

Pursuing 171

Chapter 171 Every Move Of Hers Is Sensuous

Clayton couldn't help but laugh at Willow's words. Does she really think I'm someone like Mason, whom she can manipulate with ease?

"Clayton, why are you looking at me like that? Don't you believe me? Every word I say is true. I really like you a lot. In fact, I'm willing to sacrifice everything for you." Confident in her beauty, Willow was sure her pitiful look would be able to melt any man's heart.

Instead, Clayton tightened his grip on her.

"Is that so? Are you really sure that you like me and truly understand what kind of person I am?"

Clayton's reaction wasn't what she had expected, causing her to feel at a loss.

"Clayton, how can I prove myself to you?"

"The man with your sister. Do you know him? He's someone that I detest." Clayton released her chin and gently stroked her beautiful face.

"Do you mean Tanny? I hate his guts too. However, what are you expecting me to do? He's Sophie's boyfriend, and I'm powerless against him." When the image of Tristan emerged in her mind, it was still enough to cause her heart to race.

So what if that's the case? She's still Sophie's man and will never be mine. Furthermore, what's the use of him being better looking than Clayton? As long as I can become Clayton's girl, my rise to success will be assured.

"I'm not expecting you to do anything. Do I look like someone like that? You know how much I treasure the woman I love. It's just that he's an eyesore to me. Since you claim that your feelings for me are

true, let's see how you prove it." No sooner had Clayton spoken than he ordered the driver to send Willow home.

Despite her unwillingness to leave, Willow was cognizant that her refusal would only end up infuriating him.

"Clayton, remember to call me." Willow then got into the car.

Right after she did, Clayton took out a wet napkin and methodically wiped his hands with it.

Since daybreak was upon them, Sophie didn't return to Wisteria Apartments. Instead, Tristan went with her to the hospital.

By the time they arrived, Josiah was already awake, but he was still breathing through the ventilator and unable to speak.

After Sophie sat by his side for a while, she had to leave the room when the nurse came in to give Josiah's body a wipe.

Nonetheless, Tristan remained inside. After taking the towel from the nurse's hand, he personally rubbed down Josiah and did so attentively.

Meanwhile, Morgan was moved by Tristan's gesture.

It's rare for young men nowadays to be willing to do the dirty work. Most of the time, they are just preoccupied with making money. Unlike them, Mr. Tristan is willing to go the extra mile for Ms. Tanner in spite of his distinguished position in society. Therefore, he must truly be enamored with her.

Josiah, too, could feel how caring Tristan was. Even his own son wasn't bothered to wipe his body for him.

Tristan is really sincere.

“Old Mr. Tanner, don’t worry. Soph managed to catch a few hours of sleep after going back.”

Well aware of Josiah’s concern for Sophie, Tristan updated him on what they did over the last few hours while wiping the former down.

“Mr. Tristan, let me do it.” When Tristan was about to pour off the water, Morgan stopped him at once.

With no intention of insisting, Tristan rolled-down his sleeves.

“Ms. Sophie, you can go back in now, as Mr. Tristan is done cleaning Old Mr. Tanner. He really is a good catch. For him to be willing to do something like that for you, he must really like you a lot!” Morgan exclaimed.

Stumped for a response, Sophie walked by him and entered.

Inside, she saw Tristan and Josiah getting along very well with each other. At the same time, sweat was beading off Tristan’s forehead after wiping Josiah earlier.

Taking out a few pieces of tissues, she instinctively wiped his sweat away for him, and that was the first time she had ever done something like that.

Since he was taller than her by an entire head, she had to tiptoe just to reach him.

Evidently, the height difference between them was simply perfect.

Watching how caring they were to each other, Josiah’s eyes glistened in approval.

This is such a perfect scene that I just wish I could freeze it for eternity.

“That’s enough.” Tristan grabbed her hand and helped her to the chair beside Josiah’s bed. “Ignore me. Just stay with Old Mr. Tanner.”

All of a sudden, Tristan’s phone rang.

“I’ll take the call outside. Call me if you need anything.”

With that, Tristan exited the ward.

Watching the door close behind him, Sophie noticed the warmth he brought into her life every time he was by her side.

“Soph,” Josiah called out to her, causing her to turn back around.

“Grandpa, what is it? Do you need anything?”

“Oh, Soph. I really think that Tristan is a wonderful man. Even though he is much older than you are, the age difference doesn’t matter as long as he treats you well. The only thing I wish for is for you to be happy.” Having not said a word for more than ten hours, Josiah sounded hoarse when he spoke.

Sophie nodded in response.

“Grandpa, I know that. Don’t worry. I’ll definitely not let happiness slip through my hands.” Even though she was young, she wasn’t blind to who was good to her.

When it was past nine in the morning, Willow arrived at the hospital. The moment Charmaine saw her, she pulled the former aside.

“What took you so long? Your grandpa has already woken up a long time ago.”

“So what? I’m not a doctor. What’s the use of me being here? Grandpa has never been bothered with me. In his eyes, the only granddaughter he has is Sophie,” Willow grumbled in indignance, for Josiah’s bias had always been a thorn in her heart.

“Why are you complaining so loudly? Don’t you want any of the Tanner family assets?” Charmaine pulled her aside.

“Mom, I’m busting my butt trying to get Clayton to like me. As long as I marry him, the Tanner family’s meager assets mean nothing to me.” Just the thought of the prestige that came with being Clayton’s wife caused Willow to feel like she was on cloud nine.

“Does Mr. Zales really like you?” Charmaine, too, was delighted to hear the news.

“Mm-hmm, I’ll definitely make him fall for me,” Willow declared resolutely.

As long as he falls head over heels for me, he will be eating out of my hand.

“Willa, make sure you give it your all. As long as you are accepted by the Zales family, you will be a cut above the rest.” Charmaine’s only goal in life was to climb the social ladder.

“Mom, don’t worry. I’ll definitely not disappoint you.”

“Let’s go and see your grandpa.” Charmaine then led Willow to the ward. When they ran into Sophie, Willow snorted in response.

What’s the use of you having so many men by your side? As long as I’m able to reel Clayton in, all those men are nothing compared to him.

Fantasizing about the future put Willow in a buoyant mood, causing her to ram into Sophie’s shoulder on purpose.

Sophie’s brows knitted by reflex. “Are you blind?”

Willow sneered as she racked her brains for a response that would inflict misery upon Sophie.

Chapter 172 Are You Jealous Of Me

“Soph, I didn’t do it on purpose. I really didn’t see you.” Willow feigned remorse. “Anyway, you can stop worrying about me fighting with you over Mason. Since you like him, you can go ahead and have him.”

“Willow, you disgust me.” Sophie’s eyes were piercingly cold. “Haven’t you fallen head over heels in love with him? What’s wrong? Have you changed your target?”

Willow was outraged.

“What are you trying to say? I just realized that some things couldn’t be forced. Since Mason has no feelings for me, there’s no point in me losing my dignity over him.” So what if I have really changed my target? Since Mason doesn’t want me as his girlfriend, there’s no point in me throwing myself at him. Besides, isn’t Clayton a hundred times better than he is?

“Have you heard of the Zales family?” Willow gloated all of a sudden. “It’s only now that I discovered I like ambitious men like Clayton.”

“How the f*ck is that my business?” Sophie didn’t mince her words. “Willow, let me warn you. I don’t care what you want to do. However, if your actions harm the Tanner family’s interest, I’ll definitely make you pay.”

Is she not taking me seriously because I have yet to hold her accountable for the incident with the picture?

Due to Josiah’s condition, Sophie had no time to deal with Willow. But now, the latter was getting increasingly on her nerves.

Willow broke into a smirk.

“Sophie, I knew you have always been jealous of me. What’s wrong? Are you also going to seduce Clayton just to spite me?”

Sophie’s eyes narrowed with a dangerous glint in them.

If they weren’t in a ward and Josiah wasn’t already sleeping, Sophie would definitely have taught Willow a lesson.

“Willa, that’s enough.” Charmaine was also worried that their exchange would escalate into an argument in the ward.

“I’m not trying to meddle in your affairs, but you had better not get yourself so deep into trouble that you have to beg me for help.”

Does she even know what kind of person Clayton is? She must be deluded to think that she can manipulate him. That aside, am I his target, or is Tristan?

“Let me tell you; you’re obviously jealous of me. There’s no doubt about it.” Willow was extremely full of herself.

“Take her away.” Sophie had lost her patience for further conversation, as she felt like she was speaking to a fool.

Sensing Sophie’s exasperation, Charmaine grabbed Willow and walked away.

Upon leaving the ward, she remarked, “Willa, there’s still a long way to go before you and Clayton are together, and yet—”

“Mom, I’m confident that Clayton will definitely fall into my grasp. How can you not trust me?” Willow was upset by her mother’s lack of faith.

Charmaine's concern intensified upon hearing her daughter's words.

"Can it be that Clayton is trying to use you?" With tons of girls clamoring to be with him, why would he give Willow special treatment?

Charmaine's doubt struck a nerve with Willow.

"Mom, what's that supposed to mean? Am I not worthy of someone's love?" How can she think that of me?

Charmaine held Willow's hand gently and comforted her, "Willi, that's not what I meant. I'm just worried about you due to Clayton's bad reputation."

I don't doubt the influence of the Zales family in Jipsdale, but Clayton is an infamous playboy who is surrounded by girls everywhere he goes. Thus, are his feelings for Willow true?

"I know everyone has a bad impression of him, but it doesn't matter, for I'll be the one whom he settles down with." Willow knew she had no control over the past. All that mattered was that he would change for the better once both of them were together.

"All right now, you should go. If you have time, get yourself some new clothes. You don't want to be outshone by the girls who are throwing themselves at Clayton." Charmaine had barely spoken when she handed Willow a card.

"There's five hundred thousand in here. Buy whatever you fancy. If there's a need, get Clayton a present too."

Willow took the card gleefully.

When she was together with Mason, her mother didn't pay much attention to her.

In contrast to then, Charmaine had now given her a card with five hundred thousand inside.

“That’s all, run along now. I’ll keep an eye on things here. There’s no need for you to be around.” All you’ll end up doing is getting into an argument with Sophie.

“Fine, I’m off then. When Grandpa awakes, tell him that I dropped by. Otherwise, he will think that Sophie is the only one who’s concerned about him.” I care about him too, all right?

Charmaine furrowed her brows as she watched Willow leave in delight. Deep down, she prayed that her daughter would succeed this time.

Given what happened to Mason, she no longer has any chance with him.

In fact, Constance had even given Charmaine a call. It was just that the latter didn’t dare pick up.

Now that Willow had a new target, Charmaine stopped planning for her and Mason to get back together even if his leg recovered.

Upon returning to the ward, Charmaine saw Sophie chatting with Josiah, who looked to have recovered a lot.

“Dad, Willa came to see you just now. Since you were sleeping, I took the liberty to tell her to leave.”

Worried that Josiah’s resentment for Willow would grow, Charmaine quickly made an excuse on the latter’s behalf.

“As the university entrance exam is approaching, you had better remind her to focus on her studies and not go gallivanting around.” Even though he wasn’t at home, Josiah was kept informed of Willow’s affairs by Morgan.

“Dad, how can you say that about Willa? She has always been a good girl. You shouldn’t accuse her of gallivanting outside.” That’s not an appropriate statement to make.

“It’s true that she’s a good girl but unfortunate that both of you have spoiled her.” Ever since she was young, all she cared about was fawning upon the powerful instead of learning a proper skill. Moreover, it will only get worse when she grows up.

Even though Charmaine was upset with Josiah’s comment, there was nothing she could do about it.

“All right now. You should head home too. As Morgan is here, there’s no need for you to stay.” Over the years, Charmaine had done a lot for the family. However, it was just a shame that she was too narrow-minded.

Although she wasn’t oblivious to Josiah’s resentment of her, Charmaine was still disturbed by how he reprimanded her.

“Dad, I know you have never liked me, but I have already done my best. There’s nothing more I can do to change your mind.” Just as Charmaine spoke, she left with a pitiful silhouette.

Josiah let out a sigh.

“Grandpa, what’s wrong?” Sophie asked attentively.

“Oh, Sophie! Do I really demand too much of your mom?” Josiah began to grow unsure of himself.

Sophie didn’t know what to say.

“There, there. Let’s not talk about that. Anyway, why didn’t I see Tanny today? Is he busy?” One didn’t need to be a genius to know how occupied Tristan was. After spending the last few days focused on Josiah, there was a huge backlog of work at Lombard Group that needed his attention.

“Mm-hmm, he will be busy for the next few days.” Lombard Group had recently made an investment worth a few billion.

Chapter 173 Tristan Has Not Tasted The Holy Grail

“Tell Tanny that if he’s bogged down by work, he doesn’t have to come, as I’m almost fully recovered.” There’s no need for him to be at two places at the same time.

“I will. You should focus on resting and not worry about such matters.” No sooner had Sophie finished than the door opened with Morgan and Tristan walking in.

One could tell from the tailor-made suit he was wearing that he had come from the office.

Tristan looked so dashing in his outfit that it was hard for anyone to peel their eyes away.

“Mr. Tristan, please have a seat. I’ll take care of these.” Morgan took over the dinner that Tristan had brought with him.

“Why did you come? Aren’t you supposed to be busy?”

“I have to be here regardless of how busy I am. Besides, it’s not anything that’s particularly important. So, Old Mr. Tanner, how do you feel today?” Tristan asked with concern.

“Tanny, I’m almost fully recovered and will be discharged in a few days. There’s no need to trouble yourself traveling back and forth.” Both of them were exhausted, fussing over Josiah’s affairs. “You too, Soph. It’s about time you go back to school. Your exams kick off on Monday.”

At the end of the day, she was still a student who should be prioritizing her studies.

Furthermore, the one-month deadline was almost upon her. Can I really take on the role of acting CEO of Tanner Group? Those were the issues that were constantly on her mind.

“Mm-hmm. I know. I’ll be punctual for my exams on Monday.” No matter what, she resolved to participate in the physics competition that was going to be held after the holidays.

“My point is for you to go to school tomorrow. Even though you have a good grasp of your lessons, the revisions for the term exam are still very important. As my granddaughter, you always have to take everything you do seriously. Do you understand?”

To him, the result was secondary. What mattered was that she would always do her best.

Sophie fell silent.

“What’s wrong? Aren’t you going to listen to me? Have dinner with me now, and get Tanny to send you back home to rest so that you can attend school tomorrow.”

“All right. In that case, promise me that you’ll obey whatever Arius says in the hospital.”

Sophie’s mind was put at ease after placing him under Arius’ care. Coincidentally, he had yet to return to Anglandur.

“Fine. I promise.”

Once they were done with dinner, Tristan drove Sophie back to Wisteria Apartments.

“Rest early.” Tristan had to leave as he had other engagements.

“Mr. Tristan, about Clayton, do you need me—”

“It’s fine. I can handle him.” Tristan reassured her, “Everything is under control.”

Clayton is no more than an insect who doesn’t even deserve my attention.

“Anyway, I’m heading back out.”

“Mm-hmm. Go ahead.” When Sophie walked to the door to see him out, she gave him a curious look when he hesitated to leave.

What is he waiting for?

“Mr. Tristan, is there anything else?”

Reaching out his hand, Tristan pulled her into his arms before giving her a kiss on her forehead.

“What am I to do? At the sight of you, I no longer want to leave. Instead, I feel the urge to stay by your side.”

Sophie was rendered speechless.

How is this my fault? I didn’t even do anything!

“Mr. Tristan!” Sophie gently pushed him away before staggering back. “Go!”

“In that case, just give me a kiss. Once you kiss me, I’ll be motivated to leave.” Tristan decided to adopt a different approach.

Nonetheless, the sudden change in his demeanor gave Sophie a shock.

“Mr. Tristan!” Even though she had developed feelings for him, it was still not in her character to wear her heart on her sleeve.

Tristan sighed in resignation.

“It’s all right. I’ll wait for the day when you’ll take the initiative.” Tristan planted the gentlest of pecks on her lips before leaving quickly.

If he didn't leave soon, he was worried that he would be overwhelmed by his growing desire to stay.

By the time Tristan arrived at Blossom Garden, the other three were already waiting. Felix quickly pulled out a bench to welcome him.

"Didn't we agree to meet in twenty minutes? What took you so long? Were you doing something unspeakable with Sophie?"

"Felix, what are you thinking? If both of them were really doing it, it would be impossible for Mr. Tristan to get here in twenty minutes. At the very least, he would need two hours. My guess is that Mr. Tristan hasn't yet tasted the Holy Grail," Charles teased.

Without any hesitation, Sean nodded while adding, "That's true. With Mr. Tristan's stamina, two hours would be the minimum."

Felix, too, nodded in agreement.

"Mr. Tristan, I'm sorry to have underestimated your capabilities. Given how enamored you are with Sophie, I'm sure Sophie will not be able to escape your clutches for three days and nights during your first escapade together.

Felix had barely finished when the other three burst into laughter.

"The three of you look like you're enjoying yourselves. Now that my enemy is at my gates, all of you don't seem to be bothered, is that it?" Despite Tristan's calm tone, it was enough to send a chill down everyone's spine.

"Mr. Tristan, Clayton is desperate to make his presence felt. Since he has a death wish, why don't you help him along his journey?"

Despite the Zales family's influence, they were still insignificant insects compared to them.

Sean nodded.

“Exactly! The Zales family is no match for us at all.” Even though Clayton might prove troublesome, he didn’t pose a threat to their combined strength.

“Mm-hmm. Since he wants to play, let’s oblige him. Besides, my hand is itching to get back into the game after so long.” A devious look descended upon Charles’ face.

Since he had his dinner with Sophie, all Tristan did was pour himself a glass of wine.

“Mr. Tristan, when you busied yourself with Old Mr. Tanner’s affairs over the last few days. I must say that I have never seen you care so much about anyone.” At that moment, Sean felt that Tristan was serious.

“Love makes people blind,” Felix joked.

“Felix, look who’s talking? You had better mind your own affairs. Despite watching Ysabelle grow up, you have yet to achieve any success,” Charles ridiculed him mercilessly.

Stumped, Felix felt disheartened over the comment. Nonetheless, there was little he could do, as Charles had spoken the truth!

Subsequently, the group discussed the massive investment committed by Lombard Group.

“This time, Clayton must be coveting that same investment.” Despite his lackadaisical attitude toward his affairs with Ysabelle, Felix was extremely competent at work.

“He already has his eyes on it. Since he intends to come in, we should let him do so. This time, I’ll make sure he throws up whatever he manages to chew off.” Clayton had struck a nerve of his.

“Mr. Tristan, you seemed to be particularly concerned this time.” This wasn’t the first time Clayton targeted Lombard Group. It was just that Tristan wasn’t bothered by his previous attempts.

“He is now trying to get close to Willow, but she isn’t his true objective.”

Just as expected, it’s all about Sophie. Only she can elicit such a response from him.

The next day, when Sophie came out of Wisteria Apartments, she saw Clayton sending Willow to school.

At the sight of Sophie, he stopped his car on purpose.

“Isn’t that your sister? Ask her to get in the car,” Clayton ordered Willow.

Chapter 174 Sophie The Savage

Willow stared at Clayton in puzzlement.

“Why do you want her to get in? We’re already almost at school. There’s no need to give her a ride.” She was rather fearful of Clayton’s demands.

“Did you not hear me? We’re not even a couple yet, and you’re already not listening to me. Why should I keep you by my side, then? Remember, I only like obedient women.” The man appeared nonchalant, but his words were more than enough to instill terror within Willow.

“Clayton...” She gazed at him, not knowing what to do. What does he mean? Is he interested in Sophie?

Clayton said nothing more. He merely tapped on the steering wheel from time to time, looking surprisingly patient.

Under his watch, Willow called out to her sister, “Sophie! Hop in! Let’s go to school together.”

Yet, Sophie walked straight in the direction of their school without even looking up.

Willow balled her hands into fists.

She's horrible! How could she humiliate me like that?

Being ignored like that in the presence of Clayton, she felt her cheeks burn in embarrassment.

"Clayton, I..."

"School's about to start. You should get going," Clayton responded, paying no heed to what had just happened.

Willow grabbed her bag, hopped down, and stared at him from beside the car.

"Go on," the man added with a wave.

"You go first. I'll leave after you do," Willow insisted as she shot him a loving look.

With that, Clayton drove off immediately.

It looks like I won't be able to get close to Sophie through Willow. I'll have to think of another way.

His phone rang as soon as he began driving.

"Hey, Clayton, didn't you ask me to keep a lookout for Phantom? I've gotten my hands on some new intel. Phantom's currently in Jipsdale."

“Got it. I’m on my way.” Clayton sped up upon receiving news about Phantom, a figure who had captured his interest. This was the closest they’d been to the renowned hacker. If we can get Phantom to help us, the upcoming investment’s going to be a success.

Meanwhile, Lombard Group had also received word about Phantom.

“Mr. Tristan, it looks like Clayton Zales is also on the hunt for Phantom, who hacked into Zales Corporation’s system last night.”

“What?”

Phantom... You really are a mystery. Why did you do that? Are you interested in Zales Corporation?

“Clayton’s currently gathering all his forces to get a hold of Phantom.”

Any financial group that could get its hands on Phantom, the founder of Wings of Light, would instantly be rich.

“It’s been a long time since Phantom last appeared. What’s going on this time? Find Phantom before Clayton does.”

He had gone up against Phantom on several occasions, only to lose them every time.

“All right. By the way, Mr. Tristan, do you think Phantom’s a guy or a girl?”

“How would I know?”

“If it were actually a girl, I’d say she’s a monster.” Many large financial groups in Jipsdale had tried to locate her but to no avail.

“What’s there to be afraid of? Don’t you think smart girls are cute?”

Given her hacking skills, she's probably a genius.

"Well, no matter how smart Phantom is, she's nothing compared to you, Mr. Tristan." Felix couldn't help but suck up to his boss.

"How about you start thinking of a way to locate Phantom instead of trying to win some brownie points?"

In truth, Tristan had nothing to fear even if Phantom were to join forces with Clayton. It would still be troublesome, though.

"Okay. I'll get right to it."

Unfortunately, Phantom always left as quickly as she showed up, which left Tristan in a bind.

Meanwhile, Willow waited for Clayton's car to disappear completely before running toward Sophie and grabbing the latter by her hoodie.

"What's with you, Sophie? I know you're jealous of me, but how could you embarrass me like that? Don't you know how important Clayton is to me?"

This d*mned woman. Why is she always so conceited?

Sophie's face clouded over as soon as she felt her hoodie being seized.

"Let go."

Willow jumped in fright at her sister's grim expression, but she refused to let go of her.

“Sophie, no matter what happens, I’m still your sister. How could you treat me like this? I’m saying this for your own good.”

With onlookers surrounding them, Willow immediately put on a façade. She could never let others know her true colors, no matter what.

“Forget it, Willow. You may treat her as your sister, but she’ll never do the same. All she does is take what’s yours. You’re better off without a sister like her.”

“Exactly! Not everyone will be grateful for what you do. Someone like Sophie deserves to die alone.”

“Do you hear that, Sophie? This is what you look like in other people’s eyes. I know you don’t like me, but it’s not like you can do anything about that,” Willow remarked smugly.

You had your way the last time just because there was no one around, but what can you do to me in front of all these people now?

Sophie’s brows creased. Why is she always spouting so much crap? Well, if she doesn’t want this hand of hers anymore, I’ll grant her wish.

Suddenly, she grabbed Willow’s hand and bent it.

“Ahhhh!” the latter shrieked, her face turning pale.

She didn’t think Sophie would dare hurt her in front of all these people.

However, Sophie hadn’t done much; she had only bent Willow’s hand lightly, but the latter felt as though her wrist had been broken.

The crowd had also seen how softly Sophie had curved Willow’s wrist, but for some reason, the older sister appeared to be in so much pain that she broke out in a cold sweat.

“What the hell is wrong with you, Sophie? She’s still your older sister! How could you attack her like that?”

“You heartless witch!”

“Are you okay, Willow?” A few girls who often hung out with Willow immediately expressed their concern, although they dared not approach Sophie.

“Let go of me, Sophie,” Willow croaked between gasps of air. “Let go!”

Having not bothered Sophie for a while before this, Willow seemed to have forgotten how ruthless the former could be.

“What’s wrong now? Where did that smug look on your face go, huh?”

Willow began to tear up.

“You broke my wrist, Sophie. I’m an artist. Don’t you know how much my hand means to me? How could you do this to me?” she whimpered. Though it was partially an act, she was feeling genuinely afraid. What am I going to do if I can’t draw anymore?

Seeing how anguished Willow looked, everyone began to rebuke Sophie.

Yet, Sophie merely smirked.

“I broke your wrist? Are you sure about that? How about you call a doctor over and find out if it’s really broken? Since you love putting on a show that much, I’ll let you keep going.”

“Don’t be afraid, Willow. I’ll call a doctor and get him to come over right now. We’ll sue her if she really broke your wrist.”

One of Willow's watchdogs immediately phoned the hospital. Then, everyone stayed behind, waiting for the doctor to arrive.

Nobody moved even though classes were about to begin, and that garnered the attention of the school authorities.

Chapter 175 Exposing Her Schemes

The homeroom teachers of both Senior Class 1 and 8 had arrived, and the former's expression turned grim when she saw what had happened to Willow.

The woman naturally knew that the two were siblings.

But since this ordeal had taken place in school, the teachers were responsible for addressing any conflict that arose between the sisters.

"Are you okay, Willow? Try moving your hand. Can you do that?"

Jenny Calkins, the homeroom teacher of Senior Class 1, knew how far the Tanner family had gone to nurture Willow's artistic abilities. If she's really hurt her hand and can't draw anymore because of that, her life will be ruined.

As soon as Willow lifted her hand, tears streamed down her cheeks from the resulting pain.

"I really can't, Ms. Calkins. What should I do?" Willow replied in agony. "You know I'm training to be an artist. If anything happens to my hand..."

Jenny's heart ached at the way Willow choked on her words. She's never done anything bad ever since she came to my class. She's such a good girl, but this just had to happen to her.

“Sophie, no matter what gets between you two, Willow is still your sister. Why did you do this to her? What good would it bring you to break her wrist? I get that Willow’s always been an incredible student, and you might be jealous of her, but still!”

“I don’t think that’s something you should say, Ms. Calkins. We don’t even know what happened yet. How could you start accusing Sophie before getting a clear view of things here?” Derrick refuted

immediately upon hearing the way Jenny spoke to Sophie.

Both homeroom teachers had arrived after hearing the news from their students, which meant neither of them had witnessed the event with their own eyes.

“Mr. Hayes, I know you’ve always been protective of your students, but we both know that the school has always paid attention to both Sophie and Willow. Willow’s an outstanding girl, and everyone knows that. As for Sophie, she may have gotten second place in the exams, but she’s known for being savage and doesn’t have much of a good reputation. Look at what Willow is going through now! Don’t you have any sense of responsibility at all? Should we overlook a person’s character just because they get good grades? So what if someone like Sophie ends up going to the best college there is? She’d only be a menace to society!”

“Ms. Calkins, I’m asking you to focus on the facts. The truth is none of us know what actually happened. All I want is to find out the exact situation before coming to a decision, so what does it have to do with me being protective? If Sophie is really at fault, I’ll be sure to make her apologize to Willow,” Derrick stated firmly.

While it was true that many events had transpired ever since Sophie had joined his class, she had only ever acted in an attempt to defend herself. Never had she instigated any trouble.

“Tell me what happened, Sophie.”

Derrick spoke gently so as to not frighten the young woman.

“Nothing much, really. She just pulled me by my hoodie. If you guys don’t believe me, you can always check the cameras. Isn’t there one right over there?” Sophie explained while pointing to a surveillance camera above her.

“Everyone saw what you did, Sophie! You’re the one who grabbed my hand!” Willow yelled in response.

“Everyone can find out the truth by checking the camera. What’s wrong? Do you actually think I can alter the surveillance footage?”

Unable to steer each other’s opinions, Derrick and Jenny eventually resorted to checking the surveillance cameras. Lo and behold, it was Willow who had started it all.

Everyone else fell silent after seeing the footage.

What else could they say when the truth had been laid bare in front of them?

Jenny glanced at Willow.

“Willow, you...”

The latter began to panic as she noticed the look of disappointment in her teacher’s eyes.

“Let me explain, Ms. Calkins.”

At that very moment, a doctor arrived and gave Willow a check-up.

“How is she, Doctor? Will she still be able to draw?” Regardless of who had started the fight, what mattered most now was the condition of Willow’s hand.

The doctor merely turned to them with a frown.

“What happened to her hand, Doctor? Is she okay?” Jenny prompted anxiously.

The doctor let go of Willow’s hand.

“Did you guys deliberately call a doctor over thinking we have all the time in the world? Her hand’s perfectly fine. There’s nothing wrong with her,” he responded, furious at how these students were wasting medical resources.

“What?”

Jenny’s expression took an immediate turn.

As the doctor left, everyone turned to Willow.

“So, what’s Willow trying to do?”

“There’s nothing wrong with her hand, but she kept saying it was broken and that she wouldn’t be able to draw anymore. She was clearly trying to frame Sophie.”

“That’s right. She’s just jealous of her sister!”

“Yeah. Remember the incident with the photos?”

“You mean the photos Angie sent? If I remember correctly, Angie uses an Android phone, but those photos were probably taken with an iPhone.”

“I would’ve forgotten about this if you hadn’t brought it up. Doesn’t Willow use an iPhone?”

“This is a wild guess, but do you guys think Willow was the one who took those photos? That’s a terrifying thought if it were true.”

Willow’s gaze darkened as she heard the discussion.

Everything was supposed to go according to my plan! What the hell’s going on now?

“All right, everyone. Get back to class! The show’s over,” Jenny announced while eyeing Willow in dismay.

“I really didn’t do it, Ms. Calkins. I don’t know what’s wrong with my hand either, but it hurts so much.”

Willow frantically raised her arm.

“Willow, I know Sophie does really well in school, and there’s always going to be some competition between sisters. However, I’m truly disappointed in you this time.”

Not wanting to say anything more, Jenny turned and left.

The first period was Jenny’s class, so the other students followed her.

Willow was about to leave too, but the students of Senior Class 8 immediately held her back. They weren’t going to let her leave after she had put on such an act.

“What are you guys doing?” Her wrist was still in pain, and yet the doctor had said there was nothing wrong with it.

Is Sophie that influential? What’s the cause of it?

“You really are a pretentious b*tch, Willow. What were you going on about earlier? Something about how Sophie broke your wrist?”

“Right? You’ve been trying to do Sophie dirty ever since she came back. Shouldn’t you be apologizing to her now?”

“Don’t even think about leaving without an apology! You think you can mess with us?” Did she assume the students of Senior Class 8 were a bunch of pushovers?

Chapter 176 That Body And Face

Willow’s eyes widened in disbelief.

What are they trying to do?

“Don’t go too far! We’re in school now. Are you going to let your students pick on me like this, Mr. Hayes?” she reminded, turning to Derrick.

Yet, the teacher turned his head to the other side, pretending as though he hadn’t heard anything. This girl is too much. She hasn’t stopped trying to hurt Sophie after all this while.

Willow was speechless.

She didn’t think such a fair teacher like Derrick would ever treat her this way.

“You guys...” Willow hastily put on a teary face, acting as though she was the subject of everyone’s bullying.

“Enough with the act. We’re not Mason.”

“Apologize to Sophie now. We still have class to attend!” Despite having spent over four months with Sophie, her classmates had still fallen for Willow’s pathetic little act—until realization finally dawned on them.

Willow turned to Sophie.

Then, she remained quiet as though the whole situation had nothing to do with her, even though she was the one who caused it in the first place.

“Sophie, there has to be some sort of misunderstanding.”

After remaining silent for a long while, Willow finally spoke while clenching her fists.

“Misunderstanding? What is there to misunderstand? That’s not what you said when Ms. Calkins was still here.”

“Exactly! Weren’t you being so obnoxious just a while ago? How was all that a misunderstanding?”

“You couldn’t even tell whether or not your wrist was broken?”

“But my hand still hurts till now! What if that doctor...” Willow still felt the pain on her wrist, but as she saw the contemptuous looks on everyone’s faces, she found herself unable to justify herself. “Sophie!”

You must be thrilled to see me like this, huh?

“You should all go now. Class is starting,” Sophie declared, getting everyone to leave.

Willow certainly hadn’t expected Sophie’s classmates to back her up today.

Wasn’t everyone supposed to hate her? Didn’t they look down on her because of her past?

“You should come too, Sophie. Finals are just around the corner. You’ve missed so many days of class, so it’s best you catch up.”

Derrick had high hopes for her.

“I will.” The only teacher Sophie still respected would have to be him.

Now, only she and Willow were left.

Sophie took one step closer toward the latter.

Willow immediately stepped back in caution. She didn’t know what Sophie could have done that the doctor found nothing wrong with her wrist, but she was now terrified of her own sister.

Sophie merely sneered at how scared the other young woman looked.

“What are you smiling about? What are you trying to pull? What the hell did you do back there? Are you trying to get back at me now?” Willow questioned, her voice trembling.

She didn’t know what to do now.

“If you’re that afraid of me, why do you keep getting on my nerves? Do you care so little about yourself?”

You know you can’t afford to mess with me, but you keep doing it anyway. Doesn’t that show how little regard you have for your own well-being?

“You!”

She dare talk to me like that?

"I never gave you my time of day because I felt no need to. Have you forgotten about the photo incident? How's Angie doing now? I bet things aren't going too well for her."

Sophie was naturally aware of Angie's current situation.

At the mention of the latter, Willow's heart began to race.

"What's the point of saying all this, Sophie? Do you have any proof?"

"Proof? Do I look like I need any? I can make that hand of yours unable to draw for the rest of your life if I want to."

Sophie's smile widened as she saw all the color drain from Willow's face.

"So, get on with your life, and don't try to mess with people you can't afford to." With that, Sophie left imposingly.

Willow gritted her teeth in rage.

"D*mmit!"

She swung her leg at a nearby tree. However, the large tree remained motionless while she bent over to clutch her foot in agony.

Tears spilled down the sides of her eyes as she boiled with resentment.

Why? Why do I keep losing to her these days?

Meanwhile, Sophie grew bored after two revision classes. Given how she could remember all these things with one glance, there was really no need for any revision. Thus, she put on her earphones as usual and sprawled on her desk.

A while later, the young woman felt a knock on her desk, and she looked up to see Bailey.

This was their first time meeting again after the events that had transpired.

Bailey seemed to have grown taller again, but this time, his eyes looked much bleaker.

“Can I help you?”

I clearly told him back then that I’m not interested in him. What is he here for this time?

“I heard your grandpa had an operation, but I haven’t had the chance to visit him. Is he doing okay? And... Are you doing okay?” In truth, he just wanted to know how she was doing. That was why he had

come looking for her right after learning she had returned to school.

“I’m okay. Thanks for your concern.”

“I’m really sorry for what happened that time, Sophie. Can we still be friends? Just friends. I want to stay by your side,” Bailey continued. He really wanted to be around her.

Sophie fell into a brief silence.

She wouldn’t have minded remaining in contact with him if she didn’t know he liked her. But now that she knew about his feelings for her, there was no way she could be friends with him.

“I don’t need another friend, Bailey.”

Bailey’s eyes had just lit up with the slightest bit of hope a moment ago, but now, all of the light vanished as the young man heard Sophie’s response.

“Okay...”

Sophie wasn't sure if she was doing the right thing, but she didn't want to give him any false hope.

“We're not meant to be.”

Since she wasn't interested in him, it was better for her to be honest, lest she end up leading him on and hurting him.

“I know.”

She wasn't going to give him a single chance.

“Here.”

Bailey took a pack of chewing gum out of his pocket. It was her favorite flavor.

He then left after handing it to her.

The students of Senior Class 8 didn't think Bailey would come to see Sophie. He looked so humble standing in front of her like that. He must really like her!

“Hey, what's so good about Sophie? Aren't her body and face the only good things she has going for her? But it's not like she's out of Bailey's league! Why did he look so modest standing in front of her?”

“Well, like you said, she has that body and face. What kind of guy wouldn't want that?”

“You guys aren’t exactly right either. Sophie’s more than that. She ranks second in our grade and is joining the physics competition. That makes her on par with Bailey in terms of intelligence. Honestly, I think they’d make a good couple!”

Nothing was impossible.

It didn’t take Whitlea long to find out who her son had gone to see.

The vice principal, Franky, approached her at once. “Sophie’s got too much of an influence on Bailey, Mdm. Dixon. If this keeps up...”

Chapter 177 Let Us Go At It Again

Whitlea took out a cigarette from the cigarette box. At once, Franky snagged a lighter and lit the cigarette for her.

“Since Sophie is so stubborn, bring a few men over to put the fear of God into her.” Whitlea’s father was part of the underworld, so she emanated an ominous aura as well.

“Sure! Don’t worry, Mdm. Dixon. I’ll definitely teach her a lesson so that she’ll never dare to appear before Mr. Dixon again!”

Franky immediately seized that opportunity. As long as I yank Andy down, the position of principal for Jipsdale Premier High will be mine!

For him to become the principal of Jipsdale Premier High, he would undoubtedly require Whitlea’s help.

As such, he had been monitoring Bailey’s every move at school, just to get close to the woman.

“Go!” Whitlea’s expectations toward Bailey had always been sky-high, and he had really disappointed her recently.

After the self-study session at night, Sophie and Ysabelle exited the classroom together. Ysabelle had been downcast these days, for her father had been restricting her too much.

“Soph, how I wish I could go to a place where no one could find me! Then, I’ll be able to do whatever I like.”

I just want to sing. It’s not like I want to do something bad. Why is Dad so adamantly opposed to it?

“If you really want to be a singer, Ysabelle, stick to your guns. Your dream will only come true if you persist.”

Ysabelle stared at her.

“I truly envy you, Soph. I’m jealous that you can do whatever you please.” Perhaps it was because she had glimpsed such insouciance in Sophie’s eyes back then that she had done everything possible to befriend her.

“Ysabelle, you can become the best singer in the world. Oh yes, The Wheelers is having a concert tomorrow. I’ll bring you there!”

The Wheelers was all the rage presently, so every single concert by the band was incendiary.

As long as it was for a concert by The Wheelers, it was difficult to even obtain a ticket.

“How I wish! I tried to get a ticket last night, but I failed to buy any.”

Ysabelle was entirely crestfallen. The Wheelers is really too popular. The main vocalist, Mark, is even renowned across Chanaea. He’s the dream man of many girls!

“I’ve got tickets.” Mark had someone send tickets to Sophie a week ago, but she hadn’t planned on going back then.

Since Ysabelle had been depressed recently, she decided to accompany her to the concert.

“Really?” Ysabelle seemed to have come to life the instant she heard that Sophie had tickets. After all, she idolized The Wheelers.

“Yup!”

Sure enough, she’s young and guileless that she’s so easily appeased!

By the time they reached the school gates, the car belonging to the Lombard family was already idling there. Seeing that the driver was already waiting for her, Ysabelle couldn’t help heaving a sigh.

However, her good mood rebounded at the thought that she would be attending The Wheelers’ concert tomorrow night.

“Soph, have my uncle pick me up tomorrow night, okay? Otherwise, it’s very likely that I won’t be able to get out of the house.” She hankered for a revolution, but it was beyond her capabilities.

At that, Sophie chuckled.

“Okay! Don’t worry. I’ll have your uncle pick you up.”

But... will Tristan be willing to attend such a concert with us?

“All right. I’m going home, then! Go back and rest earlier as well!”

After getting into the car, Ysabelle even stuck her hand out and waved at Sophie.

Subsequently, Sophie headed back to Wisteria Apartments. No sooner had she taken a few steps than she noticed someone tailing her. Verily, she was sick of such tricks.

Can't they be more innovative? They only tail me every single time, yet they can't do anything to me.

She stopped short and leaned back against the wall, waiting for those people following her to make an appearance.

Sure enough, the few men tailing her rushed out upon seeing that she wasn't moving anymore. It was a few burly men with petrifying tattoos on their arms.

Taking out a strip of chewing gum, Sophie ripped the wrapper off and popped it into her mouth. It's been a long time since I've last gotten some exercise. They came at just the perfect time!

"Do you know who we are, girly?"

Sophie hadn't even an iota of interest in engaging in such dumb conversation, for it wasn't the least bit significant.

"Is something the matter?" Sophie asked bluntly. "If you want to fight, just come at me together."

Don't they find it boring to play a such silly game when they're all strong and strapping men?

"How dare you?"

Huh? This script is wholly different from what we imagined.

Before Sophie had the chance to make her move, Bailey appeared beside her and shielded her behind him.

"Who ordered the lot of you to come here? I've said that no one is allowed to hurt her." Bailey had known that his mother would never let Sophie off the hook.

He had followed her as well when he saw her leaving with Ysabelle after the self-study session at night. Never had he expected to witness such a scene for real.

“Mr. Dixon...”

At the sight of him, the few burly men grew somewhat flustered. They all knew his temperament, but it was Whitlea’s orders. For that reason, they couldn’t do anything about it either.

“Mr. Dixon, Ms. Whitlea is only doing this for your own good. Please don’t make things difficult for us and go home quickly instead! We promise we aren’t going to hurt her. We merely want to scare her for a bit.”

Scare her?

“Well, the lot of you indeed look rather scary.” If a kid were to behold their countenances, he would probably burst into tears in fright.

“How dare you?” Argh! Why are her remarks all so irritating? No matter what, we all have normal facial features. How could she make personal attacks on us? This is too much! She’s really going too far!

“Look, Mr. Dixon! We aren’t the ones who want to pick on her. It’s the other way round!”

How can there be such a girl? We all look like tough nuts at a single glance, okay? Yet, she dared claim that we are lacking in the looks department!

Ignoring them, Bailey urged Sophie, “Go home first, Sophie!”

It’s very late, so she should go home and rest.

Sophie cast a glance at the few men, but she wasn’t certain whether he could handle them.

“You don’t have to bother about me, Bailey.” Really, there’s no need for him to strain his relationship with Whitlea because of me. Ultimately, she’s still his mother.

Bailey shook his head.

“I’m to be blamed for this incident. How can I sit idly by and do nothing? No matter what, I must interfere in this!”

“Mr. Dixon, you’ll definitely be hauled over the coals when you go home if you do so.” Is he still not familiar with Ms. Whitlea’s temperament? He’ll only suffer if he continues to persist.

“In that case, pardon me for my actions!” Sophie pulled the hood of her sweater over her head before she pushed Bailey away. If I beat them all up, Whitlea won’t blame him anymore, will she?

“Sophie!” Panic swamped Bailey. Crap! She has no idea about their line of work in the past! They’re all brutal and vicious!

To his surprise, Sophie wasn’t the least bit inferior to them.

They were ruthless when they attacked her, but she was even more merciless.

They were terrifying, but she was even more horrifying than them.

Sophie stacked them all together. Then she casually dusted her hands.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve last had such a workout. Get up. Let’s go at it again!”

Chapter 178 Scooting Away

The few burly men stared at Sophie in horror.

We're now bruised and battered, yet she wants to go again? Who exactly is she? She's just too terrifying!

"Shall we have another go?" Sophie inquired once more. She had been too tired these days, so she was a tad drowsy then. Yawning nonchalantly, she swept a gaze over the few men.

"We're sorry for intruding on you, Ms. Tanner! Please have mercy on us!" Oh my God, she's really frightening!

They had a reputation in the underworld, but when it came to her, they weren't even enough for her to work up a sweat.

"Why are you still here, then? Scoot! Do you know how to do that?"

"What?"

This is too much! Is she really asking us to scoot?

Some were still hesitating when they saw that Scarface had already started scooting away.

"Scarface!" What? He's actually doing as she said? "Where are your principles? Is this really appropriate?"

Scarface glanced over his shoulder at the man.

"You've got principles, yes? Then, you stay there! Why are you butting into my business?"

Hah! I know I can never defeat Ms. Tanner!

He was really scooting by dragging himself along the ground.

After all, one had to be quick-witted and adapt to the situation. Since Scarface wasn't Sophie's match, he decided to admit defeat. Besides, her blows hurt like hell!

"I—" The fierce-looking man who spoke promptly went silent.

Okay, then. I used to feel that I was pretty incredible in the past, but things are different now. The Dixon family isn't the same anymore either. Fine, I'll scoot!

Gratification finally flooded Sophie as she watched the few burly men scooting away on the curb.

Meanwhile, Bailey was wholly stunned at the side. He had never seen that side of her.

Yet, such a side of her rendered her all the more alluring.

Turning back, Sophie instinctively touched her face when she saw him looking at her so intently.

Is there something on my face that he's staring at me fixedly?

"Is there something on my face?" she asked when he was still staring after a long time had passed. There should be nothing on my face, yes?

"No, there's nothing. I merely feel that you're seemingly shining brightly right now." At long last, Bailey understood why so many people liked her. Verily, she was too mesmerizing.

Sophie went silent.

She really didn't know what to say in response to that comment.

The moment she turned around, she was greeted by the sight of Tristan.

It was uncertain how long he had been standing there. Without uttering a word, Sophie went over to him and queried, "Why didn't you tell me that you were coming over?"

"I missed you, so I came over."

At once, words eluded Sophie.

When it came to the man, she still couldn't be as calm and unruffled as she was with others.

Hence, she inexorably flushed bright red upon hearing that.

"Mr. Tristan..." Gah! Can he not say something like that? And why must he look so seductive in everything he does?

"What's wrong? I just missed you."

"Okay, I got it."

Sophie's face flamed.

She whirled around and said to Bailey, "If there's nothing else, I'll be leaving."

"Sophie." Bailey wasn't willing to admit defeat, but he noticed that the look in her eyes when she gazed at Tristan was different.

Sophie arched an eyebrow.

"Is something else the matter?"

In the end, Bailey shook his head.

"I won't allow them to disrupt your life again." No matter what, this matter shall end here.

"It doesn't matter to me."

After saying that, Sophie left with Tristan.

Bailey stared at their backs. The man was tall and handsome, giving off a sense of intense dependability. The girl, on the other hand, was cold in nature, but she exuded a sense of warmth before the man.

So, she... likes him? Nothing I say or do will make any difference.

"Whitlea came to bother you again." It looks like she's been too free recently. I can keep her occupied.

"Yeah. You know the kind of person she is. Once something doesn't progress according to her plan, she'll definitely make trouble." Frankly speaking, Sophie really didn't have anything good to say about Whitlea.

"Well, be careful about Clayton these days. Whitlea isn't much of a threat, but Clayton is truly irritating."

"Okay, I got it. You don't need to worry about me."

Sophie knew that Clayton wasn't a good man, and she might be the reason he was hooking up with Willow.

Alas, Willow was exceedingly confident, so she wouldn't believe whatever Sophie said.

The two of them went back to Wisteria Apartments together. Sophie went for a bath while Tristan took out his laptop and settled Lombard Group's business matters.

When Sophie came out after her bath, she saw the man answering his emails while reclining against the couch. He was incredibly focused, so much so that she couldn't take her eyes off him. He's too perfect!

"It's very late. Are you going home?" She really didn't mean anything else when she said that. She was merely asking an innocent question.

From the look in his eyes, however, she knew that he had obviously misunderstood her.

"I didn't mean anything else. Just carry on."

Forget it. He's a man overflowing with testosterone in the first place, so he'll give others such an illusion even if he does nothing at all.

Taking her hand, Tristan pulled her into his arms.

"What's wrong? Is it very tricky?" It was the first time Sophie had ever seen him toiling at something.

"It's still manageable." But it's just rather troublesome. Truth be told, it wasn't that easy to eliminate Clayton, as the foundations of the organizations in Jipsdale were deep-rooted and their networks were intricate. In fact, it was extremely challenging.

Seeing that he was seemingly exhausted, Sophie reached out and gently massaged his temples.

"This feels good!" Tristan couldn't help sighing. He lay down and rested his head on her long and slender legs, allowing her to massage him.

Closing his eyes, he luxuriated in her tenderness at that moment.

Without realizing it, he drifted off to sleep.

As Sophie gazed at the man who had fallen asleep on her lap, a sense of unprecedented peace suffused her. Such a feeling made her feel reluctant to lose it.

She was aware that it was very late then, so she should wake him up and have him go home. Then, she could also go to bed.

However, she couldn't bring herself to do so at the sight of his peaceful expression. Instead, she wanted to wallow in such warmth and never wake up.

When Tristan woke up after sleeping for a little over half an hour, he saw Sophie dozing with her back against the couch. Her hands were still resting against his temples.

At that particular moment, he could no longer hold back. He propped up his upper body and captured the rosy lips he had been pining after.

As soon as Sophie opened her eyes, she was greeted by the man's enthralling countenance. His kiss was addictive, so she reflexively responded to him.

Sensing her response, Tristan kissed her even more feverishly. Flipping over, he pinned her beneath him and kissed her passionately.

His kiss was so intense that Sophie couldn't quite withstand it. Despite that, she had no intention of stopping him and allowed him to kiss her as he pleased.

Chapter 179 Hugging And Kissing

Finally, when things were about to get out of hand, Tristan flipped over and rolled to the side. He lay on the couch and panted heavily.

Such a feeling is truly tormenting!

Sophie's face and ears were flaming.

Indeed, she had sensed the change within him earlier. It was her first time being so intimate with a man, so she didn't quite know what to do then.

After calming himself down for several minutes, Tristan pulled her into his arms.

"I'm sorry. Did I scare you just now?" I must have been frightening earlier, huh? No matter how capable she is, she's still an eighteen-year-old girl in the face of romantic relationships.

Sophie said nothing, so he continued, "I apologize for almost losing control. But I can't help it either. In front of you, the self-restraint I've always prided myself on hasn't the slightest effect."

"Mr. Tristan." The instant Sophie spoke, she was startled by her hoarse voice. So, it turns out that he affects me this much.

Satisfaction inundated Tristan when he heard her raspy voice. From the look of things, I do have an effect on her to a certain degree. Otherwise, she wouldn't sound like this.

Glimpsing his grin, Sophie grew utterly chagrined. She pinched him hard at the waist.

"Don't laugh."

"Okay, I won't laugh. I'm really happy, Sophie. I'm glad I do have an effect on you and you're not entirely indifferent toward me."

Sophie broke free from his embrace.

"I'm tired. I'm going to bed."

In other words, he merely wanted to conquer me? Because I'm aloof, I attract the attention of men?

Upon seeing that she was seemingly angry, Tristan immediately went after her, pulled her into his arms, and hugged her tightly.

"I've always been serious about you. You should know this, right?" He found it necessary to clarify that, for he felt that he might have gotten a little carried away earlier.

"Yeah."

In truth, she was cognizant of everything he had done for her lately. It was just that she was slow to open up to others.

However, she would always remember those who were good to her.

And he was clearly different from others.

Nevertheless, she didn't want to make a decision about their relationship so early. In many things, she felt that it was more important to prioritize the present. As for the ending, she could accept whatever might come.

"I'm not mad. All right, go home."

"I don't want to go home. Can I stay? Don't worry. The most I'll do is hug and kiss you. I won't do anything else."

No matter what, I'll wait until she's twenty years old before going any further. She's still too young. I won't be so imprudent.

"What else do you want, then?" Is hugging and kissing not enough?

“I want another kiss.”

Taking a mile when he was given an inch, Tristan pecked her on the lips.

“Okay, go and sleep! Remember to lock your door. I’m not confident in myself,” he joked.

A lock can only constrain a gentleman. If it’s a rogue, the best lock in the world won’t be able to keep him out, no?

“You should rest earlier, too. Don’t sleep too late.”

It was almost bedtime then, so he should also be going to sleep.

“Okay, I’ll sleep in a while. Don’t worry! For your sake, I’ll definitely take good care of myself.” Tristan was much older than her, so he was worried that he wouldn’t be able to keep her company until she was old if he didn’t take good care of himself.

Because he loved her too much, he wanted to walk with her until the end of the road.

After returning to her room, Sophie plopped down on the bed. Alas, she didn’t feel drowsy at all. It was a strange feeling. For the very first time, she was losing sleep over a man.

I wonder if he’s still working at this hour.

All of a sudden, she clutched at her hair.

“D*mn it! I’ve forgotten to have him bring Ysabelle out tomorrow to attend the concert!” Annoyance swamped her.

Ugh! Beauty really turns one’s head around! But since he’s staying over tonight, I can just tell him about it tomorrow.

Since she couldn't sleep, she picked her phone up and took a look at her WhatsApp.

Mark had sent her a few messages.

Mark: You must attend the concert tomorrow!

Mark: If you don't come, I'll sever my friendship with you.

Mark: Never mind. Even if you don't show up, I can forgive you. Let's not sever our friendship.

Mark: You're a heartless woman. So you won't be affected even if I sever our friendship!

In the end, he even attached a crying emoticon.

Good Lord! He spammed me!

Sophie replied: I'll definitely attend the concert tomorrow. But don't ask me to go on stage. Otherwise, I'll really get mad.

Having replied to the messages, she was just planning to sleep when she received a call from Mark.

"Are you really coming tomorrow, Sophie? For real?"

"Yeah, I'll be coming tomorrow. All right, go and get some rest. It'll be exhausting for you during the concert, so don't waste your time with this." They were a rock band, so having a concert would be exceedingly enervating.

"Sophie, are you really not planning to come back? If you return, I'll give you the main vocalist position. What do you say?" Mark sounded rather meek.

Sophie went silent.

She really had no interest in joining the entertainment industry. Otherwise, she wouldn't have left back then.

"When are you guys releasing your next album? If the time permits, I'll write a song for you guys." That was the only thing she could do.

"Really? Okay, then!"

Well, this is acceptable, too.

After exchanging a few more words with her, Mark hung up the phone reluctantly. Despite being the main vocalist, he was pitifully servile.

He really hoped that Sophie would return.

After all, she was the soul of The Wheelers in truth.

"Mark, I'll be frank with you. I'll never join the entertainment industry. If I've got the time, I can write a few songs for you guys. But if I don't, I can't do anything about it either."

"Oh well, no matter what, you'll undoubtedly be The Wheelers' main vocalist as long as you're willing to come back!"

Neither of them betrayed the other. But since she didn't want to return, he wouldn't coerce her either.

There was no rule that a group of like-minded friends would certainly walk with each other until the very end.

But then, she was really a very talented main vocalist.

In fact, she had taught him a lot.

She had written songs for The Wheelers, but they didn't release those songs without her permission after she left. He believed that if they were released, they would definitely top the charts since she could grasp the real essence of a rock band.

"Besides, you guys can also use the songs I wrote previously."

I've always forgotten to apologize to them.

"I'm really sorry for leaving without a single word. But I'm also happy for you all that you're so renowned now."

Without a doubt, The Wheelers' fame will persist because they have the best main vocalist, and their band has the soul of a real rock band.

"Don't apologize. You didn't wrong anyone. You merely followed your heart, so we can all accept that. In the future, don't avoid us anymore. We're still friends, aren't we?" In the beginning, Mark couldn't let it go, as they had traversed the most difficult times together. But by then, it had all passed.

Chapter 180 Too Ostentatious

When Tristan had finished the work at hand, he went upstairs. Unexpectedly, he glimpsed a shaft of light from the gap in Sophie's room door.

He walked over and knocked on the door.

Hearing the knock on her door, Sophie placed her phone on the nightstand before going over and opening the door.

“What’s wrong? Is something the matter?”

Puzzlement was written all over Sophie’s face. I wonder what else he wants at this hour.

“No, everything’s fine. I just saw that the light in your room is on, so I came to ask you what you were doing. Are you having trouble sleeping? It’s very late now.” She still needs to go to school tomorrow. Keeping such hours is too erratic, and it’ll be bad for health.

“No, I just talked on the phone with a friend. That took a bit of time, so I’m not asleep yet.”

“Oh, I see. In that case, sleep earlier. Or perhaps you’d like me to keep you company?” Tristan couldn’t resist the urge to tease her every so often.

Sophie said nothing.

Her usual response was silence.

“All right, I was just joking. Don’t take it to heart and don’t sleep too late.”

“I can’t sleep, Mr. Tristan. How about you tell me a story?”

How long has it been since someone told me a story? When we were young, Mom and Dad always loved to tell Willow stories, but they never gave me the same courtesy. Perhaps it’s because I’m too cold and indifferent that they aren’t close to me.

“So, you really can’t sleep? Did something happen that I’m unaware of? Do you mind sharing with me?”

“No, I just have a bit of insomnia. Tell me a story, will you?”

“Sure! It’s my pleasure!” Tristan was more than eager to draw close to her, so he naturally agreed when she proposed such a request.

Sophie lay down on the bed with a premier duvet over her. The duvet wasn't all that thick, but it was exceedingly warm.

That was the best duvet, a conclusion drawn after Tristan had Felix compare the duvets of more than ten brands.

While she lay on the bed all toasty under the duvet, Tristan only had a white, thin sweater on him.

The central air-conditioning was running, but she didn't set the temperature that high, so she had no idea whether he was cold.

"Are you cold?"

The corners of Tristan's mouth curved into a smile.

"Yeah. Do you want to huddle under the covers and chat with me?"

Words promptly eluded Sophie.

All right, that was remiss of me. I shouldn't have asked that.

"Do I look like a heinous man who kidnaps young girls?"

Even Tristan found himself all too similar to such a kind of person then, for he couldn't help teasing her at every turn.

"All right, I got it. Don't look at me with such a look in your eyes." He really couldn't withstand further temptation, albeit her doing nothing at all.

As long as she looked at him with that particular gaze, desire inexorably blazed within him.

Tristan cast his mind back to the past. He hadn't heard that many stories when he was young.

"I have no bedtime stories. How about I tell you about my stories in the business world throughout the years?"

It's pretty good if I can use such a method to have her understand me better.

In response, Sophie nodded. Right. How could someone like him have bedtime stories in his memories?

"I grew up together with Felix and the others. Once upon a time, we were even sent to the special forces to train..."

Tristan started speaking of some incidents that had taken place while they were part of the special forces.

It was then that the four of them forged a strong and deep friendship.

As Sophie listened to him talk about his past, she gradually felt sleepy.

Her eyelids grew increasingly heavier, and she eventually drifted into slumber.

Gazing at her beautiful sleeping countenance, Tristan pulled the duvet over her before leaving her room.

At seven o'clock the following morning, Sophie got out of bed. When she went downstairs after washing her face, she surprisingly discovered that Tristan was already awake.

"Why didn't you sleep for a while longer?"

He slept so late last night. As the CEO of Lombard Group, he should have the privilege of going to work a bit later, no? Besides, it's still so early now.

Right then, Tristan was plating breakfast at the side of the dining table.

"Come and have breakfast. I only need three to four hours of sleep daily."

"Three to four hours isn't enough. It's best to have at least eight hours of sleep a day."

"Okay, I'll change henceforth." As long as it was something she disliked, Tristan would change it all. "All right, come and have breakfast!"

Sophie shrugged nonchalantly.

She then sat down across from him. Taking a piece of hash brown, she started nibbling on it.

Among all the breakfast dishes, only coffee and hash browns were to her liking.

She had never really liked eating bread and drinking milk.

Ultimately, she still preferred a somewhat modern style of breakfast.

Tristan loved watching her eat as she was natural without being the least bit pretentious. Whenever he had breakfast with her, he could even eat an extra piece of hash brown.

"You went to The Crown to buy breakfast early in the morning?"

It was quite a distance to The Crown from there. A round trip would take around forty minutes. Yet, he had driven over and bought her breakfast early in the morning instead of sleeping in.

“I noticed that you like their coffee and hash browns, so I went there to buy them for you. It just took forty minutes. It’s no big deal.”

Her appetite wasn’t great in the first place, and she only ate more for breakfast. Hence, he naturally had to try every means possible to feed her.

“You don’t need to go to such trouble in the future. Just buy a breakfast pie from downstairs, and that’s enough for me.”

Sophie didn’t care much when it came to food.

“But I like watching you eat hash browns.”

That remark of his rendered Sophie speechless.

What kind of peculiar kink is this that he actually likes to watch people eat hash browns?

“Mr. Tristan, The Wheelers is having a concert tonight. I want to go and attend it together with Ysabelle.”

Tristan quirked an eyebrow.

Hmm, it’s the second time I’ve heard her mentioning The Wheelers. She seems to pay particular interest to this band.

“As you know, it isn’t easy for Ysabelle to leave her house. So, could you please help me bring her out?”

This request is probably not too much, right?

“Sure, but I have a condition.” Tristan took a sip of coffee. “Bring me along to the concert, and I’ll bring Ysabelle out.”

Sophie was stunned for a moment.

“Do you like The Wheelers as well?” He doesn’t look like the kind of person who’s crazy about celebrities.

“I’m neutral about them. But since the two of you are going, it’s no big deal to bring me along.”

“But I only have two tickets.” By now, all tickets for the concert have sold out. Where am I going to buy a ticket for him?

“Do you think this is a problem to me?”

Again, Sophie was struck dumb.

Okay, then. I asked a foolish question. If he so desires, he can even purchase the venue of the concert, not to mention a mere ticket!

In the end, six people ended up going instead of the initial two.

Seeing the four people who had come to pick her and Ysabelle up, Sophie propped a hand against her forehead.

The lineup—Tristan, Felix, Sean, and Charles—was even more attractive than the concert itself.

Every single one of them could have Jipsdale quivering in fear.

At that moment, they all appeared at the gates of Jipsdale Premier High in a luxury car each.

Isn’t this a bit too ostentatious?