## **President 26**



are the best candidate."
Looking at his penetrating eyes, Summer could see a faint sense of loneliness, and an indescribable
complex emotion in him.
When she tried to take a closer look, he let go of her hand. "Think over it tonight and give me an
answer by tomorrow. If you agree, we will register our marriage straightaway. If you don't agree, I will
not force you into it. But you will have got to go to the hospital." He looked calm, his voice low but
succinct.
Summer fell into silence. She really needed to think about it.
"And" he let his words hang for a second, then continued, "never think about running away. It will just
be a waste of energy."
He left as soon as his voice trailed off, leaving her staring at him from behind.
A day of escape attempts ended. Things came back to square one, and she got herself an expired train
ticket.
She hauled her luggage bag back to the school, feeling depressed the entire time.
In the evening, she sat at the table with a bowl of chicken soup for dinner. She felt a crushing burden

falling on her.
Things had gone sideways, catching her unawares.
She had thought about getting married, but marrying Mark Valentine had never been part of the plan.
He was serious about the marriage, and she wanted to keep the baby. So it seemed that it was a
match made i n heaven.
She was sipping on the chicken soup when his voice rang in her mind again. She felt as if she was
imagining things.
'I need a partner to marry. And you, whom I don't hate, are the best candidate.'
She shook her head when she felt her heart galloping again. "Marriage is so casual to him. As long as
he doesn't hate me, he will marry me," she mumbled to herself.
She thought she was simple enough-her thinking was that it does not have to be a mutual affection, but
at least there must be a feeling between two people.
Apparently, his idea of marriage was much casual than hers.
The complicated emotion in his eyes still perplexed her. But she could not tell what it was about.

The next early morning, right at first light, in the icy wind, amid the rustling of the tree branches, salt grain -like snow falling from the air added a touch of chilliness to the morning. A black Land Rover was parked outside the apartment. Cigarette butts were strewn on the ground beside the vehicle. It was apparent that the Land Rover had been waiting there for some time. Mark rested his left hand on the steering wheel, took out his mobile phone with his right hand, and dialed it. Chapter 27 The phone rang for a long while before a drowsy voice picked it up. "Hello?" "You have five minutes. Either you come down, or I go up," he frowned and said with a nononsense voice. He disliked waiting, but today was an exception. He had been waiting for over half an hour, and his patience had run out. Summer was jolted out of her sleep. She gasped in fright. 'How... how could it be him?' "Five minutes. If you agree, bring your things and come down quickly. If you disagree, we will go to the hospital. Now, there are still four minutes left."

He reminded her again and hung up before she could say anything.



hands, and she had no way to escape. With her brows knitted together, she looked at him and tried to

provoke him." What makes you think I will agree?"

"How could you still sleep if you did not agree?" he squinted with his lips curling up slightly. He did not

even have to make guesses as her emotions were written all over her face.

He paused for a second before he continued. "Besides, you are so brazen-faced and show your

temper in front of me."

She could not find a word to respond. His beast-like, sharp gaze frightened her.

With much reluctance and dissatisfaction, she handed her Social Security card to him.

The black Land Rover started, backed out of the parking lot, and drove forward.

Sitting in the back seat, she looked out the window with her hands clenched together. She was a little

nervous and did not know what to do. She wondered i f she was making the right choice.

But since things had come to such a pass, why should she worry anymore?

She would just have to roll with the punches and let tomorrow worry about itself.

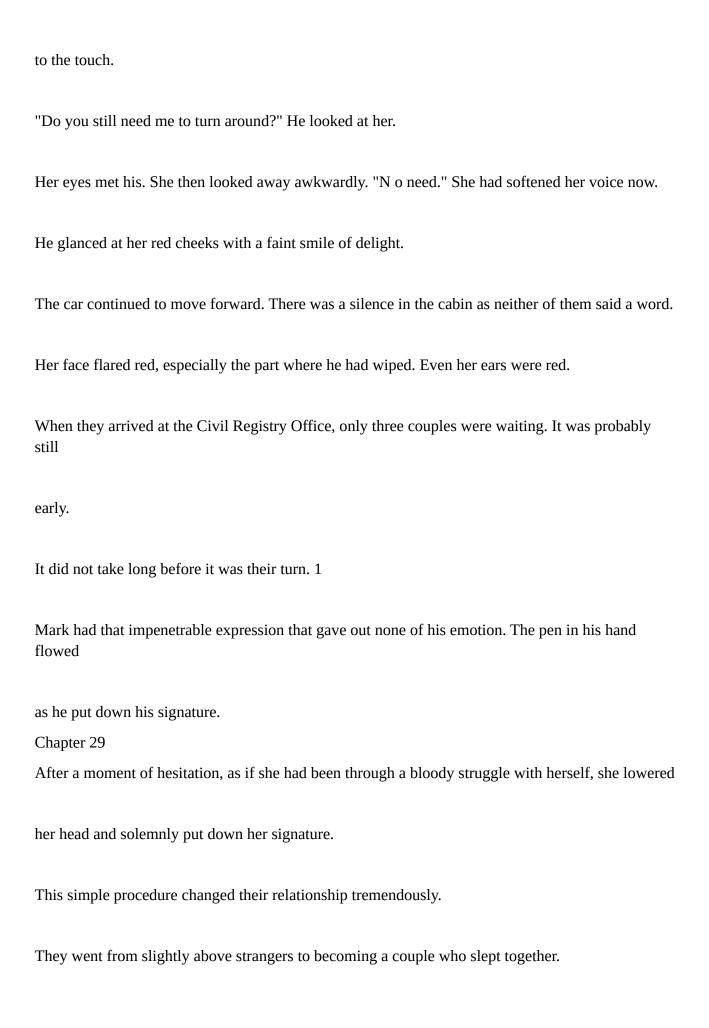
After the car had driven forward for a while, Mark glanced at her mouth. "Are you sure you want to go

to the Civil Registry Office like this?"

"What do you mean 'like this'? Only now that you think about my appearance? Don't you think it is too late?" she asked, not noticing the stain on her mouth. "Since you don't mind, I have no reason to say otherwise," he said in a low voice. Her overreactions did not affect him a bit. "What do you mean?" It was only now that she suspected something. He said not a word. With his left hand on the steering wheel, he tapped the overhead vanity mirror with his fingers of his right hand, motioning her to look up. She rolled her eyes at his strange behavior, and then suspiciously, she straightened up and looked at herself in the vanity mirror. Chapter 28 She instantly blushed, wishing the ground would swallow her up. Last night, after having her chicken soup, she was too exhausted and crashed out without cleaning herself u P-Also, he threatened her in the early morning. She was afraid of waking her neighbors, so she hurried downstairs, not realizing... "Turn the car around!" She patted his seat from behind.

"What do you want to do?" He smirked, asking the obvious. "Going back to wash my face." She was almost whispering. "You know what, Miss Hart, I don't mind at all. Just keep it this way." He did not plan to stop the car. Summer could not describe how embarrassed she was. Yet, she could do nothing about him except threaten him. "If you don't turn around, I am not going to get out of the car at the Civil Registry Office!" Mark scanned the surroundings. He then swirled the car around and stopped on the opposite side of the road. "Get out," he snapped. "I want to go home!" She looked at the surroundings and shook her head. "Do you want to get out on your own, or do you want m e to kick you out?" He threatened her. "I want to go home!" She insisted. He had no choice but to get out of the car and go to the convenience store across the street. Minutes later, he returned with a bottle of mineral water in his hand. He unscrewed the cap and poured a small amount of water into the palm of his hand.

He then wet his other hand, bent down slightly, and used his calloused fingers to wipe the stain off her
mouth gently.
She did not expect that he would do this. It stunned her for a while. She did not know how to react.
He was just inches from her. His scent of a mature man mixed with the smell of nicotine was drowning
her. She felt she could not breathe.
When his rough fingers wiped across her mouth, she felt a sense of intimacy.
Her cheeks were now as red as an Elmo doll.
Her eyelashes flicked spontaneously as she looked up at him.
He did not look at her but just wiped her mouth by feel, his black eyes seemingly so focused and
gentle.
That part of her heart softened like butter. His action tugged at her heartstrings, as if a rock hit the
surface o f the water.
Just then, Mark got up but left his finger on her lips for a few seconds before removing it. He glanced
down at her delicate face and noticed a red rubbing mark there.
Her skin must be so delicate that it reddened at the touch of his finger. Nevertheless, her skin felt good



It was 8:30 am when they left the Civil Registry Office. The salt grain-like snow had turned into flakes, covering the ground in white. Cold air rushed into her nostrils as she took a deep breath. She could not help shivering. The temperature had dropped so low overnight. But the thought of her going from being single to married overnight made the changes in weather seem to be not much of a surprise. Many things could change overnight. While her mind ran wild, Mark was walking out of the Civil Registry Office with two staff members. They followed him from behind and were very respectful when they spoke to him. Mark opened the car door and motioned for her to get i n. She still could not get used to their relationship, and s o she looked awkward. She pretended to look at the time and then made excuses. "It is half-past eight. I have to rush to school. I know you must be very busy too. I will just take a taxi." "Get in the car," he snapped, frowning, as if he had not heard her.

More people had arrived. Envy eyes were on Mark as people whispered among themselves.

Mark was undoubtedly the most eye-catching person everywhere he went.

Summer thought of her appearance and became self-conscious. She had not washed her face yet and

was too embarrassed to keep standing here. So she bent over and flew into the back seat.

Just then, his deep voice came. "Sit in the front. I am not your chauffeur, mind you."

She gritted her teeth. 'What is wrong with this guy that he wants to dictate where I should sit?'

But she gave in.

The car drove forward, smooth like a magic carpet. Mark looked over at her. "I have an important

meeting in the afternoon. Go home and pack your belongings, and the secretary will fetch you over."

She flustered, spontaneously shaking her head. "My parents haven't known about it yet. Let me tell

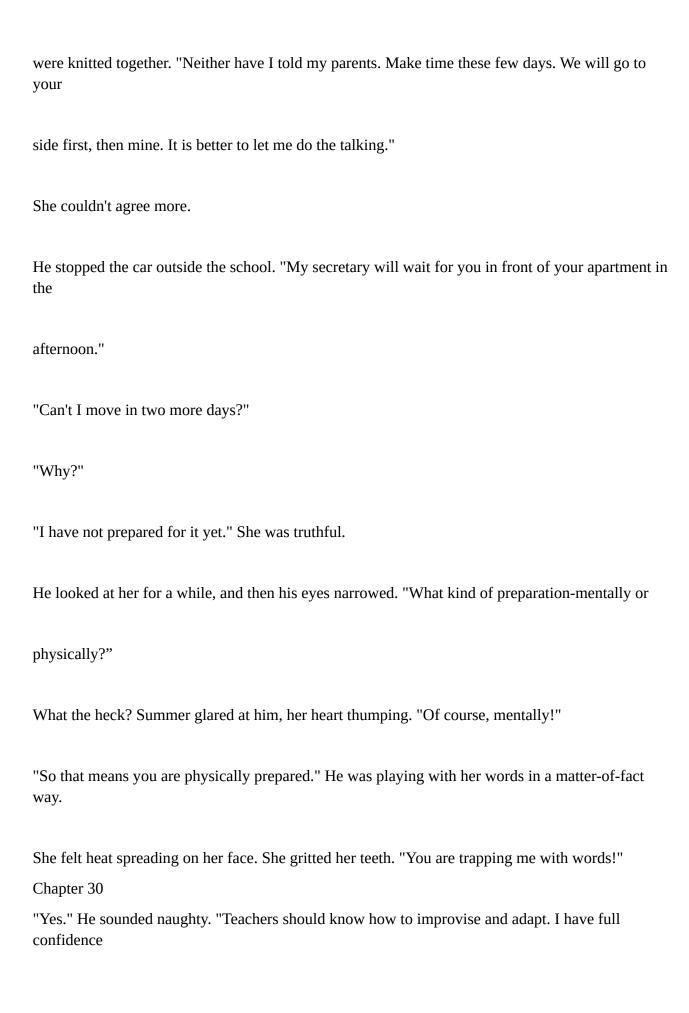
them

first, and then I will move in." 2

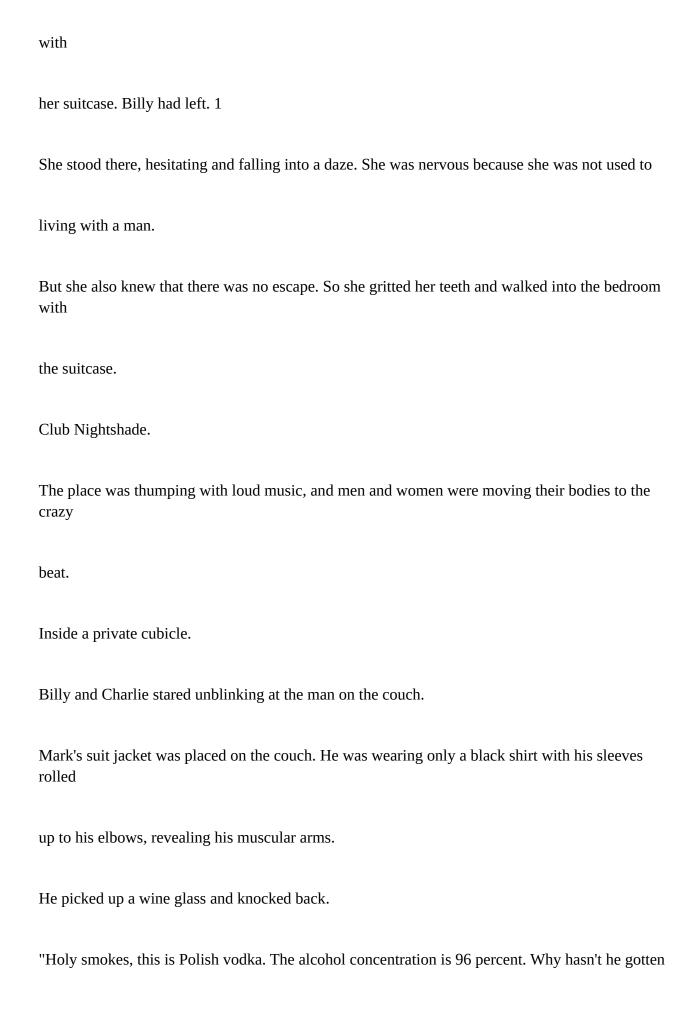
Things happened too suddenly that she was not mentally prepared for it.

Thinking of having to live with him from now on, she was discomposed again.

He looked at her for a few seconds, turned the steering wheel to the left to make a turn. His eyebrows



in you, Miss Hart." "Who told you that a teacher should know how to improvise and adapt? Do you think I am a wild survivor?" She retorted irritably. "You really know a lot." He started the car and left. 'How could this man be so dictatorial? He never listens to others at all.' She thought to herself with frown. But then, she could not deny that he looked charming when he raised the corner of his mouth as he was leaving. Summer got off work and walked out of the school in the afternoon. A middle-aged man in a suit walked up and stopped her. 1 She frowned, wondering what this man was up to. When she was about to ask, the man spoke, "I am Billy Day, Mr. Valentine's secretary. He asked me to bring you to the apartment." No wonder. She could not refuse but to get into the car. She first returned home to pack her belongings. Only then she went to the apartment with Billy. It was an expensive apartment, large, but no one else was there. She was standing in the living room



drunk?" Billy scratched his chin.
"I am more curious about how he got together with Miss Hart. They even got married." Charlie
shrugged with amazement.
"As curious as I am about that, what beats me is that why is he drinking here on the first night of his
marriage? Is he still thinking of his aunt?"
Mark's hand holding the wine glass stopped in midair for a fleeting second, and then it returned to
normal, as if nothing had happened before.
But Charlie's keen eye had noticed that. He nudged Billy with his shoulder and whispered, "Don't poke
a wounded tiger, man."
Realizing his blunder, Billy hemmed and shut up.
1.00 am.
Probably because she was not used to the new environment, she could not sleep. So she sat on the
sofa.
Mark had not come home yet.
She frowned, as she could not describe her feelings now.
Just then, a knock on the door jolted her out of her thoughts and up from the sofa.

'Who could it be at this hour? Is it Mark?'

She went to open the door and saw Charlie and Bill holding Mark on each side.

Judging by his condition, Mark was apparently drunk.

"Hello, Miss Hart." Billy let out a smile. "Mr. Valentine went to a business meeting and got drunk."