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"Stop! I'll wear my b.ra now for the sake of your future," Ashley said righteously while looking at Joseph, who was trying to sneak and touch her bare c.hest. Of course, she quickly swatted his hands and thwarted his attempts.

It took them a long time to ease the sensual feeling between them. If Ashley was not firm on her words, she and Joseph would have made love again. Sadly, she could no longer bear to go through Joseph's hungry wolf again.

Since Joseph's "kindness" was rejected, he just stood there like a giant rod while he watched Ashley wear her underwear.

Ashley felt his burning gaze on her. Because of this, she lowered her head and blushed in embarrassment. Although they had done so many acts of intimacy, she still could not help but feel shy whenever he looked at her like that.

"I'm hungry. Let's go out for dinner," she said, feeling that the temperature on her face rose.

She hoped that this would distract Joseph so that they would not do something intimate again.

"Sounds good," Joseph quickly replied.

'Since I can't make love with my beloved, I won't mind what we're going to do next. Everything is fine as long as she's with me,' he mused.

"I've decided. Let's pack something for dinner later and then go to the beach. Then, we can have dinner in the seashore while we talk. Is that okay with you?" Ashley suggested while looking at the view of the sea as they passed by it.

"Sure," Joseph agreed without hesitation and then added, "Which beach do you want to go anyway? I'll just ask someone to send the food there."

"Okay then. But why did we suddenly decide to go to the beach in winter and enjoy the cold wind?" Ashley asked worriedly. Only then did she realize that her proposal was somewhat strange. At that moment, she suddenly recalled the reason why she came to Joseph. Well, she just wanted to find a quiet place with a beautiful view and then ask him some questions. It just happened that she saw the beach and got enticed by it. Sadly, the weather could not support her suggestion.

"Why don't we go to my seaview villa? There's a thermal tent on the beach there. What do you think?" Joseph gently asked.

"That's amazing!" Ashley exclaimed. By doing so, she would hit two birds with one stone. "I just suddenly realized how amazing it is to have an omnipotent boyfriend."

"What do you mean by 'you suddenly realized'?" he asked meaningfully. It seemed as though he was unhappy with Ashley's last sentence.

To his surprise, she scoffed and replied, "You're so stupid. How could you not get my point?"

If it was someone else who said that, he would have punched that person in the face and even kicked him in annoyance. However, it was Ashley, so he just kept his mouth shut and looked at her in confusion.

"Didn't you hear the word 'boyfriend'? From now on, you're officially my boyfriend," Ashley explained in a serious tone.

Joseph was speechless. It seemed as if he was at a loss for words that he did not even express how grateful and happy he was.

In all honesty, he had always regarded himself as Ashley's boyfriend. Others thought of the same thing anyway. One look and they presumed at once that Ashley and Joseph were indeed a couple.

Because of this, the first thing Joseph noticed was the words 'suddenly realized'. After all, everything else in her sentence sounded about right.

Ashley noticed that he had been silent for a while, so she asked in a gloomy voice, "Why do you become stupid when you're with me? Am I the problem or you?"

"You are," Joseph answered quickly.

In his mind, Ashley had a magical power that made him weak and foolish, unlike his normal self, which was intelligent and formidable. He was really unhappy when she called him 'stupid', especially when he said those words unconsciously.

"Hmph!" Ashley just let out a snort because she did not disagree.

All of a sudden, Ashley seemed to have recalled something, so she turned to him and said, "I haven't gotten even with you yet. Have you forgotten what I've said in your office before?"

"Which one?" Joseph asked immediately. It seemed that he really had the tendency to be stupid when he was in love.

"Think for yourself!" Ashley said in exasperation. She then turned her head to the window and looked outside. She had rather do that than look at Joseph, who seemed to be forgetful and oblivious around her.

Truth be told, he knew very well what she was talking about. She must be pertaining to the time when he spoke to her domineeringly. Ashley was pressing him about it, but it seemed to her that he had already forgotten about it. She was disappointed when Joseph had apparently forgotten about it, especially when she was expecting that he had already fallen for her way before.

As Joseph saw the serious look on her face, he could not help but chuckle. "I'm just kidding! Of course I still remember the second time we met when I said the same sentence to you. Or you can say it was the first time we came face to face. Is it not it?"

The truth was, Joseph reflected on his words as soon as Ashley said those cold words. At that time, he wanted to marry someone so that he could avoid his grandfather's bombardment and then solve the problem of the inheritance of the Marshall family. As a result, he made a straightforward request to Ashley to make her be his woman.

He thought that she would agree right away, but she kicked him instead. Never in his life did he expect that he would be treated so badly. But for some reason, he did not get angry. Instead, he felt more drawn towards her. She piqued his interest, and his boring life was finally filled with colors.

Despite his explanation, Ashley remained silent.

"Don't be angry at me anymore. Just as you've said, I'll be your man, or we won't discuss anything else. Besides, you've earned a lot because I'm omnipotent." The way Joseph cajoled his woman was unique.

However, it did not seem effective to Ashley, as she still seemed unhappy. "You're so smug! Those words mean that you're going to suffer losses. Do you think I'm useless?"

"Of course not," Joseph replied with a faint smile. "My dear wife, you have a lot of traits. For example, you can warm up our bed and be the mother of my children."

"Joseph, just so you know, all women can do those things as well!" Ashley shouted. Although Joseph thought that those were compliments, she was not happy about it, which made her feel the need to call him in his full name.

His rea.ssurance only made her annoyed. What he had stated could be achieved by any woman. He should not have answered her instead. After all, hearing such compliments about her was distasteful.

As Joseph noticed that Ashley's voice slightly raised, he immediately defended his answer in hopes of making up to her. "First of all, my wife will only be you. Secondly, you're the only one who can warm up my bed, and lastly, be the mother of my children. No other woman will have these advantages, as I will only want you. Do you understand?"

When Joseph spoke, his tone was firm, and his words were simple yet affectionate. They seemed like a warm stream pouring into Ashley's heart, calming her restlessness at once.

That was their future together, expressed in a relatively simple way. When Joseph, a cold and unfriendly man, said that he would only want her, it made a whole lot of difference.

Sweet words do not need to be too ravishing. They just need to be close to life to warm people's hearts better.

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Ashley listened to Joseph's words with rapt attention and nodded her head. "I see," she murmured.

"Well, good girl," Joseph said with satisfaction.

"Are you expressing your love?" Ashley moved close to him and raised her eyebrows in surprise.

Joseph shook his head at her stupid question and said, "I'm making an offer of marriage."

He couldn't wait for her to step into his life officially. Having her as his wife would be the best recognition for him.

His proposal was straightforward and unr0mantic. In spite of that, Ashley felt her heart skip a beat. However, she forced herself to maintain a straight face. After a short pause, she said coldly, "This isn't r0mantic enough. I won't accept it."

Instead of feeling angry, his face broke into a smile at her reply. With a wide smile, he said, "It doesn't matter. Sooner or later, you are going to be mine. I'm in no hurry."

Ashley was dumbfounded. She widened her eyes and looked at him. She had expected him to present a r0mantic confession to change her mind. Unexpectedly, he didn't budge and his arrogant confidence was all over his face. Slightly disappointed and bewildered, Ashley didn't know what to say.

She was quite a reserved girl. 'There is no way I can contradict him by saying I am in a hurry. Also, I can't use arrogance to beat him. That's his weapon. If I ask him how he can be sure that we were destined to be together, it is bound to backfire. The former response would compel him to drag me to the marriage hall as soon as possible. And the latter would result in being molested and taught a hard lesson.' Ashley shook her head, dismissing all the ideas that had come to her mind.

She understood no matter how she responded, it would get her into trouble. Under the circ.umstance, it was best not to say anything. Ashley, who was not in a hurry to get married, knew it was better to not provoke him.

Joseph, who had implied he was in no hurry to marry, gazed at her as she sank deep in thought. In a leisurely voice, he said, "Ashley, let's also get married after the new year." Ashley lifted her head and looked up at him. She knew what the word 'also' meant in this situation. He intended to get married before his friend, Zachary. After all, Zachary would be a father before him. The least he could do was outshine him by getting married first.

It was surprising that the masterful CEO Joseph was envious of his friend for making his girl pregnant before marriage.

Ashley took his words into consideration. After all, Zachary was marrying her friend Yasmin. She wouldn't mind getting married at the same time. The more she thought, the more she became convinced that it was a great idea. In the end, she had no reason to refuse. "Okay, we should hold a wedding with them. That would be wonderful," she said readily.

Her thoughts had taken a different turn. Ashley, who had initially thought she didn't want to marry anytime soon, had accepted a proposal that wasn't even mildly r0mantic.

"Silly girl, do you wish to hold a wedding in Olkfield?" Joseph asked, raising his eyebrows.

In short, he was implying there was no point in holding a wedding together. After all, they were in different places. However, Ashley wouldn't give up on this idea and thought of a solution. "I have an idea! We could ask them to hold a party in Olkfield. Later on, they could come to Ariosa and get married with us! This way, everyone is happy," she interjected happily.

'Are you kidding me? If we marry together, I won't be overtaking Zachary. I want to lead!' Joseph thought to himself, mentally rejecting her suggestion. He didn't want to start a fight so he said, "Whatever makes you happy! You can prepare to be my bride at any time."

"Here we are!" Before Ashley could say something, he exclaimed.

It was a beautiful night. The magnificent and elegant white villa stood overlooking the boundless beach with waves frothing and crashing. As Joseph and Ashley walked holding each other's hands, wind swept over them and ruffled their hair. "Your hands are so warm." Ashley observed, but her eyes were gazing at the boundless blue sea in front of her. She felt a cold gust of wind and she shivered a little.

"Give me your other hand too," Joseph ordered, but his voice was gentle.

Ashley turned around, looked at him quizzically, but didn't refuse his order. She gave him her hand obediently.

His strong and warm palms engulfed hers. He gently rubbed his hands against hers. The warmth from his hands spread to hers.

In this remote and peaceful place, only the two of them were present. Ashley couldn't help but study the handsome man who stood with her in this vast sea. She admired him for being so considerate and gentle. She felt a deep love for him course through her heart.

She was fascinated by his deep eyes. She couldn't peel her eyes from him.

"What? Your man is very handsome, right? Look at you, I can see you drool."

His mellow voice snapped her back from her reverie.

She looked at Joseph's face and there was something honest about his expression. In an instant, she withdrew her hands and self-consciously touched the corner of her mouth. She realized he had been teasing her with his drool remark!

"Joseph! I won't talk to you anymore!" she cried out, vexed at having been fooled. She was both embarrassed and angry. Looking at him, she noticed a smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. Unable to stand his mockery, she turned around and started walking.

Joseph had been a we.t blanket. He noticed the sudden shift in her lovely face but he continued to laugh. Ashley put on a sulky face and quickened her pace.

She thought back to how he had teased her! She couldn't believe his audacity. While she was admiring him, he had the nerve to interrupt her in an unr0mantic manner! She wished to maintain a distance from him.

Behind her, Joseph had come to a halt. He received a call from his subordinate. He called to inform that the food was ready. Once Joseph hung

up the phone, he continued to catch up with her, a pleasant look appearing on his face.

"Honey, our tent is here, and so is the food you want to eat," he shouted after her.

Ashley had passed the big tent and in a fit of rage she continued to walk past it. Joseph stood near the tent and kept on calling her name. But his attempts were in vain. Ashley wouldn't stop.

Ashley could ignore him but she had difficulty resisting the delicious food. She felt a pang of hunger. In spite of this, she stayed away for a long time. A surge of disappointment swept through her when she realized Joseph wasn't trying to coax her. In the end, she told herself food was the first necessity of people. She maintained an arrogant face, but changed the direction and went towards the tent.

She was delighted at the sight of abundant food. The tent also kept her warm. Neither of them spoke and an eerie silence ensued.

He smiled and silently watched her ravish the food that was in front of her. He noticed she was dodging his gaze. She was busy in the pursuit of filling her stomach.

The scene that unraveled in the tent was adorable, depicting how a couple quarreled.

Ashley had decided to give her attention to the delicious food and ignore Joseph. However, she caught sight of him staring at her and smiling. His thin I!ps were parted. 'Learn from your mistakes,' she reminded herself and tried to stop staring back. In spite of that, she found herself talking to him. In a calm voice, she asked, "Joseph, I said I wouldn't talk to you. Why did you let me go? Why didn't you coax me?"

"I was waiting for you to talk to me," he replied nonchalantly. It turned out that low EQ was capable of making a man extremely unr0mantic.

Joseph's ideas were quite simple. He was certain Ashley wouldn't ignore him for long. Moreover, he knew how much she loved delicious food so he coaxed her with it. He didn't think it was necessary to say anything. Also, he thought they could converse after she was done eating. In short, Joseph was giving her space. He wanted her to calm down. However, his words weren't well received by Ashley. She wasn't an unreasonable girl by nature. But she found it hard to believe that Joseph hadn't tried to coax her after the fight. 'Perhaps he didn't even know what coaxing is?' she thought. She sighed and began to wonder why she had fallen in love with a man with such a low EQ.

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"Joseph, I'm angry!" The truth was, Ashley had no idea what else to say, so she turned her head away and continued to be stubborn.

She was hoping that Joseph would console her, but she just received a single word from him. "Okay."

Ashley was dumbfounded. 'How could he be so heartless?! How dare he ignore my obvious hints?' Seeing that Joseph was looking at her with amus.ement, she felt helpless.

Joseph noticed the unhappy expression on her red face and the resentful look in her eyes. Because of this, he moved closer to her and gently said, "Honey, don't be angry anymore. Could you tell me what you want me to say to you?"

Unfortunately, what he said did not make the situation any better. If anything, it only made the situation worse. Ashley could not believe that he had just asked her how to coax herself!

As a result, she maintained her silence and did not answer him despite his pleas.

"If you don't tell me, I'll k!ss you. Or maybe you want to do something else to appease each other?" Since she was cold towards him and was ignoring him, Joseph moved his handsome face close to her and smiled evilly.

Ashley looked at his tempting thin I!ps. His threatening words made her tremble in fear. "Rogue!"

Joseph did not waver. He inched closer to her so that his l!ps were almost less than a centimeter from hers. Seeing this, Ashley said in a slightly fl.ustered tone, "I'm not angry anymore. Get up first!" Joseph's deep, black eyes were glinting in anticipation. Unfortunately, Ashley was not in the mood to make out with him at the moment.

Seeing that he was about to k!ss her and did not budge when she ordered him to get up, she threw herself into his arms instead. She wrapped him in a tight embrace, preventing him from k!ssing her.

What she did not know was that her actions only made him happier.

Joseph could only look at the dark night and heave a sigh. Since Ashley didn't want to make out, he would be sure to do so with her next time.

"Are you still angry?" he asked with concern.

"I'm not angry anymore." As Ashley felt the warmth of his embrace, she eventually gave in to avoid trouble.

Meanwhile, Joseph figured that being a rascal was very useful and effective in coaxing his girlfriend.

When he had finally calmed down, Ashley lifted her gaze and looked at him in the eye. "There are two things I want to ask you," she said solemnly.

"Go ahead." Joseph raised his hand and smoothed her hair. "Are you going to ask me if I love you or not?" he bluntly asked.

'That question usually pops up in intimate moments, does it not?' Joseph had never watched a single soap opera. However, he had heard Zachary, who regarded himself as a master of love, talk about it. As a result, Joseph surmised that Ashley was going to ask this question at this very moment.

The truth was, Ashley wanted to deny it, but she could not help asking the man now that he mentioned it, "Do you love me?"

"Yes. I love you very much," Joseph replied with utmost sincerity.

Ashley's heart skipped a beat upon hearing his response. "I love you too. I love you very much," she answered back with a sweet smile.

Almost instantly, Joseph's face lit up in happiness.

Love is something that can make people feel in a bliss. It has nothing to do with what you do or who you are. Only happiness can make a man and a woman do anything for each other willingly.

"Wait! That wasn't what I wanted to ask." Ashley had just returned from her senses as she got lost in his doting gaze.

"Then, what is it?" Joseph could not help but chuckle upon seeing her annoyed expression.

"I wanted to ask you about my brother. What agreement did you two reach? When I informed him a while ago that I would come to see you, he didn't come with me. He had even asked me to look for you as soon as possible. It's weird, isn't it?" Ashley blurted out what was on her mind in detail.

"What did he say?" Joseph asked meaningfully.

Ashley knew him enough that she did not miss the smug look in his eyes. "He said that you had given him 50% of the shares of the Synder Group. However, I doubt that the deal between you two is that simple," she explained with an apparent doubt.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I don't think my brother has ever approved of me being with you. When he followed us, I figured that he must be very interested in us. How could he let us go so easily? Besides, I don't think he's short of money."

"You're so smart! Yes, I used other methods," Joseph explained through gritted teeth.

"What's wrong with my brother?" Ashley asked with a frown.

"Nothing. He just cares too much about his sister. He's thick-skinned, cunning..." Joseph paused for a moment to think about how to describe Mike, but that was all he could muster. "Well, that's it for now," he concluded.

As a matter of fact, he had been in contact with Mike recently.

Mike followed Joseph and Ashley wherever they went. Also, everything he said made Joseph feel bad. When Joseph and Ashley walked together, he would often go between them and even put his arm on Ashley sometimes.

What was more, Mike's gaze towards Joseph was hurtful, as though he was looking at a person who had committed a heinous crime. It had become to the point where Joseph felt that he was the third wheel.

Needless to say, Joseph was unhappy with the way Mike was acting for the longest time. Fortunately, Mike was finally on Joseph's side, making the latter breathe a sigh of relief.

Hearing what Joseph had to say about her brother, Ashley was speechless. Her brother had left a negative impression on Joseph till now. As a result, she was unsure what Joseph would think of Mike in the future.

If she had not known her brother for decades, she would have thought that he had a bad character. After all, the way Joseph sounded when he talked about Mike was very serious.

In all honesty, Ashley felt that Joseph's words actually made sense. What Mike had done these past few days was indeed repulsive and questionable.

She suddenly lifted her head and looked up at Joseph with curious eyes. "How did you get my brother to change his mind?"

"I had tricks under my sleeve," Joseph answered mysteriously.

"Just say it!" Ashley angrily said, frustrated the he was keeping her in suspense.

As Joseph looked into her black eyes, he narrowed his eyes and mused, 'This girl is getting bolder. She now has the nerve to speak to me in that tone.'

Of course, he did not want to be angry at her, so he said in a low voice, "If you want me to tell you, you have to k!ss me fist."

Ashley was aghast at his request that she fell speechless. However, she remembered that she had said something that must have upset him, so she leaned over and did as he wished.

"Are you happy now? Answer my question!" Ashley demanded. Although Joseph still seemed dissatisfied, she moved to her original position and looked at him expectantly.

It was not easy to get the answer to that question. Her own brother refused to tell her, and Joseph would only explain to her if she k!ssed him. At the thought of this, Ashley felt helpless.

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After getting a k!ss from Ashley, Joseph gazed at her and revealed, "I have given your brother a pass to the provincial army base."

"What will he do with it?" Ashley asked, looking surprised.

"Well, he is going to be able to meet your sister-in-law with it." Joseph's response was very subtle.

His heart was at ease. After all, he had realized Mike, his brother-in-law, would no longer be a barrier. In order to gain more support from him, he had helped him chase the girl he liked. All in all, this bought benefits to both of them.

Ashley finally made sense of his words. "Is my sister-in-law a soldier?" Her face filled with intense curiosity. Before he could respond, she went on, "How come you know about it? I have never heard of it. This makes no sense!"

"I am sorry but this is a top-secret. I cannot give more details."

Ashley observed he was showing off a lot today. Unable to resist her curiosity about her brother's love life, she blurted out, "Just say it!"

"Huh?" Joseph snorted indignantly. He was deeply dismayed by her tone.

"Please forget what I just said," she said hurriedly. Her head c0cked coquettishly to one side and she held his arm. In her gentlest voice, she pleaded, "Come, let's talk about our sister-in-law."

Ashley knew Joseph well enough to know he had a temper that could be ruffled easily. When she spoke, she had used the words 'our sister-in-law' hoping to encourage him to speak up. Her trick worked quite well! He relished the fact she had included him as a member of the Guzman family.

Therefore, Joseph was once again in good spirits. He pulled his pretty girlfriend into his arms and said leisurely, "Your brother seemed hell-bent on

ruining our dates. I realized if I wanted his support, I had to find something against him. I noticed he often went to the provincial army base. After a little digging, I found out he had 'hara.ssed' a female officer there."

"And then?" Ashley adjusted herself and found a comfortable position in Joseph's arms. She raised her eyebrows and eagerly waited for the rest of the story.

"Your brother was prohibited from entering there. I spoke to Grandpa and got him a pass. I spoke to your brother and struck a deal with him."

"Oh? How did Grandpa manage to do it so easily?" Ashley found this part a bit confusing and wished to be enlightened.

"Grandpa used to be a senior military officer in the provincial army base. The girl your brother is after is my Grandpa's friend's granddaughter. Her father is the current commander in chief of the army base. The pass was obtained from that commander," Joseph explained carefully.

"I see!" Ashley said as she nodded her head and put her cold hands into his coat pocket.

"Do you have any other questions?" he asked, looking at her dotingly.

"Yes, I actually do. I wish nothing but an honest answer. Can you give me that?" All of a sudden, the smile on Ashley's face disappeared. Instead, a stern look took over it.

"Sure." Joseph rubbed his chin against her smooth hair.

"What on earth is the inside story of the Synder Group's lawsuit that you talked about last time? When I previously broached this topic, you avoided speaking about it. Please don't lie to me." When she spoke, she assumed a serious tone.

At the beginning, Ashley was confused. She couldn't understand why Joseph suddenly had announced the acquisition of the Synder Group with great enthusiasm. She suspected there was a non-commercial motive behind it. Now, when she heard there was a lawsuit against James, she was certain her

suspicion had been right. Joseph definitely had a personal grudge against James.

She looked up and detected hesitancy in Joseph's deep black eyes. Gently, she broke away from his grasp and uttered in a low voice, "Joseph, I hope we can be honest with each other. No matter what happens, I will want to be with you. Don't let me go again. Please start confiding in me. Can you do that?"

"Don't be silly. I won't ever let you go," he swore, putting his strong hand around Ashley's thin shoulder. After thinking about the matter for a while, he let out a sigh and said, "It's just that I don't know how to tell you."

"Take your time. There is no hurry," Ashley said when she noticed disappointment in his eyes. She couldn't watch him sad. She put her right hand on the back of his hand, wishing to soothe him.

"The former CEO of the Synder Group, James Synder, was my father's classmate. They remained good friends for years. The two of them started their business almost at the same time. My father was quite fond of James so he often bankrolled him. James came from a relatively poor family. After a while, the two of them began to gain lots of success with their career. That's when a beautiful woman appeared in their life. She was the daughter of a famous plutocrat. And she was quite an attractive woman."

The tide was beating against the beach in rhythmic movements. Joseph watched the boundless dark sea ahead of him. Ashley listened to him quietly, not uttering a single word.

"What they say about love is true. It comes when you least expect it. My father just wanted to negotiate with that woman and ardently wished to get the plutocrat to invest in his business. But as time went by, he began to develop a crush on her."

Joseph took a deep sigh and stopped for a moment. Ashley couldn't help but intervene. "Is that woman your mother?" she asked.

Joseph nodded and said, "Yes. And then she fell for him and they got married. One year later, they had me. In the first six years, I was fortunate to lead a happy life with my parents. They were kind and tender people. They kept showering me with love. I relished the attention they gave me." Joseph's face grew wistful as he thought about his happy time he had spent with them.

When he next spoke, there was despair in his voice. "I still remember that horrible day. It was right before my sixth birthday. My mother ran out in a hurry. I didn't know what happened. After a few hours, Grandpa came to me, looking very pale. He held my hand and took me to a place. I remember that terrible smell of disinfectant mingled with bl00d. I saw... my parents' motionless bodies. They were swimming in bl00d."

He winced at the rememb.rance of this tragic memory. He closed his eyes and unconsciously relived that scene which he could never get out of his mind. Realizing Joseph was in pain, Ashley bent over and h.ugged him tightly.

"You know what? When I saw them, I didn't shed any tears. I didn't believe it was real. I thought perhaps it was a nightmare. I simply couldn't accept it..." he faltered. His pain was depicted in his voice and face. Ashley felt so sorry for him.

"Please don't be sad. I am with you. I will always be with you." She patted him on his back. Her eyes glistened with tears.

Leonard had once recounted this incident to Ashley. When she heard it, she felt terrible for the child who had experienced such tragedy. She knew this must have been a great shock to Joseph.

Joseph's body slightly trembled. Ashley understood he would never get over this sorrow.

The little child had grown up and become a successful man. However, this tragedy would always remain with him. No amount of success could erase the memory of his parents.

After hearing his painful confession, Ashley's heart ached for him. She felt responsible for making him relive his old wounds. She tightened her grasp on him and whispered, "That's enough. You don't have to explain anymore. Just remember you will always have me by your side."

'May the loneliness of the past vanish from your mind. I'll give you a beautiful future. I am going to be by your side through thick and thin,' she thought as she held his hand.

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Blake Marshall, Joseph's father, diverged from the family tradition of joining the army and went to a different route. His interest was business management and no one could convince him to choose a different path. As a result, during his educational years, he made acquaintance with a student from the same department, James.

They shared a simple friendship that kept on blooming due to their similarities. Both of them appreciated each other's talent and weren't blinded by l.ust for money.

However, after they graduated from college, they drifted apart for a while. Now that they were out in the real world, they had to face all kinds of temptations.

Blake belonged to a rich family. He was an open-minded man who had a knack for business. Life after college wasn't that hard for him. As a result, his career was flourishing. However, the same couldn't be said about James. He didn't have the money it took to start a business. Blake would every now and then lend his friend money to help him make it through those difficult times.

In spite of that, their relationship had been estranged ever since they both established their own companies. The gap between them was getting bigger. As a consequence, they grew further apart. James couldn't believe how unjust life had been to him. He often cursed it. He believed he had put a lot more effort than Blake yet it was in vain. Slowly, he was devoured by jealousy.

However, with time, they both were on the right track with their careers. James was still jealous of his friend but it wasn't beyond repair. Just then, a beautiful and gentle woman appeared in their life.

At that time, both the companies had planned to cooperate with each other. Their plan was to raise a h.uge amount of money by combining the strength of both companies. Then an idea struck them. They decided to seek for a rich third party to work with them.

As this idea was brewing in their mind, they came across a well-known plutocrat. He showed interest in the cooperation plan, and all the three parties came up with an appointed date to make the negotiation official.

It was a warm sunny day. Blake and James anxiously envisaged their companies' development. Their hearts were brimming with expectations. They sat in a high-end hotel, waiting for their financing partner to appear.

However, it wasn't the old man they had spoken to on the phone. Instead, a charming woman with a sweet voice walked towards them.

After greeting the two men, she elegantly reclined on the chair near them. She started off by giving a brief introduction of herself. She made it clear she was here to negotiate with them on behalf of her father.

Janice Castro's elegance and beauty took people's breath away. The woman, who was the epitome of grace, would be remembered by the two handsome men who met her.

The bright French window of the hotel was on her side. The light reflected on Janice's beautiful face. She didn't have a residue of make-up yet her soft face was glowing. Due to the sunlight, a few strands of her hair were shining. All in all, her delicate face was even more beautiful in the sunlight.

It wasn't just her beauty that struck people. She was a smart woman and all her movements had grace in them.

In addition to being physically attractive to the opposite se.x, she also had the ability to stun them with her intelligence. The three of them sat and had a detailed and formal discussion. In the end, they sealed the deal at dinner party.

Once this wealthy and charming woman drove away, Blake and James went back to the hotel. They opened a bottle of wine and toasted the success of their new endeavor.

They both had different thoughts in their mind but they wouldn't confide in each other.

Young and promising, Blake, who was second to none in appearance, envisioned the future of his career. He imagined how the expansion of his business territory would take him a step closer to his dreams. While James, who was a little inferior to Blake in all aspects, was still thinking about the rich and beautiful woman, Janice. He wanted to expand his career but at the same time pursue her.

Love was always an unpredictable phenomenon. It couldn't be described and in most cases, it happened when one least expected it.

Soon, the three of them would be tangled in a complicated love triangle.

In the beginning, Blake's priority was his company. He went everywhere just for the development of his career. It wasn't possible for him to rest. He had to discuss more cooperation rules in the Castro Group. However, it was Clark, the head of the Castro Group, who negotiated with Blake most of the time. Clark admired Blake and considered him a provident business genius.

As the heir of the Castro Group, Janice often stood aside, observing and learning. Initially, it was strictly professional, but later she found herself admiring Blake. His perfect face remained engraved in her mind. Several times she found herself ogling at him.

Even though Blake was oblivious of this, her father, Clark, noticed the situation. He smiled and encouraged his daughter to choose one from these two men, Blake and James. Clark was a good judge of character. He preferred Blake over James. From his observation, he had gathered that even though James had the drive to earn a lot of money, he was a little narrow-minded.

Janice, who had always been on good terms with her father, made a clean b.reast of things. She poured her heart out, revealing she had developed feelings for Blake. She also confessed Blake seemed to be busy all day long, never sparing time for such amus.ements.

Her remark was true. Blake was way too focused on his career. He came there several times. But after he exchanged a formal greeting with her, he would get straight to business.

When Clark heard his daughter's frustrated lamentations, he smiled. He appreciated her observation and said it was quite normal for a man of this age to focus on his career. In addition, he encouraged her to show up more often in front of Blake.

Janice was rendered speechless by her father's long-winded speech. She couldn't believe he was asking her to pester a man who didn't care about her.

'Do I really have to put effort and show interest in a man who cares about nothing but his career?' She couldn't help but think it would be a desperate move.

"If you like him, you should pursue him b.ravely. Otherwise, your life will be full of regrets," he said, noticing her reluctance. And his words did it! Then and there, Janice made up her mind that she would pursue Blake.

Using various reasons, they tried to make Blake a frequent visitor of Castro Group. Clark decided to allow his daughter, Janice, to negotiate with him.

He had given his daughter full support to chase after Blake. He was in no hurry and didn't mind taking things slow. However, Blake had a busy schedule. Besides, the business deal with Castro Group was not as important as his other deals. Hence he resorted to sending a company representative to Castro Group.

Blake's foolish behavior brought a surge of anger in Clark. He shook his head disappointedly and thought he was too ambitious. However, deep down, Clark also appreciated Blake's dedication to his career. It was commendable!

By now, it had been more than a month since they knew each other. Blake's company got a h.uge amount of capital, and it began to develop rapidly. The company was ready to enter the national market. This explained Blake's absence. He had been busy the whole month. The deal with Castro group had taken a backseat in his mind. However, he hadn't completely forgotten it. In addition to paying the dividends on time, he didn't forget to negotiate with the other party. No matter how busy he was, he was always polite to everyone.

The father and daughter of the Castro family, who had set their eyes on Blake, were even more impressed with him as time went by.

Finally, Clark came up with an idea. He sent Janice to Blake's company. In the pretext of an internship, she was to stay as his assistant.

Clark knew his request was too far-fetched. After all, his daughter didn't work as an intern in his own company. Instead, she worked in a different company as a senior assistant. One had to be an idiot to believe she needed to develop her practical sk!lls. Clark had spoken to Blake with unyielding resolve. He was indeed in need of an assistant. At first, Blake hesitated a little bit, but in the end he gave in and allowed Janice to enter his company as his assistant.

Once she was there, Blake began to take notice of this considerate and quiet woman. Janice played the role of an assistant with perfect grace and offered to deal with the company affairs along with him. Janice's presence had increased his efficiency. With her by his side, his career reached another height.

During her stay as his assistant, Janice, who was already attracted to Blake, grew to love him even more.

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After getting along for a long time, Janice developed a deeper understanding of Blake, a handsome and extraordinary man. He was not promiscuous and, interestingly, had never been in love. He may be serious all the time, but he was actually gentle.

However, she found out something about him—he only cared about his career. He did not care about his love life, and work was his only partner in life.

Although being an assistant was exhausting, Janice still found her job enjoyable. After all, she got to work for the person she liked. Sadly, Blake always ignored her, which in turn made her sad and heartbroken.

The day came that she could no longer bear her feelings, so she decided to tell the truth in the most euphemistic way possible. "Mr. Marshall, I want to ask you something."

At that moment, Blake was busy reading doc.uments. "Go ahead," he said without even bothering to raise his head to look at her.

Janice was infuriated. She was very uncomfortable as she was about to confess her feelings for him for the first time, but he only gave her a cold att!tude. "Blake, raise your head and listen to me!" she shouted angrily.

Because her usual gentle voice suddenly changed into an annoyed one, Blake looked at her at once. Janice was standing in front of his table with a serious expression on her face. He was confused. Nevertheless, with a frown, he beckoned her to continue.

Janice stared into Blake's bright eyes and, albeit reluctant, gave in eventually. She then looked away from his gaze and instead stared at the floor. Once she mustered her courage, she calmly said, "I want to ask you a personal question. What kind of woman do you like?"

"I don't know. I've never thought about it," Blake answered without hesitation.

The truth was, Janice was expecting that answer, even before she had the chance to ask him. "Well... will you like me?"

Janice suddenly raised her head, her face red in embarrassment, and looked at Blake, whose I!ps were pursed in thought. Also, there was an apparent look of expectation in her eyes.

"No," he quickly answered with certainty, despite not expecting that Janice would ask this question.

His answer broke Janice's heart into a thousand pieces.

"Blake, you bastard!" she exclaimed in sorrow. She could not help but burst into tears upon hearing his rejection. As soon as he said that, she stormed out of the office.

Janice had spent more than a year working for him without regret. She even helped him with his career! It turned out that she just wasted her time on him. He had just turned her down without even considering it! At that moment, Janice's heart was full of pain.

Blake realized that the situation got out of control. Because of this, he quickly ran out, only to see Janice's head buried into James's c.hest. With a sympathetic look on his face, James was comfortingly patting Janice's back while she trembled in anguish.

At that moment, Blake, who was standing at the corner of the building while he watched the intimate scene, felt a pang in his heart.

'It turns out that Janice and James are really a couple,' he thought to himself.

After the incident, Janice did not come to work for days.

Blake was restless as he recalled what had happened that afternoon.

Ever since James saw Janice for the first time, he always went to Castro Group to look at Janice, intentional or not.

Janice may be beautiful, but she was arrogant. Every time they talked, she answered James curtly, which made it difficult for him to approach her.

Time had passed, and James learned that Janice's father had arranged for her to intern in Blake's company. As a result, a sense of crisis arose in James's heart.

Since he had always wanted to achieve a win-win situation in both love and career, he made an appointment with his friend, Blake. They chatted for a while, and then James told his friend that he liked Janice and wanted to pursue her. Blake, who was not at all interested in love, just smiled and expressed his support.

Since then, Blake had regarded Janice as his friend's girlfriend, even though she was always by his side. He appreciated her efforts for taking her job seriously, but he treated her like any other employee.

On the other hand, Janice adored Blake, but she had no idea what to do with his stubbornness. With this in mind, she took the initiative to find Blake's most trusted friend, James. She confessed to him that she liked Blake and asked about his hobbies and even lifestyle. That way, she could make rapid progress in pursuing the man she liked.

From that moment on, James played a two-sided role. He tried his best to give Janice advice, so they gradually became friends. Then, he would tell Blake how he and Janice were getting along.

However, James only became jealous as time went by. He figured that since Blake did not care about love, he would definitely ignore Janice's extra efforts and sincere feelings. Because of this, he made sure that Blake and Janice would not end up together.

As Janice's love strategist, James once suggested that she could pretend to be his girlfriend to spite Blake. The truth was, he wanted to make Blake believe that they were really in love. Sadly, Janice refused to do it. She wanted pure and sincere love. Also, she was afraid that Blake would be more indifferent to her and would even give her his blessings if he saw her with James.

Time passed, and Janice admired Blake even more. He was outstanding in all aspects, after all. Meanwhile, James really wanted to get his beloved woman, Janice, even though his career had not significantly improved. Not to mention, he was hoping to get strong financial support from her.

It was agonizing for James whenever Janice asked him how to make Blake fall in love with her. Since she could not see James's real feelings towards her, the resentment in his heart grew deeper.

'Why does everyone only see Blake and then turn a blind eye to me despite my outstanding performance?' James wondered. Truth be told, after enduring the humiliation for so many years, he grew more jealous of Blake. This eventually put an end to their friendship.

One day, James finally advised Janice to confess her feelings for Blake b.ravely. Janice, too, felt that it was the right thing to do. Because of this, she went to Blake before she got off work and then asked him those questions.

What she did not know was that James had told Blake the day before that she and James were officially in a relationship.

As a result, when Janice confessed her love for Blake, he thought that she was his friend's girlfriend and that she wanted to date two men at the same time. That was the reason why he rejected her immediately. He even felt a little sorry for James at that time.

Janice was heartbroken and in misery after being rejected. She rushed downstairs and happened to see James along the way. He rushed to her aid and said in a comforting tone, "Don't cry. It's good that you can see it clearly. Come here. You can lean on me. I'm your friend, after all."

She felt James's tenderness and sincere concern. Finally, she calmed down, and the anguish in her heart dissipated as she leaned on his c.hest.

A misunderstanding thereby disturbed the three of them.

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Since Janice had not come to work for days, Blake felt that the company's affairs were too heavy to handle on his own. He was constantly reminded of what had happened that day as the scene of it appeared in his mind all the time.

For some reason, he could see Janice's figure in every corner of the office. Whenever she reported the work process and made arrangements, there was always a faint smile on her face. Also, the way she made coffee and ordered food for him was worthy of attention for her gentleness and dedication.

'Why did I get hurt when I saw Janice and James were close to each other? Why am I anxious now that I can't see her? Am I only used to her being around me?' These three questions echoed in Blake's mind.

One day, Leonard, Blake's father, noticed that his son was somehow distracted while he was resting at home over the weekend. As a military soldier, Blake being absent-minded did not escape Leonard's scrutinizing eyes. Because of this, Leonard could not help but ask his son in a stern voice why he seemed in distress. Blake who was always in awe of his military father told him the truth at once.

After listening to Blake's answer, Leonard found out that a woman's love confession was troubling his son. "You're so stupid! You probably have feelings for that woman! Why are you still standing there? If you like her, chase her!"

"But... she seems to have a boyfriend," Blake replied in a low and respectful voice.

"She has a boyfriend, yet she still confessed her love to you? Is it not obvious, or you're just stupid? I doubt it's the former. Anyway, I don't want to talk to a foolish person like you. You're no longer young for this. By the way, get married as soon as you can," Leonard bluntly said. Only then did he realize that his son was not confident as he seemed.

"It doesn't seem to be a confession, does it?" Blake asked, which only showed how clueless he was.

"How the hell did I have a stupid son?" Leonard rubbed his temples as though talking to Blake was giving him a headache. Then, he continued to read the military newspaper. "Don't mind your father. He always says useless things with a straight face and thinks he's smart," Blake's mother suddenly said. She noticed that her son was a little dejected and hesitant to refute his father's words, so she continued, "You definitely like that lady. After all, she works for you every day, and her question to you proves that she likes you too. A lady from an eminent family would not confess her love to you and be with someone else at the same time. There must be some sort of misunderstanding between you two. Besides, she's not yet married, is she? As long as she remains unwed, you'll still have the liberty to love her. Why don't you ask that lady out?"

"She said she didn't want to see me anymore," Blake answered with melancholy.

Truth be told, he had gone to the Castro Group twice to see Janice after the incident. However, he went there for business reasons every time, so he only met with the representative of the senior leadership of the company. It seemed that Janice was avoiding him on purpose.

Leonard happened to see the warning in his wife's eyes while he was reading the newspaper, so he decided to help shed some light on his son. "She said she didn't want to see you, but you can still show up in front of her. You'll definitely meet her one day. If that happens, you can pester her whenever you want."

He then paused for a moment and added, "Don't tell me you still don't know what to do. Just ask someone to send expensive things to her company, or better yet, her home, every day. You have a lot of money anyway, unlike us, poor soldiers."

"I got it," Blake quickly said. The truth was, he was just pretending to understand because his father had just brought up his own past and might start blaming him again for not joining the army.

After his parents' inculcation, Blake made up his mind to find Janice to clear things up once and for all and explain himself.

He went to Castro Group almost every day just as he had planned, but he, unfortunately, never saw Janice.

As a result, he came up with something else. He decided to go to the Castro family residence early in the morning instead to see her.

"Blake, what the hell do you want?! You don't have to ask me to go back to work. I'll hand you my resignation now." As soon as Janice finished her words, she handed Blake the resignation letter she had written two days ago.

The truth was, she was actually very happy. She finally saw the man she had been missing day and night at the door of her house. She was expecting that Blake came there because he wanted to ask her personally to go back and help him with his business. At the thought of this, she held back her excitement and pretended not to care.

She still could remember the time when she expressed her love full of expectation. Sadly, Blake just rejected her cruelly. As a pampered woman, it was very difficult for her to forget it, let alone accept it.

It took Blake a few days to see Janice again. She was still beautiful and elegant, yet it appeared that she no longer seemed gentle. Upon seeing her, he forgot all the lines that he had prepared beforehand and stuttered instead, "I... I didn't come here to ask you to go back to work. The truth was... I... I came here to ask you a few questions."

"What questions do you want to ask?" she asked impatiently.

Every time Blake was around her, she could not help but shift her attention to him. She looked at the deep eyes of the man in front of her, but she found that he was avoiding her gaze. 'Perhaps he doesn't know how to face the woman who expressed her love for him.' At the thought of this, Janice felt a sharp pain in her heart. She had loved him for so long, but she did not know how to end it.

Blake, on the other hand, was at a loss for words. He had no idea which question he should ask first. Truth be told, he had always treated Janice as his favorite woman, but it seemed that he never noticed it until recently.

"Blake, if you're not going to say anything, I'll leave now," Janice said impatiently. She had been standing there for a long time, waiting for Blake to say anything, but it seemed that words got stuck in his throat. Unable to hold it any longer, she added, "Just take my resignation, and you won't have to come to me again." As she was about to turn around and leave, Blake grabbed her wrist in a hurry and asked, "Do you have a boyfriend?"

Janice fell stunned for a moment. Once she regained her composure, a sneer appeared at the corners of her mouth. "Why are you asking me that, Blake? Do you want to humiliate me? If I had a boyfriend, why would I say those stupid words to you?"

These rhetorical questions exposed the bitterness in her heart. She suddenly felt how much of a failure she was that even her first-ever love confession was being questioned.

Blake was perplexed to hear her snide remarks. How could he humiliate her just by asking this? He just wanted to find out the answer to the question that had been troubling him for days so that he could plan for the future.

"Janice," he said weakly while staring into her eyes, "I seem to have fallen in love with you. What should I do?"

His mellow voice touched Janice's heart. She was caught in surprise that she even felt her heart skipped a beat.

At that very moment, the morning light shone on them, and the scene was both beautiful and timeless.

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"What did you say?" Janice said in disbelief after a moment of silence.

"I said I seem to have fallen in love with you," Blake answered straightforwardly.

Janice was finally sure that she did not hear it wrong. But before anything else, she suppressed the ecstasy in her heart and moved her wrist, which Blake was grasping tightly. "Let go of me first," she calmly said.

The truth was, Blake was so nervous that he could not help but put more strength on her wrist. As a result, Janice asked him to let go of her as the pain was becoming unbearable.

However, Blake thought that she was indifferent to his confession, so he tightened his grip even more. He feared that she would turn around and leave the instant he let her go.

Janice noticed the look of apprehension in his eyes, so she could not help but chuckle. "Let go of my hand. It hurts."

"Oh. I'm sorry." Realizing that he had misunderstood what Janice had meant, Blake immediately released her wrist in embarrassment.

Now that there was no hindrance between them, he quickly brought up what he had to say as clearly and concisely as he could. "My father told me to be b.rave and go after the girl I like, so I did. I came for you. What do you think?"

Janice could not help but laugh at his words. "Well, I'd like to sign the contract with you. Where do I sign? Mr. Marshall, how long do you want the contract to last?"

"What?" Sadly, Blake did not seem to catch what she meant by that.

"Oh my God! Can you be more stupid?" Janice exclaimed in exasperation while staring at the blank look on his face.

Blake still had not understood a single thing she said. Janice realized how clueless he could be, and it was driving her crazy, To make matters worse, he asked an even more stupid question. "So, you really don't have a boyfriend?"

"Blake, that's enough! I don't have a boyfriend!" Janice could not help but raise her voice upon hearing that question for the second time.

All of a sudden, a booming laughter erupted from behind. Blake and Janice, who seemed to be in a stalemate, turned around and saw Clark laughing at them.

Blake greeted Clark with a smile. Janice, however, was very embarrassed.

Ever since Blake found out that James and Janice were not lovers, they signed a contract for their lifetime partnership. That was to say, they immediately committed themselves and entered a relationship.

Now that their misunderstandings had been cleared up, Janice and Blake realized that James was actually devious and two-faced. As a result, they kept their guards high against him. Blake was warier of James since he knew that his so-called friend liked Janice ever since. Meanwhile, Janice was disgusted with James now that she knew how scheming he could be. Because of this, she ultimately cut off ties with him.

James was full of resentment now that Blake and Janice had cleared the air and started dating. Not only that, he had become estranged from his closest friend, and it seemed that they would not be in contact with each other for the next few years.

Truth be told, Blake was boring and rigid before he fell in love. After dating Janice, he finally learned how to please a lady. They dated for two weeks, and then he proposed to Janice. Their wedding came shortly after. They then led an enviable life as a couple.

During that time, the Castro Group merged with Blake's company, a wellknown enterprise in the country. This enterprise was later named Empire Group. Hand-in-hand, it headed for the broader market.

Janice and Blake conceived a child soon after. The child was named Joseph. The loving couple loved their genius child so much. No matter how busy they were, they were sure to find spare time to be with little Joseph.

Needless to say, Joseph was doted on by his parents and lived a happy and simple life since he was little.

Time passed by quickly. In the seven years of their marriage, Blake loved Janice so much. After all, she was his best assistant in life and career, not to mention his beautiful wife. Of course, Janice also loved her handsome and considerate handsome as well. She learned how to be gentler and more virtuous than she already was. Others envied their relationship. How would they not be? Blake and Janice's story was perfect and something that they wished for themselves.

Unfortunately, a tragedy struck the happy family.

It was when the time that Blake had always asked Janice to go home first on the pretext that he had special engagements. Janice did so as told. She believed that her husband loved her so much, so she went home to accompany her child without questions asked. However, Blake had asked her to do that many times, which eventually aroused her suspicion. As his wife, she was starting to be suspicious of him if he was having an affair with another woman.

But, every time she asked him, Blake always shifted the subject. As a result, she was unable to ask what she had longed to ask, even if it was troubling her for the longest time.

One day, Blake did not go home all night, so Janice was not able to sleep. To her surprise, she received an anonymous message with a hotel address and a photo early in the morning. In the photo, her husband was lying on the bed with a n.aked woman in his arms.

Janice was dumbfounded. Her nightmare turned out to be true. She froze for a moment, and without thinking, ran out with her phone in her hand.

It was still very early. The sun had not come up yet, and the eastern sky was still gray.

Janice did not know that her uncharacteristically impetuous behavior was caught by young Joseph, who had just got up to go to the bathroom.

She arrived at the address attached to the message not long after. She actually prayed and hoped in her heart that it was not true. Sadly, it was. She saw Blake disheveled as he lay next to a n.aked woman.

For some reason, he seemed to have sensed something that he opened his eyes at that very moment. He saw Janice watching him with incredulous and tearful eyes. Then, he looked at himself, and his eyes were wide in disbelief and horror.

Janice rushed out of the door. Meanwhile, Blake, who knew that explanation was the most important thing at the moment, immediately picked up his clothes and followed her.

When he caught up with his wife, her face was covered with tears. He grabbed her arm, but she just shook it off. She wanted to leave this painful place at once, so she went to her car and opened it.

She was in a state of grief that she turned a deaf ear to Blake's incoherent explanation. The scene was very chaotic.

Blake had no choice but to take the car key from Janice's hand. He tried his best to hold his anxious wife still, but she struggled fiercely as she caught a sniff of a woman's perfume on him.

Once Janice broke free of his arms, she ran off. Fortunately, he was able to pull her into his car. He started the engine right away and drove to their home.

Janice was still unhappy on the way home. She was restless and insisted on getting off the car, but Blake did not budge. All of a sudden, she turned the steering wheel to stop the car in protest. This caused the car to swerve sideways and hit the pillar of the bridge. Blake slammed on the b.rakes in hopes that the car would come to a halt, but it did not.

With a loud bang, two lives were lost in the car accident.

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The accident was undoubtedly the result of a conspiracy. Every information when analyzed made it obvious it wasn't merely an accident. The photo of the n.aked woman, the location, the door which had been opened without a key or a door card. Lastly, but most importantly, the b.rake failing made it certain. There was no way this was a coincidence.

Unfortunately, Blake and Janice died without knowing the truth.

Years later, their son, Joseph, made it his goal to put the culprit behind bars.

When James learned that Blake and Janice had gotten married, he went abroad. He spent two years there trying to expand the company's business. He became crazed with jealousy and chose to not see them.

In those two years, he had an affair with a countless number of women. He tried hard but he couldn't bring himself to forget Janice. As time went by, his infatuation for Janice grew and so did his hatred for Blake.

The Empire Group was a well-known company. In comparison to it, the Synder Group was nothing. James had cut all ties with Blake, yet he knew his enemy was having a wonderful time with a loving wife. And his career was also a success. This knowledge gnawed at his heart. There were times when he would sink deep in thought. He always wondered if Janice had married him instead of Blake, would he be the one enjoying the success? The Castro Group would have belonged to him. The glory which the Empire Group was savoring at present would also have been his!

He was full of hatred and bitterness. The only way he could attain peace would be by watching Blake lose everything! 'Hell, I would like him to disappear from this world,' he thought with determination. Once Blake was dead, James could try to get his hands on everything that belonged to Blake.

Therefore, James carefully orc.hestrated a vicious conspiracy. He started off by bribing a customer of Blake with a h.uge sum of money. He asked the customer to make an appointment with Blake alone. When they met, Blake was given a drink with a large amount of roofies. Once he was unconscious, they put a n.aked woman beside him. Blake would be accused of having an affair! James texted Janice, along with the pictures, and eagerly waited for them to split. The location of the hotel was sent to her.

James knew if he wanted to take over Blake, it could only be done by tearing the couple apart. Once their relationship was destroyed, everything would be possible.

James was a mastermind. He had also ordered his men to sabotage the b.rakes of Blake's car. People would mistake it for a traffic accident. When Blake would disappear from this world, James could get two things he desired with all his heart, Janice and the Empire Group.

To James' utter surprise, things didn't go as per his plans. The couple quarreled fiercely in the parking lot of the hotel. But Blake was persistent. He dragged Janice into his car.

James's original plan had been to send someone to follow Blake when he was driving out. He could then cause a traffic accident without being noticed. But the fact Janice had entered into this dangerous car disrupted his plans.

When James heard of this, he felt sorry for Janice, but his sorrow was very short-lived. He didn't mourn her death. He was busy celebrating Blake's death. He was glad that this man was finally wiped from this world. As soon as this happened, James sent someone to delete the messages from Janice's mobile phone. When Blake's car was dragged back to the Bureau of Transportation, James ordered all the evidence to be destroyed. He was eagerly waiting to get his hands on Blake's property.

He knew Blake's family well enough. Blake's parents were soldiers and they were over fifty years. Blake had a son but he was just a little boy. James had nothing to fear. There was no barrier. None of these people could do business.

Surprisingly, Leonard, who had retired, decided to take over the Empire Group after his son's demise. He wasn't a great businessman and there weren't any big breakthroughs. In spite of this, he managed to stop the Empire Group from sinking. He couldn't allow others to take advantage of the company that his son had loved so much.

James often came to visit Leonard, but Leonard didn't pay him much heed. Having heard the story among the man and his son and daughter-in-law, he thought James was an arrogant man and there was something not quite right about him. James slowly began to understand that Leonard wasn't as ordinary as he had anticipated him to be. And the Empire Group was well-established in the market. As time went by, James lost hope. He realized his dream to swallow up the Empire Group would remain a pipe dream.

James hadn't been in touch with the Marshall family for decades. However, Blake's son, Joseph, who was initially underestimated by James, hunted him down. His motive was to destroy the man who had k!lled his parents. He pushed James into a dark abyss and showed him no mercy.

"When I went abroad, I brooded over this matter. I kept wondering why my mother ran out early in the morning with her phone. After this bizarre event, the accident took place. Something wasn't quite right. I was young, but I often overheard the discussion that took place between Grandpa and Grandma. They were certain it was an accident, but I had a strong feeling that wasn't the case. I knew something must have happened prior to the accident."

Joseph tightly held the beloved woman in his arms. He continued to narrate the events of the past. He spoke in a calm voice.

But Ashley looked at the desolation and sadness that were evident in his eyes. She leaned and gently k!ssed his cold l!ps. "How did you find things out?" she asked.

"After I came back from abroad, I recovered from that sad memory. I knew I was strong enough to do it. I went straight to my parents' room and found the mobile phones they had used in the locker. I went through all the call records and texts on her phone but there was nothing that would lead me to this

conspiracy. Before shoving the phone back in, I clicked on the photo album. There, I came across a snap of my father with a n.aked woman. When I looked at the time, I found out it was sent on the day of the accident.

I couldn't locate the source. But I understood why my mother had run out of the house looking distressed. This photo was the reason behind it. There was no doubt someone had tried to create conflict between them. My suspicion that it wasn't a car accident became even stronger. The only thing I lacked was clues that led to the person who did it."

"What happened after that? Did something lead you to James?" Ashley asked seriously, watching him with rapt attention.

"The man who had called the police mentioned that when their bodies were found, my father was holding tightly onto my mother. Their posture went to show he was trying to protect her. He was the sort of man who would sacrifice his life to save her. The fact he had had an affair with another woman right before this made no sense! And according to my father's secretary, he was secretly preparing a party and some grand gifts for their 7th anniversary. It was clear that he had no intention of cheating on my mother. In addition, the photo wasn't taken on my mother's phone. Instead, it was sent to her by someone else. And yet, I couldn't find who. This goes to show it was definitely a conspiracy. This photo was meant to destroy their relationship. After several investigations, I heard about James. I learned when they were young, the only person who had issues with them was James. It took me many years to find evidence against James."

Joseph, who was reliving those hard days, spoke in a low voice. In spite of this, there was an edge in his voice. Ashley sensed the hatred he nurtured for his parents' k!ller.

"James is a cunning man. That's why he got away with this crime. He handled everything well and made it look like an accident. He was extremely careful. The people who helped him with this crime were sent abroad. In the end, I had to resort to a primitive method. I tapped into the powerful investigation and search system of the Dragon Gang. There I discovered all the people who had contact with James. It clearly showed James had tampered with my father's car. Once I found this information, I was convinced it was him. However, I didn't want to put him behind the bars so soon. I wanted to slowly t0rture him. I wanted him to see the Synder Group collapse. He had worked hard on it so I was sure it would be a big blow to him. He had to watch the Marshall family swallow it up! When I was satisfied, I put him in jail. He is wretched and helpless. This is exactly what I wanted. I want him to feel intense despair. I wish to destroy him a thousand times!"

Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 190 - Tips

Just then, Joseph grasped the situation he had put himself in. He had exposed his dark side. Nervously, he glanced at the gentle and beautiful woman in front of him. "Are you afraid of me now that you have got a glimpse of my dark side? Perhaps you have realized I'm not as pure as you had thought me to be. Will that change anything?"

Joseph, who had poured his heart out to his girlfriend, felt helpless like a child. When his parents passed away, he had felt isolated. The feeling was akin to having been abandoned by the whole world. Since then, his biggest fear had been being abandoned by the people who were dear to him. For some reason, he was overcome by similar fear at this moment.

Joseph had always been the king of the dark world. His hands were often streaked in bl00d and his sole companion was darkness. He had always been afraid he would pollute Ashley's pure world. But today, his concerns were different. He feared that his only source of warmth would leave him now that she had learned the truth.

He had begun to care for her deeply and wouldn't want to be away from her.

Ashley, on the other hand, raised her head and bit hard on Joseph's pale I!ps. As soon as she let go of his I!ps, she watched two drops of bl00d form on his I!ps.

She fixed him with an icy glare and asked, "Joseph, I am telling you for the last time! I don't care about your ident!ty. Your dark side doesn't bother me. No matter what happens, I will love you. You have treated me with nothing but love. In fact, I feel sorry for the things you had to experience in the past. I don't want to see you in pain. What can I do to make you believe me? If I am afraid of something then it is your departure. I am worried you will present this ridiculous reason as an excuse to leave me. Have you ever thought of it?"

Ashley turned red with rage. Underneath this anger, a feeling of helplessness gnawed at her.

Their past breakup had been horrible. She often found herself recalling it. She wasn't the sort of woman who feared physical t0rture. She had almost forgotten all about Zack's kidnapping. However, she felt true agony when Joseph, who she had loved deeply, decided to break up with her. In the dead of night, she thought to their sad breakup, tears trickling down her cheeks. As time went by, the wounds on her body had healed. But heartache couldn't be resolved with medicine. The mental injuries she had experienced were painful.

As Ashley remembered this, tears welled up in her eyes. It spoke of the firm resolve she had in her heart. Joseph understood the love she carried for him. In an instant, he pulled her into his arms and k!ssed her passionately.

After k!ss ing her for a long time, Joseph finally released this feeble woman. His eyes fell on her red and swollen l!ps. In a low and seductive voice, he said, "Ashley, I love you. I am sorry for hurting you, but it won't happen again. I will never ask you this question. There is no way I am letting you leave."

As she listened to his deep sonorous voice, it was obvious he was starting to move past his previous beliefs.

In the past, he had thought about his parent's love story and gathered love was like an abyss. The deeper they went, the deeper their pain would be. It was also like a poison that s.ucked the life out of them.

Over the years, Joseph had held love responsible for their death. If his mother hadn't run after his father on that unfortunate day, they wouldn't have died together. At least she would have been still alive. Her love forced her to go with him. If his father hadn't concealed their wedding anniversary to surprise her, there wouldn't have been any room for misunderstanding. In the end, one could easily conclude their deep love was the cause of their doom.

Therefore, Joseph had regarded love as a dangerous thing that he wished to refrain from. He had lived his life dismissing it. He was sure he would never fall in love with anyone.

In fact, he was determined to remain unmarried all his life. Just when he was so sure of everything, Ashley entered his life. She compelled him to discard his beliefs. He cast aside his dark life and embraced happiness. Now that he had fallen in love, he knew love was capable of making people blind. Life had no value anymore. In the blink of an eye, he would sacrifice his life for Ashley.

Ashley detected something resolute in Joseph's expression. She raised her hand and thumped her soft fist against his strong c.hest. "You bastard! You are usually so smart, but for some reason you seem stupid when it comes to my feelings. I have made my feelings very clear. If you dare to repeat it, I will never forgive you! I mean it!"

Joseph gave a hearty laugh. She looked up and saw bl00d dripping from his red I!ps. At this moment, there was something devilishly handsome about his face. She remained dazzled for a few moments.

As she watched his enchanting smile, her mind went blank. In a few seconds, she had forgotten all about her anger. "Be serious. Don't laugh!" she said, but there was a gentleness in her voice.

Joseph caught the fascinated look on her face. She flushed at being caught. Seeing this, he started laughing wantonly. More blood began to drip from his I!ps.

Ashley's attention shifted and she looked at the beads of bl00d that had formed on his I!ps. Joseph raised his hand and touched his I!ps. "When did you become so savage? I can still feel the pain," he said.

"It's your fault! You shouldn't have said those stupid things! Besides, I can still taste your bl00d in my mouth. How come you have only realized it now?" Deep down, Ashley knew she had bitten him too hard. However, she wasn't going to admit her mistake.

Joseph, who had been called stupid by her several times today, let out a helpless sigh. However, the last words she had uttered brought a smile to his face.

With a complacent smile plastered on his face, he asked, "So tell me, how does my bl00d taste? It might deepen our bond."

His words suddenly lit up the atmosphere. The sadness had faded. He was now fl!rting with Ashley. She shyly turned her crimson face away and chose to not answer him. However, her silence wouldn't deter him. He would still continue talking. In a low voice that was almost like a whisper, he said, "What should I do? When I see you, I want to k!ss you, hold you tight in my arms, and get inside you."

Ashley had vowed she would never leave him. This had inspired new passion in his heart. He drank in her beautiful face. He knew he would never let her go.

His words were sincere but they evoked memories of their wild night. She couldn't get out of bed for days. She felt alarmed.

"Can you be a little more serious?" she said, breaking her silence. She avoided meeting his eyes.

Her words filled him with distress. 'Why is she being rude? I was only expressing my love for her.'

She had misunderstood him. Innocently, he gazed at her and said, "Well, I am serious. I am expressing the ardent love I feel for you. Why has my words annoyed you?"

Ashley peered at his handsome face. She realized he wasn't faking innocence. There wasn't an ounce of I.ust in his deep black eyes. She was the one who had misinterpreted his words.

Once again she understood she had been at fault. However, she wasn't going to admit her mistake. 'It isn't really my fault. His words were very ambiguous,' she thought.

Ashley decided it was best to drop this topic. She cleared her throat and changed the subject. "I'm wondering if this bad guy, James, will spend the rest of his life in prison," she said curiously.

She had listened to the news report carefully. According to it, it was clear his punishment wasn't much. But if the world came to know he had k!lled Joseph's parents, he could easily face life imprisonment.