

## Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 61 - Tips

While Ashley was busy in the kitchen, Leonard called Joseph and said quickly and directly, “Avail yourself and make sure you are home for lunch at midday. We have an important guest visiting today.”

Joseph had an important meeting scheduled for that day and was on his way to the meeting room. Joseph couldn't help but feel confused at his grandfather's order. He couldn't imagine who was visiting that had his grandfather so excitable. This person must be of great stature. “Who is it?” he asked.

“You will know when you meet us for lunch.” Leonard did not want to give any more details away to Joseph. Fearing that Joseph may not accede to his request, Leonard threatened, “If you are not here on time, I will run away from our home!”

Joseph felt helpless at this threat. ‘He throws tantrums, like a child. My grandfather is becoming more juvenile in his old age,’ he thought. Joseph realized it would be too much of an effort to extract the information from his grandfather. Plus, this seemed important to the old man as he was so insistent, so he agreed. “Alright. I'll be home on the dot,” he assured Leonard.

Leonard felt a sense of relief wash over him when Joseph made this promise. He ended the call, having achieved his goal.

‘Why did he cut the call so abruptly?’ wondered Joseph. Leonard's behavior had been rather peculiar. He was usually a talkative person, so Joseph was left feeling puzzled.

‘From what I've noticed of late, Leonard has been displaying this odd behavior since yesterday. Sometimes, he even flashed a mischievous look, fraught with excitement. What's even more bizarre is Leonard's appearance today. What has happened? Who could be so distinguished to have such an effect on Leonard?’ Joseph pondered about this as he walked.

Joseph abruptly stopped in his tracks. He turned around, and addressed Zachary, “Zachary, do you have any idea about what my grandfather has been getting up to these past two days?”

Zachary had always enjoyed a good relationship with Leonard. He was fond of the dignified yet endearing old man. He especially enjoyed outing Joseph's secrets to him. Since Zachary and Joseph were such great friends, and Leonard also adored the former's jovial and optimistic personality, Leonard treated the two equally. He even went as far as treating Zachary like his own grandson.

Zachary was startled by Joseph's sudden questioning. His mind went blank and he was unsure what to say. He wondered whether Leonard had ratted him out to Joseph, but he could not be sure. He calmly and composedly responded, "I don't know. Is something wrong?"

Joseph looked straight into Zachary's eyes, sizing his response up. Joseph detected a hint of guilt. Knowing he would find his answer when he reached home anyway, he decided not to press Zachary any further. He turned on his foot, and continued to walk toward the meeting room.

The agenda for meeting today was only to find a strategy on how to deal with the Synder Group. Joseph had intended that this matter be discussed in great detail. However, due to Leonard's demand that he be home by midday, Joseph had no choice but to have the meeting postponed to that afternoon. Joseph had almost reached the meeting room when he decided on what he would say to the group that was to meet. He decided he would advise them of the time change, and request that they put their thoughts together before that time, so that the meeting can be more efficient when it was reconvened in the afternoon.

After ordering his grandson to return for lunch, Leonard felt cheerful. He relaxed in the living room for a while, before boredom overcame him. He wanted to check up on Ashley, and see how things were going in the kitchen. John, the old butler who was with him, could not help but chuckle at the uncharacteristic look of anxiousness on Leonard's face.

"What are you laughing at?" Leonard asked the butler.

"Master, I didn't mean to laugh. But you seem to be so anxious."

John Lee was the longstanding butler of the Marshall family. He was capable, loyal and trustworthy. He was perhaps just a decade younger than Leonard, and the two often chatted when Leonard was overcome by boredom.

Therefore, John and Leonard had a good relationship. He could freely express his opinions when questioned by Leonard.

Leonard did not have a sense of superiority and treated John as a companion. After a moment of silence, Leonard queried, "Is my anxiety that apparent?"

'I am eager to see Joseph's reaction when he is met by delicious meals and a gorgeous woman when he comes home for lunch. I am just a bit impatient with excitement. Could it be so obvious?' Leonard wondered about this to himself, awaiting John's answer with anticipation glowing in his eyes.

John nodded honestly, and gave him a reassuring smile. "Relax. This Miss Guzman is really something special! The younger master will like her," he said.

Hearing his response, Leonard wondered to himself about he should ask, 'Is it so plainly clear that I want Ashley to be my grandson's wife? Why didn't Ashley take any notice of how obviously I am behaving?' Being satisfied with John's high praises of Ashley, he decided not to voice his question. Instead, he confidently said, "Of course! If he dares not like her, I will flog him!"

Upon hearing this, John pursed his lips, thinking, 'Are you sure you will flog Joseph?' However, he would never utter such words to Leonard. Admiring the joyful expression on Leonard's face, he said, "Master, you have great taste!"

John's words were not mere puffery, but sincere compliments. He had met a lot of people, but Ashley was something special. Notwithstanding Leonard's satisfaction with Ashley, Ashley had many good traits. John felt that, apart from being exceptionally beautiful, Ashley was also charming while still being down to earth. She had the grace and nobility of a wealthy lady, yet she did not have the unattractive quality of arrogance that sometimes accompanied such wealth. One could easily see how Ashley and Joseph would make a perfect couple. It was quite clear that Leonard most definitely had a discerning eye.

As John and Leonard continued their chat, Ashley brought out the first dish that she had prepared. Seeing this, Leonard rushed forward to meet her. Ashley asked him to take a seat, before beginning to serve several other dishes that she had prepared.

Leonard desired that he would be able to have the opportunity to spend quality time, just with Joseph and Ashley. When Ashley had almost finished

setting out the dishes, and they were ready to begin eating, Leonard sent the servants out of the main house, who quickly left in succession.

Five dishes and a soup had been laid on the table and Leonard couldn't help but notice that Joseph had not yet arrived. He requested Ashley to take a seat and begin eating. Leonard then expressed his sincere appreciation for her trouble, and asked "Ashley, aren't you tired? That son of mine will be back here soon. Let's begin eating without him. I can tell just from the smell and look of these dishes that they are very tasty. It's uncommon to find girls like you, who have good careers but are still great in the kitchen."

Ashley had carefully selected her ingredients from the wide range of options available in the Marshall family's pantry. She made delectable dishes, including wine-marinated shrimp, broiled fish in a rich brown sauce, an assortment of fresh vegetables, and a hearty chicken soup with wild mushrooms. The dishes were plated beautifully and brightly colored, arousing one's appetite.

"Leonard, you flatter me. It's easy to make these home-made dishes." After taking her seat, Ashley added, considerately, "Leonard, please start eating if you are hungry. I can manage waiting a little longer."

'See? Where would he be able to find another girl of such a good nature? How dare he be late?' Leonard thought, unhappy with Joseph.

Speak of the devil — Joseph finally arrived. The towering, stately figure of Joseph appeared in the doorway.

"Grandpa, I've returned." After hanging up his coat in the living room, Joseph went to the dining room and greeted Leonard, as usual.

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As soon as Joseph lifted his gaze, his eyes fell upon the important guest which his grandfather had held in such high esteem. At the same time, upon hearing a magnetic male voice, Ashley looked towards the door and laid her eyes on this person. Their eyes met, simultaneously.

She was astonished. 'The world is so small. What were the chances that Leonard's grandson was none other than Joseph? I thought I would never

bump into him again, let alone in this circumstance. Then again, Marshall is not a common surname. So, it doesn't come as a surprise that the two are related in some degree.'

Thinking of this, Ashley's surprise abated and she returned to her normal self. She stood up and graciously greeted Joseph. "Hello," she said politely.

It did not even cross Joseph's mind that the guest his grandfather had lauded was in fact Ashley, rather than an old friend of his. Taking in the beautiful scene of his happy granddad, the stunning Ashley, and several delectable dishes laid out on the table, Joseph could not help but feel moved. He felt content and peaceful in this company. It was a homely, comforting feeling.

Joseph had a poker face when it came to displaying his true feelings. He nodded in greeting at Ashley and casually sat down. The two did not take a second glance at each other. There was a moment of intense silence in the dining room.

Leonard carefully observed the interaction between Joseph and Ashley. He felt a great sense of disappointment in respect of Joseph's behavior. This polite girl had taken the initiative to greet him so graciously, yet he did not even afford her the courtesy of a reply. Leonard felt helpless at Joseph's social discourtesy. If he could help it, he wished to assist Joseph in learning to behave more appropriately in Ashley's presence.

"Ashley, this is my grandson, Joseph." After letting out a long sigh of disdain at his grandson's foolishness in his mind, Leonard broke the ice with this brief introduction.

Glaring at Joseph in disapproval, he then introduced Ashley to Joseph. "This is the very same charitable young woman I had spoken about previously, who had so compassionately assisted me when I was injured, and ensured I had a medical examination. Her name is Ashley."

On completing this introduction, Leonard gave Joseph a wink, encouraging him to make conversation with Ashley. But it was as if the information had gone in through one ear, and left the other. Joseph remained silent, still keeping a poker face. Ashley addressed Joseph once again, "Mr. Marshall, I have heard quite a bit about you."

Upon hearing this, Joseph could not help his expression, and frowned ever so slightly. He registered the indifferent expression on Ashley's face, while he thought, 'Is she really pretending as if she just met me? Does she want to conceal from others that we are acquainted with each other?' Joseph was dissatisfied with the estrangement of Ashley.

Seated next to Joseph, Leonard could not read any change in Joseph's expression. The old man was exasperated at his grandson's behavior. He thought, 'This time she addressed him directly once again, and he did not even nod. He completely ignored her. The boor!'

The older man could no longer bear the embarrassment of this scene. Before Joseph could reply, he said, "Let's have lunch, before the food gets cold." Then he made sure he addressed Ashley specifically, and kindly said, "Ashley, thank you for cooking for us. Please help yourself."

Leonard was at a loss in respect of how to elude that he knew the two were acquainted. He decided he would just observe how things went between the two of them, and see whether they needed any assistance from him. He was surprised by what he had just witnessed. 'People who don't know what happened may think that the two have just met each other. Not only do they not speak to each other much, they don't even make significant eye contact.'

Thinking of this, Leonard felt defeated. 'At this rate, when will I have a great grandson?' He agonized over this thought. Leonard was thinking about this important question with distress, while picking up his bowl and lowering his head to eat.

Joseph wanted to sincerely thank Ashley for her effort. Before he could speak, his grandfather interjected. Then, his grandfather and Ashley both returned to eating silently, so he did the same.

At this time, Joseph paid attention only to Ashley. He did not even notice his grandfather's strange behavior, even though his grandfather flashed him several disapproving looks.

Meanwhile, Ashley continued to eat with her head down. She was wondering what Joseph was thinking when he stared at her before they had sat down to eat. 'Is he unhappy?' She tried to recall the moment when Joseph entered the dining room. Ashley felt everything was fine.

In the end, she concluded that she was overthinking it. Perhaps it was Joseph's intense, deep eyes which gave her the illusion that there was more to his look, when he had looked at her. Telling from how he had reacted when she greeted him twice, it was just his nature to be cold and he was a man of few words. She had just been overthinking. Rationalizing this way, Ashley felt relieved.

As for the reason behind Ashley greeting Joseph in a manner that indicated that they just met for the first time, she had thought it was improper to show the relationship between the two of them in the presence of an elder such as Leonard. In Ashley's opinion, however, the two of them were not familiar with each other, but just complicatedly involved.

At the dinner table, the three of them ate in silence for some time. Leonard brought up an appropriate topic to ease the heavy atmosphere. "Ashley, you are a really good cook! Who taught you how to cook?"

"I'm glad you like it. I didn't learn from anyone. I taught myself and improved with practice. I did, however, have some guidance from my mother and our servants." Ashley had indeed become a good cook due to her parents. They had ensured that her elder brother and she took turns to cook every alternate day, and did not let anyone offer the children any assistance. With practice, the two siblings became very good cooks over time.

"I'm enjoying this food a great deal! Will you cook for this lonely old man more often?" When Ashley said she was glad Leonard liked the taste of the food, he immediately invited her to cook for him again. Of course, his main intention was to create more opportunities for Ashley and Joseph to interact. As the saying goes, "A waterfront pavilion gets the moonlight first." This opportunity could not be missed.

When Ashley heard Leonard call himself "a lonely old man", she couldn't help but feel shocked. 'With his grandson beside him, how can he be lonely?'

On second thought, Ashley thought it was understandable. Perhaps Joseph was busy with his work for the greater part of the day and did not have time to satisfy the emotional needs of this elderly, lonely man. She did not mind coming over and spending time with Leonard when she had some free time. She was quite fond of this old man. He was easy to get along with and had such a pleasant demeanor.

While Ashley was considering what Leonard had said, Joseph remarked in an expressionless voice, “Tasty.”

The simple word of praise by Joseph, made both Ashley and Leonard think.

‘Is he praising me? But I don’t understand what he’s trying to communicate.’ Ashley looked at the expressionless Joseph in confusion.

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At this time, Leonard thought, ‘This bloke has finally come to his senses!’ It was rare for Joseph to afford someone praise. When Leonard sensed Ashley’s uncertainty from her expression, he said to Joseph in his mind, ‘Can’t you elaborate? Ashley doesn’t really know what you are trying to say.’

Taking into account Leonard’s invitation to Ashley to cook for him again, his encouraging winks, and glances of disapproval, Joseph quickly gauged that his grandfather was trying to set him up with Ashley.

‘Even though I know your purpose, please don’t insult me like that, Grandfather! I am right by your side. How could you say that you are a lonely old man?’ In Joseph’s heart, he sighed helplessly at the sentiment his grandfather had expressed.

Joseph approved of the way that Leonard treated Ashley, especially when he noticed the amicable and harmonious relationship the two of them shared. It was clear that Leonard was fond of Ashley. In fact, he had more affection for her than he did his own grandson. This made Joseph more determined that he would marry Ashley. Not only did Joseph enjoy Ashley’s personality, but she had also given him a sense of security and family today.

Joseph had already spoken of his appreciation for Ashley’s cooking. In Joseph’s opinion, his praise for her was perfectly sufficient and did not need further elaboration. On one hand, while the dishes prepared by Ashley were not of restaurant or chef quality, they were very tasty. On the other hand, with regard to Joseph’s character, a simple praise was enough to show recognition of her skill.



Leonard noticed that Joseph just continued eating and was not going to praise Ashley in any greater detail. So Leonard addressed Ashley, "What do you think? Will you be able to visit and relieve some of my boredom?"

Noticing that Leonard repeated this question with a smile on his face, Ashley realized that she had become absent-minded. She smiled apologetically and replied, "It would not be a problem at all. If I'm free, I will pop by and give you company to relieve your boredom."

Hearing this, Leonard could not suppress a smile, and he incoherently expressed his joy. "You are too kind. I will never be bored again! Ashley, you must come to see me whenever you have time. I'm so happy... "

Joseph, who was eating silently, heard the overflowing excitement of Leonard. Joseph really didn't want to expose Leonard's poor acting skills. 'How could anyone believe that Leonard was actually bored?' he thought. With John's daily company at home and Zachary often joining him to have a meal and chat with Leonard, Leonard could not convince saying he was bored. Further, Leonard would call his old friends to come by when he wanted different company, or would even travel to see them. More so, Joseph did return from work each day and spent time with him. Joseph wanted to know why Leonard was so thrilled now.

Joseph went along with Leonard's show, and continued to remain silent while eating, allowing Leonard to continue expressing his admiration for Ashley.

Hearing Leonard's gushing words, Ashley felt that the old man really lacked company. She comforted him, "Don't say that. I will visit you more often when I am free." Ashley's intentions were good. She just wanted to visit the lonely old man who lacked love and attention, out of the goodness of her heart.

Ashley suddenly remembered that she would be making a trip abroad. She quickly informed him, "I am planning to travel abroad within the next few days, so I may not see you soon though."

Hearing this, Leonard and Joseph both stopped eating. They looked up at Ashley, simultaneously. Leonard made his thoughts known first. "The youth should make more time for travel. Where are you planning on going? Are you traveling on your own or perhaps taking friends with you?"

“I’m going to Mexico on my own,” Ashley answered.

“In that case, you must be sure to be very cautious since you are a young girl traveling on your own. As long as you come by to see me when you return, I will be happy.” Despite what Leonard had just said, he thought about what he actually had wanted to say, “It’s not safe for a girl to travel alone. Do you want to find someone to accompany you?” Of course, the person who would accompany her would be Joseph. But Joseph was sitting quietly next to Leonard, with his attention wholly on eating. It would be too forward for Leonard to make such a suggestion, so he kept this thought to himself.

“Thank you for the advice. I’ll be careful,” Ashley said gratefully.

Hearing the conversation between the two, Joseph remained silent. He just continued to eat, while pondering about the situation internally.

There was intermittent, casual chat between them now and then, while they ate the food. The conversation, however, was not free flowing. When they quickly finished their meal, a servant cleared the table and brought out dessert and fruit. The three of them chatted for quite a small interval. During this time, the conversation was almost exclusively between Leonard and Ashley. Joseph chimed in, only occasionally, with just a few words. It was the amity between Leonard and Ashley which kept the atmosphere jovial.

After some time, Joseph realized that it was time for him to return to the company to continue his work. He said, “You two can carry on for a bit longer, but I have to take my leave. I am needed at work.” Registering the disappointment in Leonard’s eyes, Joseph provided him with a further justification, “I have a very important meeting over which I must preside, at the company.”

It would have been improper for Leonard to reprimand Joseph in front of Ashley. Leonard instead chose to respond casually, “Alright. Do as you must.”

When Joseph stood up and walked towards the door, Ashley also got to her feet, and said to Leonard, “I think it’s time I leave, as well. I’ll come to see you when I return, Leonard.”

Noticing that the two of them had decided to leave together, Leonard suspected that they would have a private conversation on their way out. He didn’t want to be a third wheel and inhibit their private chat, so he did not try to

stop Ashley. He said, “Okay. Be safe! I’ll be waiting for you to come to see me again.”

“Okay! I will. Leonard, take care of yourself,” Ashley replied with a smile, as she packed her bag.

Leonard’s suspicion was right. Regardless of the reason behind Joseph helping Ashley by holding the press conference, it did not change the fact that he did assist her. So Ashley wanted to convey her thanks to him, as she was the kind of person who ensured she showed her appreciation. Ashley had been thinking that she would like to express her gratitude to Joseph personally, and this opportunity was perfect.

Ashley internally rationalized that she would probably not have any further contact with Joseph, and saw this opportunity as one that would not come by again. Ashley was unaware that Leonard was trying to play matchmaker between Joseph and her. As long as Leonard stuck to his plan and pursued this goal, he would ensure that he organized many meetings between the two of them.

After saying goodbye to Leonard, Ashley increased her pace so as to catch up with Joseph, heading in the direction he had headed. Leonard acted as if he were undisturbed, and casually waved goodbye. As soon as Ashley was out of sight, Leonard decided that he would do his best to stealthily eavesdrop on the two of them. He alighted from his seat, and quietly pursued them.

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At the sound of the pitter-patter of footsteps behind him, Joseph turned around and saw Ashley hurrying toward him and then stopping about 10 meters away. He leaned against his luxury car, his deep-set eyes expectant, waiting for her to state her purpose.

Taking a deep breath, Ashley slowly walked closer to him. In a clear, mellow voice, she stated, “Mr. Marshall, thank you for publicly speaking up for me yesterday.” She punctuated her words with a slight bow.

The sincerity in her beautiful dark eyes unnerved Joseph that, without meaning to, he unconsciously reverted to his businessman persona, offering a

condition, "You're welcome. If you really want to thank me, then you owe me a favor. What do you think?"

A spoken word of thanks was not nearly enough to express her gratitude, and there was no such thing as a free lunch in this world. Ashley nodded and replied, "As long as it is not too excessive and it is within my abilities, I agree with this payment."

Joseph liked Ashley's forthright manner. Unlike other women, she didn't talk trivialities and was always straight to the point. However, much as he would like to be as straightforward at that point, his offer was made on the spur of the moment. He hadn't even thought about the specifics yet.

Ashley warned him that the favor shouldn't be too extravagant, so asking her to be his woman or her hand in marriage again was out of the question. He was sure that those were considered overkill. A similar request in the past revealed Ashley's fierce side to him. The memory of nearly acquiring bodily harm during a close encounter with Ashley's foot remained vivid in his mind.

The more time he spent with her, the more he realized that Ashley was unlike other women who chased after him. By now, Joseph had already abandoned his misconception that Ashley's purity and nobleness was just a ruse. Ashley was a genuine person who held her own unique moral standards and was disdainful of his wealth and appearance.

No doubt, Joseph admired Ashley. In the last two decades, she was the only woman whom he had never been repelled by—thus, she was special to him. In the beginning, he spoke for Ashley because he couldn't bear to see the woman he wanted being wronged by other people, and he did not have to think twice about helping her. He never expected anything in return.

Now, as Ashley insisted on paying him back, Joseph was a little annoyed by the polite distance between them. 'I should do something to make this relationship a little less formal.'

"I haven't quite decided on the terms yet. I'll let you know once I have thought of something," Joseph blurted out honestly.

Ashley hesitated for a moment and replied, "Okay. Thank you again for your help! I'm sorry for taking up your time, and I wish you all the best."

After once again expressing her thanks, Ashley stepped aside to let Joseph go first.

After a casual “See you later”, Joseph turned around, got into the car, and finally drove away.

Leonard had mixed feelings about the scene that had just happened. At first, he was so excited to see Ashley chasing after Joseph. He secretly hid in a corner and watched the two of them whispering in the parking lot. Such a beautiful scene of the two young people standing close together filled his heart with gratitude—it definitely seemed like they had feelings for each other. However, his hiding place was too far for him to overhear their conversation. He watched them chat for a short while; then, Ashley moved aside, and Joseph drove away without saying another word. Somehow, their parting made Leonard feel sad.

Watching Ashley drive away, he heaved a heavy sigh. ‘I thought that there would be some progress between the two of them, but they were just being polite. They didn’t even have any eye contact! What should I do?’ At that moment, Leonard was starting to doubt whether the object of Joseph’s affections was indeed Ashley. ‘Maybe it’s just as Zachary had once said—Joseph is a man with high IQ and low EQ? If he acts in such a low-key manner in front of the woman he likes, then maybe he does have an extremely low EQ,’ Leonard thought sadly as he paced back to the house.

The truth was, Joseph had no clue how to please Ashley, nor had he thought much about it. Even so, he believed that he didn’t have to actively try to please her and that the best way to go forward was to treat her just as he always had. In his mind, he was doing just fine.

During his lunch break, Joseph received a call from Mike, who told him that he was willing to help the Empire Group acquire the Synder Group to thank Joseph for helping out his sister. After some thought, Joseph readily accepted the offer. In addition, Mike specially invited Joseph to have dinner that night to discuss their strategy.

Therefore, the meeting this afternoon was particularly important. The public was aware that he was used to making snap decisions. With the temporary cooperation with the Guzman Group, the Empire Group was as strong as a tiger with wings. However, each of his decisions now affected two companies instead of just one. He had to be more careful in making them.

After returning to her apartment from her visit to the Marshall family residence, Ashley took a nap and continued to finalize the details of her travel plan. The rest of the day quietly and comfortably passed by.

However, the night was not as idyllic.

As soon as Yasmin returned to her apartment, she called Zara to report her current situation, including her relationship with Zachary. As usual, her answer was, "Not bad." After chatting for about half an hour about various family matters, Yasmin ended the call.

After taking a shower, she then called up Ashley's number. Yasmin gleefully talked about Lina's suspension. "I swear, with Lina not breathing down my neck anymore, I feel a lot more comfortable at work—and a bit bored, to tell you the truth." On the other end, Ashley scolded Yasmin about her masochistic tendencies. Finally, she told her friend that she would be flying to Mexico in two days.

"That's not fair! I want to go to Mexico, too, but I don't have time!" Yasmin wailed as they wrapped up their call.

To pass time, Yasmin turned on her TV and started to watch a soap opera when her doorbell suddenly rang. On the other side of the door, a seductive young woman stood smiling at her. However, the woman's glance sweeping her from head to toe was frankly appraising.

Yasmin wasn't in the mood to be polite, so she boldly met the woman's stare. A few seconds ticked by without either woman moving.

Finally, Yasmin sighed, 'This is getting odd. A staring match with a stranger isn't as interesting as I thought it would be.' Deciding to close the door, she thought to herself, 'What an odd woman. Did she come here just to stare at me?'

However, the woman reacted quickly. Before Yasmin could close the door, she suddenly threw her weight against the door and then sneaked into the house through the gap.

Sensing Yasmin's angry glare, she flashed her a disarming smile and introduced herself, "Hello! I'm Patricia Myers, your neighbor. Someone's taking a shower at my place, so can I borrow your bathroom?"

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Yasmin looked at the woman again, who stood before her with a sincere smile on her face. Even though the woman had skilfully applied makeup to her face, you could tell that she had attractive features and bright eyes even without using any makeup. 'She must be the new neighbor,' thought Yasmin before she nodded her head in the direction of the bathroom, adding, "The bathroom is down that way. Feel free to use it."

Hearing Yasmin's friendly introduction, Patricia replied in warm voice, "Thank you." She then turned to make her way to the bathroom.

On the way to the bathroom, Patricia gave Yasmin a score in her mind, 'Nine points for her appearance, attractive facial features, porcelain skin, and tall, slim figure. She is a classic beauty, even without any makeup. Eight points for her personality which is authentic, charming, cheerful, but somewhat irritable.

But overall, she scores a perfect ten. Since she is to be the wife of my cousin, she cannot just be beautiful, but will need to have a strong character in order to be able to somewhat tame and deal my wily cousin.'

Indeed, the woman was Zachary's cousin. The two of them grew up together, playing together as kids, so Patricia knew all too well the slick ways that Zachary had.

In their tender youth, Zachary's parents had become swamped with work in their business. Consequently, they were unable to effectively care for Zachary so he moved in with his aunt, Patricia's mum. Since then, Patricia's life had been turned upside down.

Patricia enjoyed teasing her cousin, who was four years her senior. Zachary, however, was a goody two-shoes in the eyes of her parents. So whenever Zachary paid Patricia back for conducting mischievous deeds to him and she complained to her parents, they did not believe her. In their eyes, Zachary was a model child and it became a case of them believing that since Patricia rushed to grumble about the incidents first, she was probably the wrongdoer who had instigated it. Every time Patricia's parents would reprimand her, Zachary would try to make a case in her favor, but this just resulted in her receiving more harsh scolding. Eventually, when the adults were out of earshot, Zachary would say, "My dearest cousin, you are still too immature to



be able to fight with me. Be a good girl. Don't provoke me. Alright?" Then he would leave gracefully.

Every time this happened, Patricia felt as if Zachary was a demon with an angel's face. When she saw the wicked smirk on Zachary's face, she knew that she had been defeated by him, yet again. Her constant defeat at the hands of Zachary during his time with the Myers family, did not deter Patricia in the least bit. She did not even try to rely on her parents to support her in her disagreements with him, since she knew they had such a soft spot for him. She had become resilient over time, and persisted in fighting against him, until the day he left their home.

After Zachary had left, the other kids in her class treated her like a little devil and kept their distance from her. Without Zachary, she didn't have any companions. Therefore, her life was empty without him. But thanks to his absence she had shown some restraint. She no longer had the opportunity to express herself like she did when he had been around.

However, his and her families still met at festivals, which gave them the opportunity to spend time together again. But as of recently, Zachary had moved to the city for work, so the two very rarely had a chance to see each other.

A few days ago, Patricia took advantage of her vacation, and decided to visit the Estrada family with her mother. When her mother and Zachary's mother, Juliet, were chatting about the developments in their children's lives, she heard her aunt mention that Zachary had found a girlfriend. His girlfriend also happened to be the daughter of the Mayor for the city. Juliet was satisfied with everything about the girl but she felt as if things were moving too slowly for her liking.

Juliet had mentioned that Zachary seemed hesitant to speak about any developments in his love life. It seemed that he hadn't made a breakthrough in his relationship with Yasmin. Juliet could not help but let out an exasperated sigh in complaint to her sister and niece.

When Patricia had heard that Zachary now had a girlfriend, she could not contain her curiosity about her further cousin-in-law, who not only was stunning, but apparently came from quite an illustrious family. Hearing that



Zachary had fallen helplessly in love, she was keen to lay her eyes on this woman herself.

Patricia just had to know the kind of person who was able to reel her cousin in, temper his unchecked ways, and manage to make him fall in love. After offering Juliet a few words of comfort, she assured her that she would get to the bottom of this. She volunteered her assistance, assuring them of her ability to solve their predicament. She told Juliet her plans. After Patricia's mother also agreed, Juliet happily gave Patricia the go ahead.

Patricia's plan was quite simple. She would spend time with Zachary and Yasmin, and become the third person in their relationship. She would cause a love triangle and be a catalyst for growth and progress in the romance of Zachary and Yasmin.

So, on this day which was her first day in the city, Patricia adorned a particularly flirty outfit before going to visit Zachary. To her surprise, Zachary took her to an apartment after work. She figured that this was the place he stayed at in the city, about which Juliet had spoken. He was Yasmin's neighbor. Patricia let out a happy sigh of contentment at the thought of how swimmingly things were going between the two. She wanted to meet her cousin-in-law-to-be, as soon as possible.

After putting her luggage down, Patricia took a quick tour of the house. After "accidentally" staining Zachary's shirt, she persuaded him to shower and change his clothes. She then took the opportunity she had created and snuck out of the apartment to meet Yasmin next door. As a result of the in-the-moment planning, Yasmin and Patricia were both a bit discomposd when they met for the first time.

After awarding Yasmin a full score, Patricia thought Yasmin could help her take revenge on her cousin and she hummed a song in a cheery mood as she proceeded to the bathroom. However, she thought of the indifferent expression that had graced Yasmin's face. 'It seems that she hasn't realized that I am the other woman in her relationship. I wonder whether this genuinely has not dawned upon her or whether she just doesn't care.' Patricia wondered about this to herself.

As it transpired, Patricia's initial guess that Yasmin just did not realize what had happened, was correct. After directing Patricia to the bathroom, Yasmin closed the front door and sat down to continue watching some television. It occurred to her that her apartment was the only other remaining apartment on

this floor. The only other apartment was Zachary's. She wondered, 'Did Zachary move out, or did he bring this woman to live with him?'

After considering the circumstances, Yasmin concluded that the second scenario was more likely. 'There hasn't been any noise coming from next door and I did not see the landlady come by to confirm a new tenant. It is impossible that Zachary has moved out of the place,' she reasoned to herself. At the thought of this, very significant questions sprang into Yasmin's mind, 'Zachary is gay yet he brought this strikingly attractive woman to stay with him. Is he trying to hide the fact that he is gay? Is Zachary now attracted to women as well? Or... had he always been attracted to women?'

While Yasmin considered this, Patricia returned after quickly having a look around while pretending to have used the bathroom. Yasmin was relaxing on the sofa, apparently watching television, but her mind was elsewhere. Patricia came before her and courteously said, "Thank you for your kindness. My boyfriend is waiting for me next door, so I must be on my way. See you soon!"

Hearing this gentle, feminine voice, Yasmin came to her senses and looked up at Patricia. 'It turns out that this is the type of women that Zachary finds attractive... A delicate, gentle yet enchanting woman. It seems that she is in love and is enamored with her boyfriend,' thought Yasmin. She couldn't restrain herself from asking, "What are you going to do when you go back to his place?"

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Patricia did not anticipate such a direct question from Yasmin. 'Does she understand the implications of me being the neighbor?' thought Patricia. However, Patricia, who had shouldered a heavy responsibility, reacted very quickly. She pretended to be shy, and coyly asked, "Why do you ask? What else can a girl do with her boyfriend?"

Patricia spoke in such a bashful manner as if she were talking about something that was taboo. This made Yasmin's mind race, falling into an unwanted train of thought. While she knew what Patricia was hinting, Yasmin was struck dumb.

Noticing that Yasmin just continued to stare at her in silence, Patricia thought of an idea, and asked, "By the way, what is your name? We are going to be

neighbors, after all.” Then she smiled and stretched a hand out to greet Yasmin, “Nice to meet you!”

“I’m Yasmin Olson. Nice to meet you, too,” Yasmin responded. Yasmin got out of her seat and shook Patricia’s hand.

Yasmin withdrew from the handshake. She noticed that Patricia who was wearing heels was the same height as her. She raised her eyebrows in a questioning manner, and queried, “Didn’t you say you had to get back?”

‘Ah, is she trying to get rid of me already? I haven’t even made my point!’ Patricia thought. ‘To be honest, I can’t figure out whether she has realized I am the other woman in Zachary’s life, or not. She looks so calm and indifferent. It seems it’s going to be a tough feat to get this stunning and intelligent woman to marry my cousin. I have a lot of work to do...’

“Yasmin, do you have a boyfriend? My boyfriend is exceptionally handsome. Let me introduce him to you,” she said to Yasmin. Patricia swiftly moved the conversation in the direction she wanted, getting to the point quickly.

Patricia enthusiastically invited Yasmin to meet Zachary, which left Yasmin speechless yet again. While Yasmin did not think that Patricia was purposely trying to show off, she did feel that there was something odd about her behavior. ‘We’ve just met by chance now. It isn’t any of her business if I’m seeing someone or not. Why should I now go meet the boyfriend of someone I barely know? This is highly unusual,’ she thought.

In the time that Yasmin was rendered speechless, Patricia quickly grabbed her arm and dragged her towards the door. “Come, let me take you next door to have a look,” she said.

Patricia was afraid that if Yasmin wasn’t aware of the role she was playing, it would be difficult for her to execute the next step in her plan, so she dragged Yasmin to see her “handsome boyfriend”.

Yasmin couldn’t shake off Patricia’s grip. Helplessly, she went along with it. Plus, she was curious to see what this attractive woman had in store.

Patricia's destination was the apartment two meters away from Yasmin's. She held Yasmin's arm with one hand and rang the doorbell with the other. Then, she stared at the door in anticipation.

After a moment, a tall man dressed in only a short-sleeved robe, with wet hair, answered the door. In that moment, all three of them had differing expressions and thoughts. Patricia was glad, and smiled happily. Yasmin was filled with mixed emotions when she saw that the man standing casually in the doorway was none other than Zachary. Zachary was stunned by Yasmin's unanticipated presence. He had not seen her for quite some time.

Patricia was very pleased with the state in which Zachary had answered the door. He had just taken a shower and changed into his sleepwear. This was exactly what she had wanted! Not only did this scene confirm what she had said to Yasmin just a few minutes ago, but it would also cause Yasmin to fantasize about him and Patricia together.

Just as Patricia had hoped, Yasmin now believed that Zachary had brought her to live with him. Although Yasmin had surmised as much before coming to see him, it was different to actually see the proof in front of her very eyes. She found the scenario rather upsetting. Thinking that she was Zachary's girlfriend in title only, and she had no right to interfere in his life, a trace of anguish made its way in Yasmin's heart. It was her pride and competitive nature which allowed her to keep a straight face. She decided she would adjust to these changes, gracefully.

Among the three of them, Zachary was the most innocent. It was completely unknown to him that he was being duped by his cousin, who got a kick out of messing with him since their childhood. He was just confused about when Yasmin and Patricia met, and how it came to be that they both were with him at the same time. What's more is that he was taken aback by this unexpected appearance of Yasmin.

That afternoon, Zachary had received a call from his mother. She told him that his cousin, Patricia, would come to the city for a vacation and that he must ensure he takes good care of her. After the meeting, Zachary picked Patricia up from the station as soon as she had called to let him know that she'd arrived. He was consumed with work as of late, and the last thing he wanted was to be distracted by his rambunctious cousin, who was even known as "the devil". So he decided to take her to this apartment for some peace and quiet that day. He would find something more exciting for her to do the following day.

Zachary planned to leave after setting Patricia up in this temporary apartment. He couldn't have foreseen that she would spill her tea on him, so that he would have to have a shower and change his clothing.

Because of the misunderstanding that Zachary and Yasmin had the last time they had seen each other, Zachary had only stayed at this place for one night. He didn't have any other clothes to change into because he hadn't had the opportunity to store more clothing there. All he could find was the night robe that he had left there. He had no choice but to answer the door in this state.

When Zachary came out of the bathroom after his shower, he realized that Patricia was nowhere to be seen. It was just when he had begun to wonder where this boisterous young woman could have possibly gone, that the doorbell rang. Naturally, he assumed that the person at the door was Patricia, who had returned. He was really caught off guard by Yasmin's presence, who he definitely did not anticipate seeing.

Zachary took in the beautiful sight of Yasmin standing in the doorway in pajamas. This surprise meeting made him feel as though it had been ages since he'd last seen her. Zachary hadn't even decided how he was going to face her after their last interaction. Zachary thought that Yasmin was repulsed by him after their last fight, which had been caused just out of impulse. He felt frustrated. He had chewed over how to make amends with her, but could not decide on a way to do so. To make matters worse, Zachary had been extremely busy with the acquisition of the Synder Group by the Empire Group at work, so dealing with the issue with Yasmin had taken a back seat.

"Yasmin, this is my boyfriend, Zachary. What do you think? Not bad, right?" While Zachary and Yasmin were still looking straight at each other, Patricia rushed into Zachary's arms and held him intimately. And then she introduced her "boyfriend" to Yasmin with great zeal.

When Zachary heard Patricia's introduction, he couldn't help but get goose bumps all over his body. It was a big surprise that such gentle voice came out of the mouth of this usually barbaric cousin. 'When did I become her boyfriend?' Zachary was bewildered.

When Zachary realized that Yasmin was looking at them, he wanted to explain, but a pain from his waist stopped him. Before Zachary could cry out in pain, Patricia suddenly leaned over with her soft body and snuggled up in his arms. She looked up at Yasmin and asked softly again, "Yasmin, what do you think about him? Let me know if there is any room for improvement."

Looking at the couple snuggling up to each other in front of her, Yasmin felt as if she were being directly insulted.

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Feeling Patricia's steady gaze on her, Yasmin stared at the two people before her from head to foot. The petite Patricia rested her cheek against Zachary's broad chest and wrapped her arms around his lean waist. Yasmin's eyes fixated on the fair skin of Zachary's collarbones, which was exposed because of their small movements. With a smile on her face, she gave the solicited comments, "First of all, your boyfriend is handsome and fair-skinned, which makes him look like a boy toy. I suggest for him to spend more time under the sun. Second, I can tell him his fortune. He is not in good health because of his good luck in relationships—he can't have it all. Moreover, he needs to control himself during sexual intercourse."

By the time she had finished her commentary, Patricia and Zachary were staring at her, dumbfounded by her words and the seriousness of her tone and expression. People who didn't know her would think that the woman dressed in cartoon-print pajamas had just escaped from a mental institution, and could not help laughing at her serious look as a fortune teller.

Patricia, who had recovered first from her frozen stupefaction, burst out laughing. "Damn. That's so funny! Don't worry, I'll get him to bake under the sun for longer. Also, I'm putting him on time out for a break from all sorts of activities."

Patricia straightened up her posture and no longer leaned against Zachary because she had a distinct impression that he was not happy. She may fear nothing, but she had enough memories growing up to make her wary of Zachary's collection of pranks. As soon as she realized the danger she was in, she ran to Yasmin and flattered the other woman, "Yasmin, your unique insight is impressive!" After saying that, she even held up a small fist for a fist bump.

In the beginning, when Patricia asked for Yasmin's comments about Zachary, she only wanted to find out what the woman thought of her cousin and to see how Yasmin would react if she introduced Zachary as her boyfriend. However, she never would have guessed how blunt Yasmin's description would be. She did not just give a positive evaluation—she was direct and insightful in the way

she had read Zachary's character. Most importantly, she did it with complete disregard of the thunderous expression on her cousin's face.

Patricia, who was usually took any opportunity to provoke her cousin, deeply admired her for her reckless, honest opinion. 'As expected, she's Zachary's weakness. My future cousin-in-law is an excellent woman!' In her mind, Patricia fervently cheered for Yasmin.

Zachary's face gradually darkened the longer he stared at the two women in front of him. 'They not only made fun of my pale skin, they're even mocking my stamina!' Zachary was angry that Yasmin held such a low opinion of him.

Sensing the murderous intent radiating from her cousin, Patricia involuntarily moved closer to Yasmin.

Meanwhile, Yasmin stood there with a blank face, ignoring Zachary's anger. After all, she only told the truth. Zachary's face, which was fairer and more delicate than most men's, was the sort that enchanted women everywhere—a perfect boy toy face. The second half of her statement referred to his womanizing ways, implying that he had too many women who exhausted his energy. She wanted to warn the two lovers not to overexert themselves in the bedroom.

Smiling peacefully, Patricia meekly stood beside the proud Yasmin, who was acting like she had nothing to do with it all. The sharp contrast between the two women left Zachary speechless. On one side stood his cousin, who was his life's biggest headache. Standing beside her was the woman who held his heart, although he still hadn't decided how to approach her about it. Now, he was at a loss as he watched the two of them get along splendidly.

After a few deep breaths to calm himself, he ordered Patricia with a finger pointed toward his apartment door, "Patricia, go inside!" At this point, his relationship with Yasmin was in a mess, and Patricia's interfering possibly damaged it even more. For now, Zachary had to take her out of the picture so he could talk to Yasmin alone.

However, Patricia heard the authority in Zachary's order and obstinately shook her head with an injured air, refusing to follow.



'She dared refuse me?' With narrowed eyes, Zachary walked toward his cousin and held her wrist, hissing between gritted teeth, "Get in the apartment first. I have something to tell you later."

Patricia lifted her chin in challenge and looked up at Zachary with her sparkling eyes, seemingly saying, 'Why, are you going to scold me?' What she was afraid of was that her cousin might break her legs or send her packing because he's mad at her. She had to get an exact answer from Zachary first before doing what she was told.

Seeming to have understood the expression in her eyes, Zachary coaxed her in a softer tone, "Don't worry, I won't do anything to you. Just be a good girl and go back first."

However, the bystander Yasmin had a different interpretation of this scene. To her, it seemed like Zachary asked Patricia to go back to the apartment because he didn't want her to witness the act between him and Yasmin. Patricia refused, leaving him to cajole her gently into giving in. During the entire exchange, the emotional connection and eye contact between the two people were undeniable. Yasmin had to admit that the relationship between the two in front of her was not the usual.

Stuck in a scene of what looked like a lover's quarrel between the two people in front of her, Yasmin scolded herself. 'It's late. Do I really want to stand here and make myself miserable watching them k!ss and make up? This is ridiculous.' Quietly, she turned her back on the two and went back into her apartment.

Zachary saw her leave, but she had disappeared before he could say anything.

Patricia looked up to find Zachary's attention focused somewhere behind her, mouth open as if to speak up but then thought twice about it. Whirling around, she saw Yasmin's departing back.

At the sound of the door slamming shut, Patricia turned to see Zachary looking at the door with melancholic eyes.

A small chuckle escaped her. It was clear to her as soon as she saw the expression on his face that Zachary was wh!pped. It was rare to see her scheming cousin looking so down.



Of course, another reason for Patricia's glee was Yasmin's reaction. Her back, which looked oddly lonely as she left, made her think, 'Maybe she was unhappy about the intimacy between Zachary and me, so she left just like that. Maybe it isn't true that Yasmin has no feelings for Zachary—maybe she just doesn't recognize them yet. Definitely a great improvement.'

After all, onlookers often saw more clearly than the ones who were involved. She was given much food for thought—she saw with her own eyes that Yasmin and Zachary definitely had feelings for each other, and she got to see Zachary's injured puppy look. 'This is promising.' Giving herself a mental pat on the back, Patricia quietly walked toward their own apartment.

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"Stop, Patricia!" Zachary angrily shouted when he saw that Patricia was going to run away after causing such drama.

"Cousin, please calm down. Let's go inside and have a talk. There is a saying that family troubles should not be made public. There is also a saying that you age faster if you're quick to lose your temper. Is this really something you're willing to tarnish your beauty over?" she said. Patricia understood what was going on. She turned around and gave Zachary a bright smile in an attempt to appease him.

With disappointment clearly written across his face, Zachary looked at Patricia, who smiled in a flattering way. 'What nonsense is she talking about? If I don't show her just how infuriated I am, she will think I am a doormat,' Zachary thought.

"Why didn't you obey when I asked you to go inside a few moments ago? It's too late for you to say anything now," he said. Zachary looked at Patricia menacingly, and approached her with slow, calculated steps.

'I ought to teach her a good lesson. She had the nerve to bring Yasmin here without warning, not to mention that she said something so obscene and untrue. To make matters worse, she blatantly disregarded my requests, even though I pleaded with her. Now she wants to quietly slip away and act as if she is completely innocent. If she has nothing to say for herself, I will not let her get away with this.' Zachary wanted to seek vengeance.

Noting the seriousness in Zachary's tone and seeing the trademark sneer beginning to manifest on his face, Patricia felt her heart beginning to race. She wasn't just taken aback, she was indeed fearful.

"My cousin, let's have a good talk. A gentleman uses his tongue but not his fists," she said. Patricia took an unsteady step back, smiling again to try and appease her cousin. He was slowly coming closer and closer.

Seeing that Zachary was not moved by her words, she turned rapidly on her heel, fled to the next room and hastily attempted to shut the door behind her.

Zachary was well-accustomed to this old trick of Patricia's. She had employed this trick many times to escape his sight. Zachary was too fast for her. He caught the door handle before she could slam him out. Now, it would be impossible for her to close the door on him.

After fighting against him momentarily, Patricia realized she did not stand a chance against his power. She stopped struggling and let him in. Patricia bitterly straightened her clothing. She walked across the room and took a seat next to the table, awaiting her punishment.

Zachary was stunned by Patricia's sudden change in attitude. This obedience was at odds with her characteristic ferocity. She behaved as though he was a parent who wanted to chastise their child. In the past, when Patricia offended Zachary, she would never surrender so easily. She would run away, doing anything to thwart him, until he taught her a lesson.

The atmosphere became rather strange when Patricia quietly sat down. In the face of Patricia's atypical submission, Zachary was at a loss on how to proceed. Between her strange behavior and Yasmin's unexpected appearance, Zachary's mind had become a mess.

"Tell me, why did you behave this way today?" Zachary sat opposite Patricia and requested an explanation in an indifferent tone. He attempted to extract an explanation from her by asking in a civilized manner.

Many years had passed since they were children who would poke fun at each other. The circumstances were different. They were both adults and it would be inappropriate for Zachary to deal with Patricia as he did when they were kids. She was a grown, beautiful woman now. They could discuss the matter

maturely and reason with one another. There were alternatives to how they had settled things in the past. Maybe she had a reasonable explanation for what she had done. Perhaps this was all just a misunderstanding.

Patricia was also surprised that Zachary refrained from vengefully attacking her. Zachary looked at her with a solemn face, which made her hair stand on end. Initially, she thought that she wouldn't be able to escape his wrath, hence she had sat down quietly, ready to deal with whatever punishment he decided to reign down upon her like a storm. But his behavior now made her even more nervous. She sensed that perhaps this was the calm before the storm.

After internally coming to terms with just how unpredictable Zachary was with his scheming ways, Patricia answered truthfully, "I went next-door to meet her while you were in the shower. I went into her home under the ruse of needing to use her bathroom."

This made sense to Zachary. After considering her words for a moment, he asked, "What was your intention when you brought her here? What were you trying to achieve?"

'I really am at a loss for words. I have no idea what I should say,' thought Patricia. Patricia was unsure about whether she should tell Zachary what her real purpose had been. It was a task she had placed on herself and it was weighing heavily on her. After weighing her options for a while, Patricia said in a level voice, "I just made a new friend and wanted to introduce you to her. As the saying goes, close neighbors are better than distant relatives. I already feel quite attached to this charming new neighbor, Yasmin."

Zachary looked at Patricia, who had leaned back in her chair and had begun twirling her hair between her fingers. He considered the veracity of her answer.

"Then why did you introduce me as your boyfriend? What explanation could you possibly have for that?" Zachary asked Patricia this pertinent question.

For the moment, Zachary was willing to accept the explanation that she wanted to introduce him to Yasmin out of enthusiasm of meeting her new neighbor. But he was still left with a few unanswered questions. 'Why didn't she tell Yasmin that she is my cousin? Why did she make it seem like I was her boyfriend? Why did she snuggle up against me to ensure that it looked like I am in fact her romantic interest?' He pondered these things in mind.

Looking at the frightful expression on Zachary's face, Patricia felt a pang of guilt. She didn't know how to explain herself to ease his distress.

'Can I say that I had a moment of madness? Or perhaps I could say that I wanted to show that I'd like my boyfriend to be handsome like him? What if I can't manage to say this convincingly? To be honest, I wouldn't believe such ridiculous reasoning. How can I convince this cunning cousin of mine?' These thoughts distressed Patricia.

Patricia poured a cup of tea for Zachary and handed it to him with a smile. "Cousin, here you go. Have a cup of tea. I will tell you everything."

Accepting the cup of tea from Patricia, Zachary took a sip, and said, "You pinched me quite hard just now and behaved so strangely. Before we make amends, you need to explain yourself." Then he put down the teacup, cleared his throat and continued, "Besides, don't even dare to think that you can fool your shrewd cousin."

Patricia could hear Zachary's threatening tone all too clearly. She saw caught off guard. "I hear you loud and clearly. I will answer your questions.

My dear, cunning cousin, is it possible that you have a crush on the beautiful girl next door?" Patricia asked this pertinent question, while being careful to flatter him.

Zachary didn't appreciate her flattery. "Cut the crap! Just answer me directly," Zachary ordered her.

"Well, since you won't admit it, what I've done has been in vein, anyway. I'm here to help you pursue your wife..." Patricia said in a low and dejected tone, having been upset by Zachary's harsh remarks. She kept him in suspense, not completing her answer.

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Hearing Patricia's words, Zachary uncrossed his legs, rested his elbows on his knees and leaned forward a little. With a sigh he rolled his head to loosen his neck muscles and then said with a quiet and earnest voice, "My dear cousin, have I told you that I hate people to hem and haw? Or did you not hear what I just said?"

Patricia could hear his wrists crack as he was slowly rotating them. The noise was not loud but it went right through her. She felt anxious. 'This is too hard! It's hard enough to deal with his interrogation, and now he is threatening me with violence. He has always been a good fighter. His whole life. Even if he hardly touches me, I don't stand a chance. This is serious.'

After a brief moment of contemplating her situation, Patricia made the decision to not keep the truth from him. She sat up, prepared herself and slowly began to tell Zachary of the heavy burden she carried on her fragile shoulders.

Accepting that she had no other choice, Patricia left no details out. Zachary sat across from her, watching her closely and listening intently.

Patricia's heart was pounding inside her chest and she could not shake her anxiety. She spoke very fast and her expression was vivid. She was unable to hide her feeling from him. Less than twenty minutes later she stopped. Silently, she looked at him. Then she picked up her cup of tea and took a sip. She swallowed and with a downcast look she said, "Dear cousin, that's all. I really didn't mean to upset you tonight." She paused, "Now, you know how much I have sacrificed for your lifelong happiness, right?"

Zachary ignored her attempt of getting him to acknowledge her. He rested his head in his palms, thinking about what he had just learned. So much information to take in.

There were three points that bothered him the most. 'Firstly, my mother worries too much. Is there anything I cannot handle? Well, even if she wants to help me, she should find a more reliable person instead of Patricia. A mere girl, giggling and silly. Secondly, why do women worry about something so pointless? How come they have the ability to conjure drama out of thin air? What was the meaning of the idea 'make someone jealous to get them to fall in love with you'? How come I am the hero in a play I don't even know I am part of? Thirdly, Yasmin! Her indifferent behavior earlier did not suggest even a trace of jealousy! She has hardly shown any emotion at all. Could it be that Patricia's plan hasn't worked? Yasmin did not give me the feeling that she cared at all.'

Patricia studied Zachary, who still sat across her, holding his head, looking at the floor. He had been silent since she finished her story. She was still

anxious inside. She needed a reaction. Confused, she asked, “Cousin, are you alright? If there is anything you don’t understand, would you like me to explain it more to you? What is on your mind?”

Her clear voice caught his attention. He looked up and studied her for a moment before he began to speak, “You have watched her. You have observed us together. What do you think—does Yasmin have a crush on me?”

Having learned that his cousin was coming to help him in this relationship, Zachary felt there was no need for him to hide his true feelings for Yasmin from his cousin. His face showed no emotion but his eyes could not quite hide the fact that situation troubled him. She could see his shoulders slumping. His big frame almost looked vulnerable.

Patricia’s heart quickened with a painful pang as she heard the desperation in his voice. She studied him silently for a moment. He avoided her gaze. She sighed quietly, ‘This is the normal reaction of a normal man.’

A “normal man” meant a man who changed his emotions. Someone who was open to change without feeling threatened by it. In the past, she didn’t consider Zachary to be such a man. All he used to be was restrained and scheming. He had never portrayed any other emotions and seemed unwilling to change anything in his behavior.

Patricia got up, patted her dress down, straightened her back and walked towards Zachary. With a newly found confidence she put her hand on his shoulder and squeezed it. In a clear and calm voice she said, “Relax. Don’t doubt your charm. You are a handsome man. From what I have seen, I believe she absolutely has feelings for you. Absolutely!” As she repeated the word “absolutely”, she patted Zachary’s shoulder. Her hand looked small and fragile, but her movement portrayed a certain confidence.

He ignored her old-fashioned flattery. He brushed it off. It had no meaning to him. All he could focus on was second half of her statement. The strength of her grip as she patted his shoulder, the meaning of her “absolutely”. He felt that she believed in her words. He sat up, rolled his shoulders back, a spark in his eyes.

He took her hand and moved it off his shoulder. She held his gaze as he looked straight into her eyes and asked, “Why do you think so?”

Standing above him, Patricia got lost in the moment and forgot what this was all about. A new feeling began to creep up inside her and her heart began to beat a little faster with excitement. Patricia looked at the beautiful, strong man in front of her. This is what it must feel like to be worshipped by him. Her happiness began to rise inside her and she couldn't help herself to throw her head back and laugh.

Zachary watched her for a second. With a slight shake of his head he got up and now towered over her. He looked down at her happy face and then raised one hand and patted her brotherly on the cheek. Immediately, Patricia stopped laughing.

She turned her head and swallowed. With a blink of an eye she batted her betraying emotions away. She cleared her throat and calmly said, "Isn't the answer to this question obvious?"

Zachary raised an eyebrow and Patricia sighed. She took a step back and collected herself. Carefully, she began to state her observations and the opinions she concluded from them. Zachary was still standing next to the chair, leaning against it, his arms crossed while he was listening intensely.

He had too many questions to ask and after a while Patricia felt weary. She slipped back into her seat while speaking. She picked up her cup of tea again and despite the fact that it was now cold, she took another sip. Finally, she looked at him and with a collected voice she concluded, "According to everything I have seen, the situation I tried to manipulate and the way she looked, when she left I am sure Yasmin holds deep affection for you." Patricia heard the sound of her own voice in her head and suddenly thought that she sounded lame, too professional. She looked at the cup in her hand, shrugged her shoulders and casually added, "Generally speaking, Yasmin is a little interested in you, but I am not sure that's not enough." She looked up, trying to see his reactions to what he just heard. In her head she finished her sentence with 'So little that it could be ignored.' Of course, she would never tell him that. Zachary seemed relieved, almost happy. His whole body seemed relaxed. He brought one hand to his chin and with a slight nod starting casually pacing through the room.

Patricia watched him and leaned forward to emphasize her next words "You should be more active, cousin. Women are emotional beings. They like surprises. They want to be swept off their feet. They want to feel like they are the only person in the world existing for you. If you act right, she will fall in love with you faster than you could have ever imagined. Come on!"



He looked at her, pondering on what she had said. Patricia hoped she was not showing how little confidence she had in her own words. She was one year younger than Yasmin, and she had only been in love twice for very short periods of time. She had no real experience, definitely not enough to give advice. However, Zachary seemed to see truth in her voice. She could see his thoughts racing in his mind. Patricia leaned back again and briefly closed her eyes. She had analyzed Yasmin in a glimpse of a second. Actually, she judged the other woman from a split second, watching her from behind while she left. Patricia had not seen her face. How could she know anything without having seen any emotions or feelings Yasmin might have shown?

After a couple of seconds, she opened her eyes again and looked back to Zachary. He regarded her in a different light now. Until a few moments ago, he had doubted his abilities to judge a woman's feeling for him. Patricia had reassured him. With an audible sigh, he turned to look at the window and ran his fingers through his hair, relaxing his shoulders even more. His self-confidence seemed to come back and he was grateful to Patricia for that. To his own surprise, he even thought he might like her a little better, now.

Noticing that Zachary was obviously in a good mood, Patricia, who was a little guilty, was happy as well. Being afraid that he might ask some more profound questions that beyond her ability, Patricia changed the topic, "Cousin, are you in a good mood after listening to my analysis?" He turned towards her as she spoke. Not changing her voice she asked, "Where are we going tomorrow?"

Zachary smiled at her. He stepped closer, opened both his arms a little and said in a soft voice, "I'll ask someone to take you to play or you can stay here tomorrow. I'll take you out for fun the day after tomorrow." He studied her face to see her reaction.

Patricia couldn't hide her disappointment. She had expected more. She pouted and answered, "Okay, go ahead with your work. I'll stay here like a good girl." She looked away to other end of the room. She was sulking and wanted him know. 'It will be a boring day tomorrow. My cousin and cousin-in-law have to go to work. I am not familiar with this city and there will be no one to keep me company.' She would be lonely and bored. Patricia sighed. This is not what she had been hoping for.

## **Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You – Chapter 70 - Tips**



Since Patricia had no objections, Zachary chatted with her for a while. When he noticed how late it was getting, he suggested he take his leave.

Zachary had planned on keeping his distance from Patricia. Honestly speaking, Zachary had chosen this apartment in order to be closer to Yasmin. It had an intriguing design, a peaceful environment and all the necessary facilities. The apartment, however, was small: there was only one bedroom, albeit spacious. It really was designed to suit the needs of a single young man or woman. The fact of the matter it only had one bedroom could not be avoided and he did not want to sleep on the couch in the living room. Plus, it would be impossible for him to share a living space with Patricia.

After a long journey to the city and uncovering the truth, all in one day, Patricia was exhausted. When Zachary left, she just managed to say goodbye to him from the sofa.

After leaving the apartment, Zachary walked to Yasmin's door. He just stared at the door for a while, before going down the stairs and leaving.

Meanwhile, Yasmin had locked herself in her room. She held her big, cuddly doll to her chest while she lay in her bed, in an attempt to comfort herself. She finally let her troubled emotions show after having bottled them up to remain composed for the entire duration of her interaction with Zachary.

After returning to her own apartment, Yasmin wondered why she was so shaken and upset by the scene of Zachary and Patricia's intimacy. The memory of Zachary speaking so gently and affectionately to Patricia kept replaying in Yasmin's head, and caused her mind to go blank.

Yasmin reminisced about her entire relationship with Zachary, starting with its inception. She remembered how aloof and indifferent Zachary had been when they first met. She recalled how acidic and harsh he had been when they had fought. Yet, today, he had been this gentle and caring person. These thoughts consumed her mind.

'It turns out that Zachary has such a gentle side. But it seems this gentle, caring side is reserved for certain special people,' Yasmin thought bitterly.

She replayed what had happened in her mind, again and again. Finally, after tossing and turning for ages, she suddenly had the epiphany that she liked Zachary! 'It's because of my feelings for him that I feel so upset after seeing him flirt with another woman.'

Yasmin analyzed her feelings about Zachary from the moment she had met him, to date. Initially, she thought he was a perfect catch, and that she would no longer need to go on blind dates. Then, she suspected that he was gay. Thinking this way, she decided to regard him as a close friend and ignore the flutter her heart had when she was around him.

Yasmin recalled their last encounter. Zachary had kissed Yasmin so passionately that she could not resist and became intoxicated with him. She was angry with him because she thought that he was toying with her. Now, she believed that she was actually angry because she could not accept the fact that she was so hung up on someone who was gay.

Every time other women had laid their hungry eyes on Zachary, she had felt a pang of jealousy. Today was undeniable evidence that she liked him as she had become jealous again when he had treated another woman in an affectionate and gentle manner.

In the end, Yasmin felt at ease since she now understood why she felt this way. Yasmin had exhausted herself with her endless, draining thoughts. She fell asleep.

Before succumbing to sleep, however, Yasmin promised herself that she would win Zachary back from Patricia.

Yasmin always got what she wanted, and did as she pleased. It was a truly uncommon experience to have met someone that she liked so much. She would never let him slip away. Would Zachary chase his wife? Or would Yasmin pursue her husband, successfully? One would just have to wait and see.

The next morning, Yasmin awoke from her dream with a start. Yasmin immediately felt her cheeks turn red when she woke. Thinking about the dream, she felt all sleepiness leave her.

In her dream, she had seen Zachary and Patricia in front of her, affectionately holding hands. The daring Yasmin did not hesitate to push the two apart. Patricia immediately disappeared from the dream. Then, innumerable women rushed towards Zachary, eager to claim him for themselves. Yasmin was too fast for them, ran towards him, taking him into her grasp, and claimed him for herself.

The dream sequence shifted to the exact scene of the time when Yasmin and Zachary had kissed. This time, Yasmin did not play coy, and continued kissing Zachary. They did not end the kiss but rather went with the mood. They ended up making passionate, steamy love to each other.

The dream had felt too real and Yasmin awoke with a shock. She could not forget the pleasure Zachary had given her in the dream, which astonished her. 'Is it because I thought about it during the day?' She wondered from where her sexual desire had come.

Yasmin lay dazedly in the bed for a while. She could not fall off to sleep again, so she decided to explore the enemy's territory. She quickly brushed her teeth and washed her face. After dressing up, she rushed to the apartment next door and pressed the doorbell hard.

After a long time, Patricia, who was dressed in pajamas, opened the door with messy hair and half-closed eyes. Leaning against the door, Patricia asked with sleepy eyes, "Who is it? Why are you interrupting my dreams so early in the morning?"

Hearing the disgruntled tone of Patricia and noting her attire, Yasmin felt speechless. She thought, 'How could she be so dumb to open the door to a stranger when she's dressed so skimpily? Did it not cross her mind that the person at the door could be there in order to harm her, perhaps even rape her? What was even more alarming, was that she had opened the door but she was too lazy to properly open her eyes and see who was before her. How can anyone ever be so indolent?'

Patricia was wearing a silk nightgown which revealed her fair arms, shoulders and slender legs. Without the heavy makeup she had donned yesterday, her features were even more exquisite. Her doe-like eyes gave her the girl-next-door look.

Looking at the innocent look on Patricia's face, Yasmin even forgot for a moment that Patricia was her "rival in love" and her purpose of visiting was to ascertain whether Zachary and Patricia were in fact living together.

Yasmin waved her hand in front of Patricia's face and said, "Wake up. It's me!"

Hearing the abrasive voice, Patricia reluctantly opened her big eyes and looked at Yasmin. After a moment, she came to her senses and mumbled incoherently, "Good morning, cousin.... Uh, Yasmin."

Seeing that it was Yasmin, her future cousin-in-law, Patricia immediately drove away her sleepiness and prepared for a fight. If Yasmin discovered her true identity by accident, all her plans would fall apart. Although Patricia was curious to know why Yasmin had suddenly popped by in the early hours of the morning, she decided that she should be polite. So, she greeted Yasmin welcomingly.

Yasmin didn't pay attention to the way Patricia addressed her. She looked inside through the gap of the door and replied, "Good morning. Is Zachary here? I have something I need to talk to him about quite urgently."

Yasmin didn't like to beat around the bush. She was completely direct about the purpose of her presence. Patricia blocked Yasmin's line of sight into the apartment, so she couldn't be sure whether he was there or not. Being the straightforward person she was, she decided to use the most direct method to uncover the truth.