why he was calling him a bastard.

She realized something and her gaze went to Mike who was sitting opposite her. ‘Did you tell Dad?’

Mike seemed to read the question in her eyes and nodded his head.

“Yes,” Ashley said shifting her gaze to her father. There was no point in hiding anything.

“That bastard’s name is Joseph, am I right?” Jack probed her with another question.

Before Ashley could respond to him, Mike spoke up. “Dad, if I am not wrong, you said you would ask Ashley just one question. This makes it two!”

“Shut up, you b.rat!” His son’s intervention irked Jack. He turned his attention from Ashley to Mike. At this moment, his face was contorted with anger and he no longer looked like a loving father.

“Dad, calm down. It’s not your fault that you have grown forgetful. It’s just your age. You are no longer young,” Mike added. He seemed unperturbed by his father’s intimidating stare. He picked up the milk tea on the table and leisurely drank it.

“You b.rat, are you trying to vex me?” Jack’s eyes bore into Mike who seemed preoccupied with his milk tea.

For some reason, the father and son’s bickering lightened the serious atmosphere which had initially pervaded. Simone gave a chuckle of delight.

“Honey, your son is pissing me off. Don’t you think I need to teach him a lesson?” Hearing his wife’s laughter, Jack turned his head to her and put forth this question.

“Honey, I think Mike is right. We are not young anymore. And they aren’t kids anymore.” Simone gently patted Jack on his back and spoke in a comforting voice.

Due to Mike’s interruption, no one paid any attention to Ashley. Seeing that her parents were flirting in front of them, Ashley coughed to catch their attention. “Dad, Mom, if you have something that you wish to ask me, then go ahead.”

Simon got ready to speak, but Jack stopped her. Putting on a bright smile, he said, “You are so sweet. You never annoy me, unlike someone.”

As soon as Jack finished his words, Mike gave an undignified snort.

“Dad, do you have any more questions?” Ashley asked again, seeing he was straying from the topic. Now he seemed to be in good spirits.

“No more questions for you. Good girl, go to your room and take a shower. Then, get a good amount of sleep. As a girl, you should take good care of yourself.”

Mike and Simone were astounded by what Jack said.

‘Dad is the best!’ Ashley silently gazed at her warm-hearted father.

‘This is so unfair!’ Mike thought to himself.

‘Honey, how can you not stand by your principles?’ Simone wondered, regarding her husband carefully.

Ashley knew the problem had been resolved. Out of happiness, she bent over and hugged her father. Then she beamed at everyone and announced, “Dad, Mom, and Mike, I’m going to take a shower. You all have a good night!”

When Ashley’s slim figure disappeared from the view, Simone and Mike turned to Jack for an explanation. Patiently, he explained why he hadn’t grilled his daughter for an answer. “What’s the point of talking to Ashley? It will do nothing but make her upset. I have thought of a plan. I am going to meet that bastard in person.”

This afternoon, when Mike had returned home from work, Jack had forced him into revealing the name of the bastard who had broken up with his daughter. Finally, he got the information he wanted. The man he was looking for was named Joseph.

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Mike told his father who the man was, and he also mentioned that Joseph was the CEO of Empire Group. The name rang a bell. Joseph was the youngest CEO and famous for his cold and aloof nature.

He didn’t understand why his daughter would have been with such a cold-hearted man. And Joseph had even broken her heart. Jack had gathered some basic information about Joseph.

When Jack inquired about the reason behind their breakup, Mike pretended like he didn’t know the reason. From his earlier conversation with Ashley, Mike knew they were going to reignite their romance. Therefore, he thought it was

best to not mention Joseph's betrayal. Otherwise, Jack would oppose their relationship.

But deep down, Mike still had difficulty in accepting this relationship. He wanted his sister to lead a peaceful life rather than an unpleasant one with a dangerous man. This was one of the reasons why he had told Mike about their relationship. He was hoping his father could persuade her into leaving Joseph.

Jack had planned to probe Ashley when she returned. He intended to see how important Joseph was in her heart. However, Mike's interruption ruined his plan.

Looking at his loving and obedient daughter, Jack didn't have the heart to interrogate her. He couldn't risk opening up healed wounds. He wanted to let bygones be bygones.

Jack had no idea that Ashley and Joseph were still together and their romance was blooming. After all, Mike had concealed this information from him.

Mike was rendered speechless by the sudden change in his father's attitude. He went upstairs with his sister, not uttering a single word.

Ashley took a shower and lied down on her plush bed. She took out her mobile phone and texted Joseph. "I am starting to wonder if I was very childish tonight. Tell me the truth."

While she was in the washroom, taking a shower, she replayed the memories she had with Joseph tonight. After thinking it over, she couldn't help but think she had acted quite immaturely. She had showed him the love bites and left in a hurry after kissing him.

She tried to shrug it off. After all, when compared to Joseph's childish behavior, hers was nothing. Of course, she wouldn't tell him that he was childish. Otherwise, he would punish her.

The thing they say about love was true. It made people blind and crazy. Keeping the teddy bear close to her bosom, Ashley was absorbed in thought.

Soon, her phone vibrated, bringing her out of her reverie. The text came from a contact that was named "Honey." "Yes, you were, but I liked it," the text said.

It was Joseph who had renamed himself as "Honey" on her phone. This was done while they were abroad. When they broke up, Ashley just deleted the call log. But the number and his nickname remained.

Perhaps it was because she couldn't completely let go of the love she had for him. Or perhaps she kept it for the sake of memory. There was another possibility and that was she had predicted the future they would have. Somewhere in the recesses of her mind, she knew they were bound to get back together.

His response was short and to the point, but it didn't fail to bring a smile to Ashley's face.

"What are you doing?" She typed the message, her smile widening.

Their conversation was very ordinary, but to her, it meant the world.

Instead of texting, Joseph called her. "What are you doing?" he asked, as soon as she picked the call.

"I asked you that question first!" Ashley protested.

"You've indeed become childish," he remarked.

"Look who is talking! You are no less," Ashley retorted petulantly.

Although she knew her replies were childish, she didn't care. After all, she was dealing with a man who was more childish than her. She rested her head on the teddy bear and looked up at the ceiling. She felt completely at ease.

"Well, we have established that both of us are childish. This makes us a perfect match," Joseph commented happily. He didn't think being childish was a bad thing.

"What are you doing?" Ashley asked, bringing a different topic.

"I'm talking to you on the phone," he said.

"Heck! I want to know what you were doing before you called me," she inquired.

“If you want to know that, then there is only one way. Move in with me! You can see what I am doing all the time,” he suggested.

“Can you stop talking nonsense?”

“Nobody’s talking nonsense. This is just a theory that will help you dispel your problem.”

Ashley was rendered speechless.

She knew better than to pursue this topic. If she continued, Joseph would come up with another argument.

“I listened to you and had a chat with my grandfather,” he said. Since Ashley had lapsed into silence, Joseph decided to stop teasing her.

“Really?” Ashley said, sounding deeply suspicious of his words.

“Of course. I will do anything my beloved wife requires me to do.” Joseph made use of this opportunity, vying for Ashley’s attention and praise.

The truth was, Joseph had exaggerated the matter a little. Before he received Ashley’s message, he was indeed chatting with Leonard. However, he hadn’t done it on his own accord. Leonard had talked to him, wishing to be updated about the progress of his romance with Ashley.

When he began to receive texts from Ashley, he looked at his grandfather and said, “Grandpa, I need to speak to Ashley. How about I report the situation of our relationship to you tomorrow?” He had brought his conversation with Leonard to a close.

Ashley had no way of knowing if his words were true. Anyway, her current focus was his last sentence. She was astounded by it. “Who is your wife?” she asked.

“The person who is talking to me right now on the phone,” Joseph declared proudly.

“You are becoming more and more conceited! I am not your wife. It’s still up in the air!” Ashley retorted.

“It doesn’t matter. I know for a fact it will happen soon. I have booked you first and you are mine.”

Ashley realized he was jokingly referring to her as his property. Snickering, she said, "Private item. Not for sale."

"Well done! Of course, being my wife means you are my personal belongings. If anyone tries to buy you from me, I'll kill him!" At the thought of someone else taking Ashley away from him, Joseph's tone became intimidating.

He thought back to the serious issue Ashley had confessed earlier.

He thought he would have to be by her side at all times. After all, she was such a beautiful woman. A lot of people would want to make her theirs. As he dwelled on it, a solution came to his mind.

"Hey! What's the matter? Are you okay? Don't worry about me. I will never run away with someone else," Ashley promised comfortingly, noticing the sudden shift in his tone.

"Silly girl, what are you thinking about? I am not worried! I have absolute confidence in our love. I will keep you by my side for the rest of my life," Joseph said in a deep voice, filled with optimism.

Ashley was moved by his words. There was a sort of charm in his confidence. All of a sudden, her concerns disappeared. The future didn't look so bleak anymore. She realized the life she dreamed of with him was achievable.

Then, the conversation strayed to other trivial topics. The two of them relaxed, a feeling of coziness setting in. They ended the day on a very happy note.

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In the bustling streets downtown, the morning sun provided the busy city warmth in winter.

At that moment, Zachary and Yasmin walked out of the hospital after having an antenatal examination. They looked like a lovely couple as they walked hand in hand.

"How about we take a walk? Staying at home all day long is so boring!"

Yasmin complained. She had not gone out from her apartment in weeks. Because of this, she had not felt the fresh air and seen some interesting things for so long.

“Sure, but where are we going?” Zachary asked, holding Yasmin’s waist.

“How about we look around and buy some local delicacies as souvenirs?” Yasmin suggested.

“Whatever you say so. After all, we have to leave this city soon. Come on. I’ll accompany you wherever you want to go,” Zachary replied, noticing the sentimental look in Yasmin’s eyes.

Both of their families had urged them to go back to Olkfield tomorrow. As a result, Yasmin and Zachary decided to stay there for the New Year and hold their wedding before coming back.

They went on a shopping spree. Yasmin bought Ariosa’s local products in bulk just as she had said.

As for Zachary, he paid her bills, carried the shopping bags and protected her, which led her to want to become a housewife.

They spent the entire morning shopping. Once they were done, Zachary proposed to go to Empire Group to get something and check on Joseph’s work. Now that he was free and at ease, he wanted to see Joseph get tortured by the strain of heavy work and responsibilities.

“By the way, I’m going to Empire Group. Didn’t you say that you wanted to meet Joseph? Would you like to go with me?” Zachary asked while putting the things he and Yasmin had bought in the trunk of the car.

“Sure. I have nothing else to do anyway.” Yasmin really wanted to see Joseph, so she gladly accepted Zachary’s suggestion.

Zachary and Yasmin went to the building of Empire Group with their arms interlocked. As they made their way inside, many employees were peeking at Yasmin, a beauty whose identity could be told at a glance. Some even greeted her with a smile.

“Zachary, why are you here? Is she your girlfriend? Not bad.”

As soon as the two arrived at the floor where the CEO’s office was located, Joseph’s three male secretaries walked up to Zachary. The three were good friends with Zachary. They spoke casually and even praised Yasmin, who was standing aside.

Yasmin was wearing a long windbreak, which highlighted her tall and slender figure. Her smile made her look even more elegant and beautiful.

Zachary seemed quite satisfied with his colleagues’ compliments to his woman. With a smile, he introduced Yasmin to them. “This is Yasmin, by the way.”

“Nice to meet you, Yasmin!” The men’s ecstatic greetings echoed in the spacious floor.

Before Yasmin could nod or greet back, Zachary said, “Keep your voices down. Yasmin is pregnant.”

“Hello. Nice to meet you too.” Yasmin turned to Zachary and was surprised to see the serious look on his face. Then, he faced the three gentlemen, who all seemed quite shocked. “Please don’t mind it. I’m not that weak. It’s just that Zachary is too nervous.”

“Oh, we don’t. Don’t worry. We all understand you. I just didn’t expect that Zachary was so fast. He’s about to be a father, while we’re stuck as pitiful bachelors,” one of the men sobbed in jest.

“Don’t worry. I’ll celebrate the Single’s Day with you next year,” another man echoed.

“I’ll accompany you, too! But think about it. Our boss will have to celebrate this holiday too! He’s single, after all. We have nothing to complain about!” the last one exclaimed.

The only ones who work on this floor were Joseph and his secretaries. These secretaries were composed of four single good-looking men. This was a feature after the current CEO, Joseph, took office. Knowing the CEO’s icy cold temperament, the three secretaries were friends with Zachary only.

To their surprise, Zachary brought his pregnant girlfriend here. It made the three secretaries emotional as they used to poke fun at their love life.

“Well, our CEO isn’t single. He’s also about to get married soon. Now that I’ve said it, you’re welcome.” Zachary could not help but reveal the truth to the three men without mercy. After all, it seemed that these three were happy to see that Joseph, although powerful, influential, and extremely good-looking, was still single.

The faces of the three froze for a moment. They looked at Yasmin to confirm if it was real. “Yasmin, is Zachary telling the truth?” one of them asked.

Yasmin nodded at once.

It made the three even more astonished than they already were

“No! I can’t believe it! Even the CEO, who’s aloof and extremely cold for so many years, isn’t single anymore. We can’t delay any longer, right?”

The other two men immediately nodded in response.

“Ha-ha!” Yasmin could not help but laugh.

The men looked at her in confusion, so Yasmin composed herself and said, “I’m sure you’ll be able to see the CEO’s wife soon. Just wait for that moment to come.”

“You, three, stop talking nonsense. Is Joseph here?” Zachary asked seriously.

“He didn’t come to work today.”

“No wonder you’re so idle today. Do you know where he has gone to?” After knowing the reason why the three seemed carefree and unbridled, Zachary became confused.

If Joseph were in the company, the three would talk less and work more. Zachary should have known from the way the three talked that Joseph was not there.

“How would we know his whereabouts? He only tells you about it.”

“I see. I’ll just call him then. You should go back to work now. Otherwise, your bonus may be deducted,” Zachary said as though he were the boss.

One of the secretaries muttered, "Aren't you dawdling as well?"

"I'm on my marriage leave. You can also have this if only you have the ability to find a woman to marry," Zachary retorted proudly and then held Yasmin in his arms.

Upon hearing his braggart, they fell silent.

Zachary's words poked the sore part in the secretaries' hearts. They turned around and went back to work one after another.

"You're so mean! How could you hurt the hearts of those handsome men?" Yasmin could not help but express her opinions as the three walked away.

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"Don't worry about them. They won't mind," Zachary said indifferently to Yasmin.

Then, he walked up to the door of the CEO's office and opened it. There was nobody inside. He could not help but wonder why. "Joseph has so much work to do. Why is he skipping work? He used to be passionate about his work."

"He hardly comes to work since his return. It seems that he has indeed changed," said a man's voice behind Zachary.

"Derek, why did you come back?" Zachary closed the door and turned around. Derek Shaw was one of the male secretaries who had left dejectedly a while ago.

"I want ask why our CEO has abandoned you all of a sudden," Derek asked.

Everyone in Empire Group, especially the middle and upper-level employees, had heard about the gossip about Joseph and Zachary. For some reason, Joseph never cleared up the matter, and Zachary never denied it either.

From the beginning, everyone sighed in pity, thinking that the relationship of the two was a waste of excellent male resources. They got used to it eventually, though, and accepted that the two men were a good match. At least, they were both handsome and fine.

However, both of them had their own female companions now. It was unbelievable, especially because Joseph used to keep a distance from women. Derek was very curious as to why the CEO suddenly dumped Zachary.

Fortunately, Zachary was accustomed to this, so he knew very well how to deal with it. "Are you blind or stupid? I dumped him. Can't you see that my girlfriend is already pregnant?"

Before Derek could respond, Yasmin coughed loudly, as though catching their attention.

At that moment, a deafening silence befell in the whole floor.

"Well, I'm going to back to work," Derek said respectfully to Joseph, who appeared out of nowhere. He then winked at Zachary, signifying that he should look out for himself.

Deep inside, Derek was praying that the CEO did not hear his question. Frightened, he immediately turned around and left.

"Joseph, you're back! Where have you been?" Zachary asked casually. He did not think that what he had said earlier was inappropriate or offensive.

"What did you just say? You dumped me?" Joseph asked in an icy cold tone. Even his eyes were extremely frightening to look at.

It turned out that Joseph overheard Zachary's words. For some reason, Zachary's last sentence irked him.

Joseph had gone out this morning to buy some roses. He had planned to go to Guzman Group to give Ashley a surprise, but he hadn't failed to meet her.

As soon as he walked into the hall of Guzman Group, he became the center of attraction. Why would he not be? He was a tall, handsome man who was carrying a bouquet of bright and beautiful roses in his hands.

The receptionist was surprised to see a handsome man carrying a bouquet. She politely asked his name, and was even more astonished upon hearing

who the man was. Then, she called the CEO's office, and the order was given after a long while.

"I'm sorry, sir. You are not allowed to enter." Although confused, the receptionist put down the phone and spoke to Joseph.

"Whose order?" Joseph asked with his eyebrows slightly raised.

"It's Mr. Jack Guzman's order."

'Mr. Jack Guzman? Ashley's father?' Joseph was even more confused.

"What did he say?"

"He said you're not allowed to enter the building from now on," the receptionist answered truthfully.

Actually, she had called Mike first. After knowing the situation, he transferred the call to Jack.

After Ashley had gone to work this morning, Jack had specifically instructed Mike to report everything that was related to Joseph and let him make the decision.

Since Mike wanted to see what his father would do to Joseph, he did exactly as Jack asked. He did not expect that Joseph would show up so soon. He was very glad to cooperate with his father on dealing with Joseph.

Truth be told, it had occurred to Mike that Joseph and Ashley were a perfect match. Now, the couple seemed to be determined to get back together. With Joseph's abilities and Ashley's determination, it was only a matter of time until that happened.

Since they would get back together in the end, Mike decided that he would not let Joseph get Ashley so easily. Joseph was omnipotent and a highly respected man. It would be interesting if the Guzman family managed to frustrate Joseph and test his capacity. Mike must admit, he was looking forward to this wonderful drama.

This was why Joseph was not able to enter Guzman Group building. Before he could even meet Ashley's family, he had been blacklisted.

Nevertheless, Joseph looked calm on the surface. After thinking for a moment, he said to the receptionist, "Please give this bouquet to Ashley."

"I will. Take care, sir," the receptionist replied politely, watching Joseph leave.

It seemed that Joseph was defeated in his first attempt to pursue his future wife. Nevertheless, he was in the right mind not to break in or call Ashley about it. After all, the biggest obstacle he had in pursuing her was her family. As a result, he decided to change course and win over Ashley's family first.

"I didn't say anything just now. I have something to tell you, by the way. Yasmin and I will go back to Olkfield tomorrow, so I came to visit you today." Zachary quickly changed the topic

Judging from the look on Joseph's face, it seemed that he was quite unhappy for some reason. Zachary was worried that Joseph would be even more morose, so he walked to Yasmin's side and introduced her to him. "This is my girlfriend, Yasmin."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Marshall," Yasmin said timely.

It was the first time that she had seen Joseph. It turned out that he was taller and more handsome than when he was on TV. His features were impeccable, yet his demeanor was unsurprisingly cold and unfriendly.

Needless to say, this man could only be admired from a distance.

Yasmin did not dare to look into his eyes. 'Why doesn't Ashley have a problem with Joseph's poker face? Judging from the looks of it, could the relationship with such a cold man be passionate?' Although she was extremely curious, she knew better than to ask these questions out loud.

As Joseph heard Yasmin's greeting, he nodded and said nonchalantly, "Hello."

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Yasmin felt that Joseph's greeting was quite unwelcoming. He did not even look at her when he spoke.

What she did not know was that this was actually Joseph's warmest greeting to a person he just met, given she was Ashley's friend and Zachary's girlfriend. Besides, he was still in a bad mood because of what had happened to him earlier.

Zachary noticed Joseph's glum expression, so he asked again, "Where have you been? Perhaps someone offended you?"

As soon as Zachary finished his words, Joseph's face turned even glummer than it already was.

As expected, Joseph did not tell Zachary what he had gone through. Instead, he walked into his office without saying a word.

"Are you going to work? It's almost lunch time," Zachary remarked the moment Joseph sat down in his seat.

However, Joseph did not even lift his gaze. He just picked up the documents on the desk and started reading them without acknowledging Zachary.

"I'll call Ashley and ask her out for lunch. Mr. Marshall, will you come with us?" Yasmin asked as soon she came in after Zachary.

Truth be told, she was annoyed with Joseph's unfriendly attitude, so she figured that it was a good idea to use Ashley to deal with him.

As expected, it caught Joseph's attention. He raised his head and calmly answered, "Yes."

'Damn it! He's still so cold. This man is hopeless!' Yasmin could not help but complain inwardly seeing that Joseph went on with his work as soon as he finished speaking.

Standing aside, Zachary noticed the dissatisfaction in Yasmin's eyes, so he quickly instructed, "Yasmin, why don't you finalize the time and place with Ashley outside?"

Just as she was told, Yasmin walked out of the office to make the phone call. Once she was out, Zachary walked up to Joseph and worriedly asked, "What's wrong with you today? Perhaps something happened in your relationship with Ashley?"

“Zachary, can’t you say something pleasant?” Joseph asked, looking at Zachary coldly.

“Why?” Zachary asked with his hands on the desk. “Tell me. Who on earth offended you? Did you punish that person?”

“Just shut up if you want to take a leave,” Joseph said coldly, signing the documents.

“You’re so mean. When Ashley isn’t around, it seems that you are depressed,” Zachary joked boldly.

The best way to deal with a chatterbox is to ignore him. Keeping this in mind, Joseph turned a deaf ear to Zachary’s nagging.

“Boring! No wonder Ashley doesn’t want you,” Zachary continued with a sigh, shaking his head in an apparent pity.

At this moment, Yasmin walked in and informed the two men, “Ashley said we’re going to meet at Winter Wind Restaurant. She’s on her way now. Let’s go.”

“Alright.” Zachary took a glance at Joseph, who was concentrating on his work, and then left with Yasmin.

“How did Ashley fell in love with Joseph? He’s so cold,” Yasmin asked in confusion in the car.

Yasmin thought that Joseph was actually friendly in person although he looked cold. To her surprise, he was not. She never expected that Joseph would be cold to Zachary; the two had been friends for so many years.

Yasmin had formed a prejudice against Joseph. Because of this, she could not help but feel sorry for Ashley for having such a boyfriend.

“Ha-ha! That’s what you call love. It doesn’t need a reason,” Zachary answered with a chuckle. “Joseph has always been cold, but he is a gentleman to Ashley. You’ll see it later.”

He remembered the time when he saw Joseph in front of the apartment building. At that time, Joseph was so sweet and gentle to Ashley. At the

thought of this, Zachary was sure that today's lunch would be fun and interesting.

Sometimes, one falls in love for no apparent reason. As long as that person is kind, their cold personality does not matter, does it? Besides, the two people who are in love need to tolerate each other no matter what. Yasmin agreed with Zachary's opinion, so she figured that she had no right to speak ill of Joseph.

Yasmin and Zachary arrived at the restaurant not long after. To their astonishment, Joseph and Ashley were already seated at the table. What was more, there was a bouquet of bright red roses on the table.

"Ashley, who sent this bunch of flowers?" Zachary deliberately asked while he and Yasmin were sitting down.

"What do you think?" Ashley asked, seeing that Zachary was casting a sidelong glance at Joseph.

"Wow! I never expected that Joseph would send flowers to make a woman happy," Zachary replied excitedly.

"You should learn from him. Don't you think so, Yasmin?" Ashley asked, taking a sip of her drink. When she spoke, she looked at Zachary and Yasmin as though implying something.

"I agree. You should learn from him, Zachary." With a smile, Yasmin raised her hand and gently nudged Zachary's arm. She now felt that Joseph was not a completely indifferent person.

It was apparent that Ashley was defending Joseph, so Zachary asked out of curiosity, "Ashley, when did he send the flowers? How did you feel when you received them? What was written on the note?"

"Stop being so annoying. Believe it or not, I'll throw you out!" Joseph threatened before Zachary could even get the answers.

"You're so cruel. Is curiosity a bad thing?" Zachary said with disdain, shaking his head in disapproval.

“If you don’t want to be thrown out, just order dishes right now,” Ashley chimed in. Obviously, she was on Joseph’s side. She then handed the menu to Zachary, so that the four of them could finally order and eat.

Apparently, the flowers were sent this morning. Ashley received them when she got off work at noon. She was not only surprised that Joseph sent her flowers, but she was also astonished at the sensation it caused in her company. Now, everyone in the company knew that Joseph was her pursuer.

When she finally got the bouquet and knew who sent it, the enthusiastic employees swarmed to ask her about her relationship with Joseph. Some said they were a perfect match, while others sent their blessings. Thanks to Joseph, Ashley became the topic in the company.