

## **Pursuing 411**

### Chapter 411

He thought they must be very disappointed in him for acting like this.

“Sunny, don't say that. I know how you feel about The Wheelers. We are yet to get a confirmation for this. Can you wait until I find out why Mark wants to leave before we try to solve this issue?”

Hearing that, Sunny nodded.

“Sophie, why did you want to leave the band back then?” This question had always bothered him.

They used to have a great time together.

Although they were poor and could not even afford to have meat for their BBQ, they were at least happy at that time.

Still, she chose to leave the band.

Hearing that question, Sophie did not know what to say.

“Sunny, everyone has the right to make their own decision. I left long ago, so let's not dwell on that anymore. Also, although I left the band, I am still rooting for you guys. I will always be a part of The Wheelers. It's just that I didn't enjoy being in the spotlight.”

She never wanted such a glamorous lifestyle.

“All right. I understand it now.”

“So, can you give me more time? I want to talk to Mark and understand why he's leaving the band. Before I get an answer from him, you must take care of yourself and not make others worry about you!”

Despite everything, he was already nineteen years old, which meant he was an adult now, so he needed to stop being so impulsive and wilful.

“Also, don't alert the fans about this yet.”

“Okay, got it.” Sunny felt embarrassed. Although Sophie was younger than him, she was always helping him deal with such matters.

He continued, “Don't worry about me. I'll take care of myself. Your only task is to talk to Mark and find out why he wants to leave.”

“I know. Go to sleep, then. Cancel everything on your schedule tomorrow. You guys should stay here and get some rest.”

“Wait, I think Jonathan is still unaware of this matter!” Sunny reminded.

“Okay, I know what to do.”

Sophie left only after seeing Sunny lying down in bed.

As soon as she left the room, the other three members immediately stood up. They had not left and had been waiting outside all this while.

“Sophie, how do you plan to deal with Mark's situation?”

“That's right! Will we still be The Wheelers without Mark? Do we have no choice but to disband if he quits?”

If they had to find someone to replace Mark, The Wheelers would never be the same again. Thus, all members would not accept finding a replacement.

Hence, if Mark had decided to leave the band, The Wheelers could only disband. After all, a band could not survive without its main vocalist.

“All right. You guys should get some rest first. I will try to understand the full story, but before I get to the bottom of this, none of you can tell another soul about this.”

The three members nodded in response.

They knew Sophie was worth their trust, and they believed in her.

“Help me look out for Sunny. His emotions are rather unstable. We can't let anything happen to him during this time.”

“Don't worry. We'll take care of Sunny. You should find some time to talk things out with Mark. He should at least give us a reason if he insists on leaving. We don't need him to do anything else—all we need is an explanation from him.”

Sophie nodded. “Mhm. I know what to do.”

“Thanks, Sophie.”

She smiled at them and said, “No matter what happens, I will always be part of The Wheelers. I hope you know I understand your feelings, and I feel the same as you guys.”

When she walked out of The Wheelers' mansion, Tristan was already waiting for her. Sophie walked over to him while wearing a black mask.

It was normal for media reporters and fans to lurk around a celebrity's mansion, so Sophie had already put on her mask before she even stepped out.

Once the reporters spotted her, they immediately approached her to ask questions. Seeing that, Sophie hurriedly got inside Tristan's car to avoid them.

It was not until Tristan drove quite some distance away that Sophie finally removed her mask and exhaled deeply.

Taking in her expression, Tristan guessed that Mark truly did intend to leave the band.

He took her hand. "Come on now. It's impossible to expect people to stay together for a lifetime. Not even parents can do that with their children, let alone friends!"

Sophie said nothing in response.

She knew he was right, but even if she understood the logic behind it, the truth was still hard for her to accept.

Mark was the soul of The Wheelers. If he insisted on leaving the band, The Wheelers would no longer exist. None of the members would settle with finding another main vocalist to fill in Mark's space.

After sending Sophie back to Wisteria Apartments, Tristan did not leave her alone. He wanted to stay by her side when she was going through a hard time like this.

Even if there was nothing he could do, he still wanted to stay by her side.

Upon returning to Wisteria Apartments, Sophie did not immediately keep herself busy either.

No matter what, she could only wait until the next day to deal with this issue. Thus, she planned to spend the remaining time relaxing and getting some rest.

Tristan poured her a cup of warm milk.

"It's late. Drink this and go to sleep. No matter what it is, we will find a way to solve it."

"Okay."

She knew he was worried about her, so she continued, "To be honest, I can accept this result, but I can't accept the reason."

Deep down, she believed there must be another reason for Mark to make such a decision.

"Mhm."

After lying on the couch for quite some time, Tristan picked Sophie up in his arms and headed to the bedroom, placing her on the bed.

"Now, go get some sleep."

He could not bear to see her not getting enough sleep and not eating her meals regularly. That would only affect her health.

"Okay. I'll go to sleep now."

Her sleeping quality had always been poor, and she did not feel like sleeping then. It was never her character to force herself to do something she did not want to do.

However, when she noticed his solemn expression, she nodded and closed her eyes to sleep.

Just like that, Tristan stayed by her side and watched her sleep. After he heard her breathing even out, he walked out of the bedroom.

Then, he dialed Mark's number and said, "Let's get a drink together."

He realized he had not gotten the chance to sit down and have a drink with Mark ever since they knew each other.

"Sure."

The two decided and agreed over the phone to meet somewhere. Tristan then got changed and locked the doors before heading there.

Mark was already waiting for him when Tristan arrived at a private room in Nocturnal.

No one would have expected a superstar like Mark would show up at a bar like Nocturnal.

Tristan did not put on airs and sat directly across from Mark. Picking up a glass of whiskey that was already available on the table, he took a sip.

"Sophie is worried about you. She cares a lot for you and the other band members, and I'm sure you know that, right?" Although he did not like the idea of Sophie caring so much for another man, Tristan had to acknowledge the facts.

"I know."

Although Sophie looked distant and reserved, Mark knew she would treat someone wholeheartedly if she could tell the person was kind to her.

Otherwise, she would not have established TS Entertainment in the first place.

He knew how much money and effort one must spend to establish and invest in a new company.

"If you know that, then why are you leaving the band?"

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Hearing that, Mark laughed.

He took a sip of his beer and asked, "What's wrong? Don't you want me to quit the band? I thought you would be the happiest to see me leaving Sophie and stop being around her."

Tristan glanced at him. "I must say you've overestimated yourself if that's what you think. Sorry to let you down, but I've never considered you my love rival because I know Sophie only sees you as a friend and nothing more."

Mark was at a loss for words. Although Tristan was telling the truth, his words still sounded rather harsh in Mark's ears. He asked, "Are you so certain that Sophie will never have feelings for me?"

"Yes, I am certain about that." Tristan was very confident in himself.

"Mr. Tristan, do you know how much I envy you? Not because you're rich but because Sophie likes you."

"That is certainly something worthy of your envy." Tristan was also proud of himself for winning Sophie's heart.

"Anyway, why don't you tell me why you want to leave the band?" He only came here to meet Mark because he wanted to hear the latter's answer.

Tristan would do everything he could to help Sophie settle the things she was struggling to deal with on her own so that she wouldn't burden herself too much.

"Well, I have been in the entertainment industry for too long, and I want to try something different now. After all, no one stays popular forever."

"But then, you're very popular now. You shouldn't have chosen to leave the band at this point in your career."

“Mr. Tristan, I don't need anyone telling me what I should and should not do.”

Mark was also someone with a temper, and he would not be intimidated even if the person sitting across from him was the powerful and terrifying Tristan. He did not need Tristan telling him what he should or should not do, and neither did he need Tristan to give him the green light for the decisions he made.

He continued, “No one should judge my decision as long as I am happy with it. Other factors won't affect my choices.”

“Do you have no regrets about leaving the band?” Tristan came all the way here to question Mark's departure because he knew how much Mark loved music and the band. “Mark, are you perhaps having some issues? If that's the case, you can talk to me. I might be able to help you with whatever problems you're having.”

“I know you're a powerful man, but you should know there are things even you can't fix.”

“So, you are having issues, aren't you?”

“Nope. Stop asking.” Mark continued drinking his beer.

He only agreed to meet Tristan because he did not want to drink alone.

Then, Mark said, “Come on! No matter what, we're still two men who fell in love with the same girl. Can't we put everything aside and enjoy our drinks tonight?”

Mark did not need someone to question his choices. He only needed someone to drink with him.

“Sure.” Tristan could let the question slide for the night. For now, he would indulge the other man as they enjoyed a drink together.



They were not talkative people, but they had a lot of things in common that they could talk about. Still, neither initiated a conversation as they continued to drink in silence.

In the end, Mark got drunk and started crying as he said, "Mr. Tristan, promise me you'll treat Sophie well. If you dare hurt her, I will never let you get away with that."

Mark had had feelings for Sophie since long ago, so he could never bear to watch anyone hurting or wronging her.

"Don't worry. I will never hurt her. I can't bear to let that happen." Tristan had spent a long time pursuing Sophie, and he would only treat her wholeheartedly. There was no way he would want to hurt her.

Mark could not stop crying as he went on, "You're right. I shouldn't worry about her when she has you to protect her. No one will dare hurt her with you around." Despite his personal feelings, he knew Tristan was the only person who could provide her with the best.

Tristan did not know what he could say to console the heartbroken Mark.

Ultimately, love was something that could not be forced. Even if Mark liked Sophie a lot, no one could force Sophie to reciprocate those feelings. Although harsh, that was the way of the world.

"All right, then. I have to return now, and you should go home earlier too. Don't let Sophie worry about you." Mark would always care for Sophie.

As soon as Mark stood up, he slumped down again. He was too drunk to stand on his feet.

Tristan had also imbibed a lot, but he was a little soberer compared to Mark.

He sent Mark to a hotel nearby before dragging his heavy body back to Wisteria Apartments. When he opened the door, he saw Sophie sitting on the couch, waiting for him.

Noticing that he had returned, Sophie immediately walked over and helped him to the couch.

Sophie frowned when she detected the stench of alcohol on his body.

“Where did you go? Why did you drink so much?”

Tristan leaned his head on her shoulder. He felt slightly dizzy at that moment and was not in the mood to say anything.

“Can you not ask me anything now? Give me a minute. My head hurts,” he said with a pained expression.

Seeing him in such a state, Sophie could not bear to ask him more questions, so she remained silent and let him rest on her shoulder.

“Why don't I pour you a cup of warm water?” Sophie was about to stand up, but he was leaning on her shoulder, and she could not move if he did not want her to move.

“No need for that. I don't want to drink anything,” said Tristan in a low voice.

“All right.”

Sophie felt helpless, but she could only let him continue resting on her shoulder.

Slowly, Tristan dozed off. When he woke up again, three hours had already passed. Having remained in that posture for three hours, Sophie's shoulder felt very sore when he finally woke up.

Tristan sobered up and wrapped his arms around her as he asked, “How long have I been asleep?”

“It hasn't been that long. Only three hours. Now, can you tell me what's going on? I haven't seen you so drunk before!”

Tristan had always had a high tolerance for alcohol, and Sophie knew he would not get so drunk under normal circumstances.

“I went to meet a friend.”

Although he had gone out to meet Mark, Tristan did not want to tell Sophie about it since he had failed to get a clear answer from Mark.

“Oh? What friend?”

She wondered which friend of his could get him so drunk.

“All right, let's drop that topic.”

Tristan started massaging her shoulders gently.

“Do you feel sore here? Let me massage your shoulders for you!” He figured she must be feeling numb in her shoulders. After all, he knew how it felt to have someone lie on his arm for several hours.

Just like that, Tristan continued massaging her shoulders for a while, and Sophie finally stood up when she felt much better.

“That's enough. It's not that sore now and will get better later.” Pouring him a cup of warm water, she then asked, “What do you want to have for breakfast?”

She knew that he would not have much appetite while having a hangover. Nevertheless, she would not allow him to skip breakfast.

Tristan took the cup and drank the warm water. “My head hurts, and I don't feel like eating anything. Why don't you have breakfast without me?” Sure enough, he did not have the appetite for breakfast.

Sophie stood in front of him and gently massaged his temples. "How about now? Do you feel better now?"

"Mhm. It feels amazing." Tristan closed his eyes and snaked his arm around her waist, making her stay there to massage his temples.

"Don't drink so much next time. It's not good for your health," she scolded. Drinking so much would not help with anything and only make him suffer a terrible hangover.

"Okay, I'll listen to you!"

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Sunny slept late that night, so it was already after eleven when he woke up the following day.

Since Jonathan had already reduced their workload, the members could rest at the mansion. However, Mark was nowhere to be seen during lunchtime, and Sunny was miserable.

"What's the matter, Sunny? Are you not feeling well?" one of the bandmates asked.

Sunny shook his head.

"Is Mark really leaving? Has he decided? Is there no changing his mind anymore?" Sunny asked.

He wondered if Mark would just leave the band to themselves even with so many events going on.

"Mark hasn't been around since morning. I suppose he didn't come back yesterday night. What's wrong with him?"

"I don't believe he'll leave us just like that. I'm just wondering whether something had happened to him to cause him to suddenly make this decision."

"You guys think so too?"

It had been a whole night, but Sunny still found it hard to accept what had happened.

"Yeah. I feel something must've happened. Mark is the most devoted member of The Wheelers. I'll understand if we want to leave the band, but not Mark. I'll never believe he can do that," a member answered.

Sunny nodded in agreement. "You're right. We have to find out the reason, no matter what. That's the only way we can solve the problem."

"But what can we do? Mark's not here. I think if he doesn't want to tell us anything, there's no point in asking. He'll never breathe a word."

Everyone was stumped for words, for they knew Mark like a book and were aware of how intractable he could be.

"We still have Sophie. Mark might not open up to us, but he'll definitely tell Sophie if she asks," Sunny suggested.

Sophie was someone he trusted deeply. He believed that the issue at hand could be resolved as long as she was involved.

"We can only count on her now," another member agreed.

"Sunny, could you give Sophie a call?"

Sunny nodded and took out his phone to make a call.

Sophie was at TS Entertainment attending to work when Sunny called, as she expected he would.

She put her work aside and went over to the window to answer the call.

“What's up, Sunny?”

“Sophie, could you please talk to Mark? We need to know what happened. I'm worried something might have happened to him.”

Sunny knew that Mark would never leave the band unless he had to.

“Don't worry. I will look into it. As I said, you only need to rest at the mansion for a few days. Also, please don't let anyone else know about this. It'll be tricky if more people get involved.”

Nobody knew what was going to happen to The Wheelers at that point.

“Got it. Don't worry! We won't say anything to anyone.” Sunny was aware that too much talking would only be harmful.

Sophie let out an audible sigh after hanging up.

Then, she made a call to Mark, who picked up the phone only after a long while.

He was still asleep in his bed when his phone rang, and it took him a while to look for his phone after the ringtone awakened him.

“Yes?” A pang of stabbing pain pierced through his head as if his skull was about to explode. He was feeling under the weather after all the alcohol.

“Where are you, Mark? Let's meet up.”

"I've said all I wanted to say, Sophie. There's no use asking more questions. My answer remains the same."

Words eluded Sophie.

Why did he reject me before I even said anything? Does he have to be that mean?

"Mark, I just want to meet up. Don't tell me you intend to never see any of us again. You don't have to go that far even if you wish to leave the band."

A brief silence ensued.

She's right. There's no way I can avoid meeting them again in the future. I'll worry about them if I don't see them.

"All right, then. Where do you want to go? I'm not going to TS Entertainment for sure," Mark replied.

He was not prepared to meet his bandmates yet as he would not be able to look them in the eye, worried they would be deeply disappointed in him.

In the end, I still let them down.

Mark felt guilty for what he had done.

"It's almost lunchtime. Let's meet up over a meal."

After deciding on a restaurant, Sophie hung up.

Oof. Mark's a tough nut to crack. I bet the conversation won't go well later when I meet him.

Meanwhile, Mark washed up and got ready to leave, but the moment he opened the door, a few men in black suits were already standing guard outside.

Mark frowned at the sight.

“What do you guys want? Didn't I say I would go back? Can't you give me a little more time?”

I need to close this chapter properly, at least. It will be too irresponsible of me to just disappear into thin air like this.

“Mr. Mark, you know we're just following orders. You should come back with us.”

The men knew they would end up in a thorny situation if they did not bring Mark back with them this time. Thus, they hoped Mark would not make things difficult for them.

“I need to see a friend first. Wait here. I'll talk to Dad myself after that.”

Mark understood that the men were caught between a rock and a hard place.

“Please, Mr. Mark...”

“Are you guys going to bring me away from here by force? You should know my current status. If things get ugly here and my fans see it, the consequences will be dire. Think for yourself what will happen after that.”

Mark had no qualms about getting into a fight there and then, but the men looked at each other before deciding they should just do as Mark said.

“Then we will wait for you here, Mr. Mark. Please don't make things difficult for us. The boss made it clear that those around you will suffer if you insist on not returning,” the men reminded.



Although it was a threat, it had nothing to do with the men as they were simply carrying out orders.

“Seriously?” Mark burned with anger when he heard what they said. He was not expecting them to blatantly threaten him. “Is that a threat?”

The men dared not utter another word, knowing it was best they keep quiet.

After all, Mark was the future head of the family, and they dared not challenge him.

Mark grabbed one of them by the neck, warning, “You all had better remember this—I’m never letting any one of you go if anything happens to my friends.”

It so happened that someone passed by then, and when she realized the person caught in a row was Mark, she quickly took photos and videos.

Seeing that, the guards immediately surrounded the girl.

“What are you doing? Don’t even think about hurting Mark. You better leave now, or I’ll call the police!” It turned out that the girl was The Wheelers’ fan and grew defensive when she sensed the tense situation.

“Give us your phone,” the men demanded.

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“Why should I do that? You guys had better not lay a finger on Mark. I’ll really call the cops!”

“The cops? Go ahead!”

When Mark saw that the girl was shaking in fear, he went over and apologized.

"I'm sorry, but I can't let you keep those photos or videos." Then, he took the phone from her and deleted everything.

"Please leave. You need to stay out of this."

"I can help you, Mark. I really like you," the girl said with her face flushed.

Mark frowned.

How dumb can she get? Doesn't she know what the situation is over here? How can she say something like this?

"I don't need your help. Just leave," Mark repeated.

Can't she tell that she's no match for these people?

The young woman glanced at the men wearing black, her lips trembling.

She thought hard about what she should do. As she was very fond of Mark, she did not want anything to happen to him.

"I can help you, Mark! I'll stay here with you," the girl announced after some thought. I can't just leave him all by himself.

Mark's frown deepened.

"I said I don't need your help," he insisted before turning to the men. "Don't even do anything to her. Consider yourselves warned."

With that said, he spun around and left. He had no time to waste since Sophie was waiting for him.

To him, Sophie took precedence over everything else, no matter what it was.

The time of their appointment came and went, but Mark was still nowhere to be seen. Even so, Sophie stayed and waited.

After some time, Mark finally showed up at Blossom Garden.

It was a good place to meet up given Mark's explosive fame at that moment, for no one would pay attention to him or what he was doing.

That was why Sophie picked this location.

Mark took off his sunglasses after entering the private room.

"I thought you weren't coming," Sophie said.

"I'm sorry. Something came up, and there was a delay."

"Don't worry about it. I didn't wait for long. We still have time."

With that, Sophie handed him the menu.

"Order first. We'll talk while we eat."

As expected of Mark, he ended up ordering all the dishes Sophie liked.

He had always put her before himself in all his considerations.

Seeing this, Sophie also took up a menu and ordered two dishes Mark liked.

The waiter who took the order knew who Mark was when he saw the famous singer, but he went about taking the order as usual.

“You don't look good,” Sophie mentioned.

Mark patted his face.

“I drank a bit too much yesterday, so I'm not feeling my best.”

“You were drinking? With who?” Sophie suddenly recalled that Tristan had also gotten drunk the night before, but it did not seem to her that the two men were close enough to drink together.

“With Tristan,” Mark admitted.

Mark knew he could leave Sophie in Tristan's hands without worry, for that man genuinely cared for her.

Sophie was surprised when she heard that.

“How could both of you do this to me? You guys should've at least invited me along!”

“Sophie, I'm glad you met a man who loves you and whom you love as well. I'm happy for you.”

“Mark, I don't like how you're talking right now. It feels like you're leaving forever. We're best friends. Can't you just tell me what's going on? Didn't we agree that we would be honest with each other and face everything together? Do you know how sad everyone is because of what you're doing?”

Sophie was not trying to emotionally blackmail Mark. She just badly wanted to know why he was leaving.

“It's nothing much, actually. My family wants me to go back to inherit the family business. That's all.”

“What?” Sophie was surprised because Mark had never talked about his family.

That was the first time he had mentioned them—only because they wanted him to go back to take over.

“But the important question is whether you want to or not. You can continue singing if you don't want to go home.”

“Sophie, I'm not a kid anymore, so I can't do whatever I please. Some matters are not up to me. This is my responsibility toward my family.”

Mark knew the time had come for him to stop living as he liked.

Sophie could understand his feelings. After all, she was not very keen on Tanner Group either, but she stepped up nonetheless because her grandfather wished that she make the company more successful. She did not want to disappoint him.

Sometimes, things were not just about individual preferences—they were about responsibility.

“But what does that have to do with your career as a singer?”

“Sophie, I'm tired of the entertainment industry already. It doesn't matter to me if I'm famous or not.”

I just love music.

“Really?” Sophie asked, feeling doubtful. Is he telling the truth? Why do I feel like he's hesitant?

Mark nodded.

"I mean it."

Both of them felt like the conversation was not going anywhere.

When the dishes came, Mark put a huge portion of the food on Sophie's plate.

"All right, stop overthinking it. You know what I'm like. No one can force me to do something I don't want," he said.

"So, you're leaving for real?" Sophie asked.

Is he leaving like that after all the time he spent with The Wheelers? Will he be able to just turn the page?

"Yes," Mark replied.

I have to do this. Nothing is more important than Sophie.

"Give me a month. We'll have a concert first. You've always wanted me to join you guys, right? I'll perform with all of you this once. This will be our farewell," Sophie suddenly suggested.

A concert with Sophie?

Mark was tempted to agree to her proposal as it had always been his dream to perform with her.

"What do you think? We can hold a rock music concert together. This once in my life, I would like to perform as a member of The Wheelers."

"All right. I can do that."

Mark had decided to set aside a month regardless of how difficult it would be for him. In fact, he would readily set aside more than a month for her if that was what she wanted.

“Great!” Sophie replied.

She did not believe that was the real reason for Mark's departure, so she needed time to get to the bottom of it.

After lunch, Mark and Sophie left Blossom Garden together, but he did not go to the company with her.

“Where are you going?” Sophie probed, worried.

“Ah, I forgot something at the hotel. I'm going over to get it.”

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Sophie took a cab back to TS Entertainment after sending Mark off.

Back in the conference room, The Wheelers' members were already waiting for her.

Sophie sighed when she saw them.

“I've gotten us one month, so make use of the time we have to find out what happened. I already told Mark that I plan on holding a concert with you guys within the next month, so everyone prepare yourselves. Even if he insists on leaving after that, I hope he doesn't regret anything.”

All of them understood that it would be too selfish of them to force Mark to comply with their wishes.

“A concert?” Sunny asked.

"Yes, Sunny. I hope you can accept reality as it is if Mark still chooses to leave in the end. We cannot expect everything to go as we wish."

"I understand."

Sunny thought that if Mark intended to leave, he should at least let the latter go with peace of mind.

After all, Mark was the one who had taken care of them over the years, and his bandmates should not force him to stay if he truly wanted to go.

It was time they grew up.

"I will get the Planning Department to start preparing for the concert. You guys should start practicing too." A concert was a big project that required thorough preparation.

"Are you really joining us, Sophie?"

"Yes, I am." That was what the band had wanted all the while.

Later that afternoon, Mark dropped by when everyone was practicing. Sunny shot up from behind the drums and ran over to him.

"Mark! I'm sorry for everything I said to you."

Sunny felt apologetic because Mark had always been the one who rooted for him, and he should not have disappointed Mark.

Mark patted Sunny's shoulder.

"It's okay, Sunny. Thank you for understanding."



“No worries, Mark. Let's practice first. This is our last time performing as a band, after all!” Everyone was ready to give it their best shot for their last concert.

It did not matter to them if The Wheelers would still exist after that.

“He's right! This is our last concert!” Sophie chimed in as she pushed open the door.

Mark smiled when he saw her.

He had decided that he wanted to go all out for this concert and have fun with the others in the remaining time he had left with them, no matter the price he had to pay.

He might not be able to do what he liked in the future, but for this one month, he wanted to enjoy himself to the fullest.

With Sophie joining the group, the six of them formed a circle and held hands.

“Let's do it!”

That had always been their method of cheering one another on, and it had never changed.

Sophie had been absent for too long already, so she decided that there was no way she was missing out this time.

“Let's do it!” Sophie exclaimed in excitement. It had been a long time since she felt that energetic. It was a feeling she would remember for the rest of her life.

Since Sunny's hand had not recovered fully, he could not play the drums for the time being, so Sophie replaced him.

“You should sing with Mark, Sunny. You're still recovering.” Worried about his injury, Sophie stopped him from playing.

“I know. Don't worry. I'll put the band first this time.”

The first song they practiced was the title track of the album they recently released. It was the song Sophie wrote.

Since she was the author, Sophie could resonate with it when the band played.

Mark stood before the microphone as he looked around at all his bandmates. I'm glad everyone is finally together again after all this time.

Like the band members, Sophie was a true rock fan deep down.

When the song was over, tears streamed down Sunny's cheeks.

“Come on, Sunny. Don't cry. We still have a month more to play music together. That's enough, isn't it?” Sophie comforted.

Sunny nodded, mumbling, “You're right. I'm sorry. I should get a grip.”

Sunny knew he should focus, but it was difficult for him to control his emotions.

Seeing this, Mark went over and threw his arm over Sunny's shoulders.

“Don't cry, Sunny. You're making me sad too.”

“Mark, you're the one who's always been by my side whenever I run into trouble. I'm so sorry for everything,” Sunny choked out.

Mark ruffled his hair and comforted, "You don't have to apologize to me. We've gone through a lot together and are practically brothers, so there's no need for such formalities."

Mark truly believed that his bandmates were his brothers, and the last thing he wanted was for them to feel sorry.

"Come on," Sophie chimed in. "If you have that much energy to cry, you might as well focus that on practicing."

The band resumed practice, and Sunny collected himself and sang the best he could.

Mark was pleased that everyone was finally gaining momentum.

They rehearsed the song that whole day until six in the evening.

After that, they went to buy some cooking ingredients and went to The Wheelers' mansion for a barbecue.

That was what they used to do in the past. Every time after practice, they would buy some simple groceries and prepare for a barbecue.

It was already eight at night when they got back to the mansion and unpacked everything.

When the barbecue was ready, everyone got a bottle of beer from the whole case Sunny had bought earlier.

"Ah! It's been a long time since we did this. I love this feeling!" Sunny exclaimed with a smile. "I don't

care about what will happen in the future. At the very least, we are doing what we like now. That's all that matters. Everything else is not important!"

"I agree!" Sophie replied, clinking her bottle against his.

"Let's drink all we want tonight!" Sunny said and quaffed down the beer.

A smile broke out on Mark's face when he saw their interaction.

"Mark, no matter what your decision is, you have our blessing."

"He's right. We don't care if we disband in the end. Thank you for taking care of us all this while. We'll always be here for you if you need us. You can always count on us."

Their relationship would remain unchanged even if the band dissolved.

Mark bit his lip, feeling torn.

He did not want things to end like that.

"All of you are special to me. You guys can always come to me if you need anything in the future. Don't be strangers, all right? We will face everything together."

As a team, even if The Wheelers were no more, their friendship would still go on.

"Enough sad talk. Let's eat. We should just live in the here and now and forget about everything else!" Sunny interrupted with a smile.

"Let's drink till we drop, Sophie!" Mark exclaimed.

"Sure! I don't have a problem with that!" Sophie could hold her liquor. To her, if everyone else could do it, she did not see why she could not.

“Come, everyone! Cheers!” Mark cried out.

“Cheers! For The Wheelers! The Wheelers for the win!” Sophie shouted.

## Chapter 416

After enjoying a hearty meal, six of them lolled on the couch. Dozens of vivid memories flashed through their minds.

“I guess I'm getting old. I can't help but start reminiscing about the good old days,” Sunny said with a smile.

“Yeah, me too. Although we were broke and lived in a cheap rented unit, we were happy with our lives back then. Above all, we all lived for music!”

Despite not having a chance to perform on stage, they still enjoyed singing for pedestrians on the bridge for free.

To them, happiness at that time was simple and innocent.

Meanwhile, Sophie was the only one reclining on the chair. Everyone took good care of her since she was the only girl.

If it were not for Mark, Sophie would not have become who she was today.

“I'm tired. I'm going to go home now.” Sophie got up from the reclining chair.

“It's late, Sophie. Why leave when you could stay here and rest?”

Sophie shook her head. “No, thanks. Tristan is still waiting for me.”

She knew that Tristan, who was aware of her close-knit relationship with The Wheelers, was waiting outside as he did not want to come in and interrupt them.

Had she decided to stay, Tristan would most probably sleep outside.

Sophie knew the man cared for her and would never force her to do anything against her will, but she could never bear to make him stay outside for the night.

"I'll see you out then." Mark nodded. She has a boyfriend now. There's no way she can hang out with us for the night.

"I can go out by myself, don't worry. You guys should get enough rest and make sure you're prepared for tomorrow's rehearsal." Sophie was serious about the concert.

"Just let me walk you out. I don't feel comfortable seeing you leave alone," Mark insisted. It's unsafe for a girl to walk alone in the middle of the night. Besides, fans and journalists are everywhere.

"Mark, you'll put me in danger if you walk me out. You know how rowdy those fans can get if they see us together. I bet they'll want to tear me apart," Sophie said.

Mark could not outtalk her.

"What Sophie said makes sense. There are fans all over. You should stay with us." Sunny agreed with Sophie's concern.

"All right. Be careful then. Call me if you're in trouble."

"Sure!" Sophie grabbed her bag and put on her mask and shades before leaving.

The moment she stepped out of the building, she saw Tristan's car from a stone's throw away. Tristan got down from the car when he saw her coming out.

Sophie got into the vehicle immediately before all the journalists and fans could approach her.

Once seated, Sophie took off her mask and shades. Feeling exhausted, she leaned on the chair and kept mum.

"Tired?" Tristan expressed his concern. He had never tried to stop Sophie from participating in the concert. I'll support her in everything she wants to do.

"Yeah. I feel worn out since I haven't rehearsed with them for a long time. But I enjoy the adrenaline rush." Sophie had never thought of debuting and did not enjoy being in the limelight, but she enjoyed making music.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it. Let me know if you need any help with the concert." Tristan hoped he could lend them a hand.

"Not at this moment."

"All right then. But you must tell me if you need help, okay?"

"Sure. I'll ask for help if I need it, don't worry," Sophie said.

"Anyway, you need to put your guard up when you're outside. Watch out for Clayton. He is desperate now and might go crazy on you," Tristan warned. She has to watch her back since I can't be with her twenty-four-seven.

"You must take good care of yourself too." Sophie was also worried about Tristan. He might be capable, but there's only so much he can do, especially when he's alone. Every human has weaknesses, and I don't want to become his Achilles heel.

"Don't worry. I doubt Clayton has the guts to lay his finger on me," Tristan assured Sophie. That useless piece of trash doesn't have the balls to mess with me.

Soon, Tristan drove Sophie back to Wisteria Apartments and prepared a warm bath for her.

He walked to the living room and called her. "Come and take a warm bath. It'll make you feel better."

"Okay." Sophie felt that he had pampered her so much that she nearly lost the ability to look after herself.

"Tristan, you're spoiling me. What if I turn into a wilful princess?" Sophie asked.

Tristan came over and embraced her.

"I still want to spoil you. Even if you become wilful, I will never stop pampering you," Tristan said affectionately.

He wanted to give Sophie the best as he was constantly worried he had not done enough for her.

Tristan was ten years older than Sophie, so he was worried the age gap might take a toll on their

relationship.

Sophie leaned against his chest. "All right then. I guess I have no choice but to depend on you for the rest of my life. I don't think anyone else in this world will treat me as well as you do." He has set the bar so high that I can't clap eyes on other men anymore.

Tristan was utterly delighted to hear those words. "For the rest of your life, huh? I like the sound of that."



He then scooped her up and carried her to the bathroom.

“Would you like me to remove your clothes?” Tristan offered.

His sudden offer rendered Sophie speechless. Wow. What did he just say?

She could not help but feel embarrassed. How could he say that and not feel ashamed?

“It's all right. I can do it myself.” Sophie blushed instantly.

“Are you sure you don't need my help? I know you're worn out. I'll be more than willing to lend a hand if you need my assistance.”

Once again, Sophie was at a loss for words.

She did not know how to react to his remark.

Tristan was pleased to see her flushed face and ears.

He could not help it. Not only did he like the innocence in Sophie, but he also appreciated all the sides of her personality.

It was as if he was addicted to the young woman. She was an addiction he could never overcome.

“You should take a shower too, Tristan. I can look after myself.” Deep down in Sophie's heart, she was still a conservative woman with a traditional mindset. It will be too embarrassing to ask him for help!

“Why don't we bathe together?” Tristan continued flirting.

“Excuse me?” Sophie thought she heard him wrong. Is he kidding? Is he going to stay and take a bath with me?

Sophie did not know how to react to his remark as she always thought of him as a gentleman.

Tristan inched closer, wrapped his hands around her slender waist, and whispered in her ear, “I said, why don't we bathe together?”

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Sophie was utterly stunned this time.

She placed her hands against his chest and shook her head.

“No thanks! You should go! I'm tired, so I'm going to sleep after bathing.” Sophie immediately pushed him out before leaning against the bathroom door, panting.

D\*mn!

Pressing her hand against her chest where her heart was, she muttered to herself resignedly, “Why is it beating so fast?”

Tristan is so hard to resist when he is feeling flirtatious.

Tristan, standing outside, could not help but laugh.

What do I do? I really wish Sophie had nodded and allowed me to bathe with her. It seems like her bust is becoming even bigger recently. I really am with her every step of the way as she slowly grows up. Now, I'm finding it harder and harder to resist her. I'm even having dirty thoughts.

An image of her bathing in the bathtub appeared in his mind. Immediately, lust surged within him. Smiling wryly, Tristan decided to get a cold shower.

After Sophie finished bathing, she felt much better. Upon opening the bathroom door, she only sighed in relief when she didn't hear Tristan's voice in the room.

To be honest, if I see him now, I won't know how to react. I can't believe I'm actually feeling shy!

She removed the towel from her hair and began blow-drying her wet tresses before lying on her bed.

Before sleeping, she sent a good night message to Tristan.

Tristan had already finished showering before Sophie, and he initially wanted to go over to spend time with her. However, upon remembering how he couldn't control himself around her, he nipped that idea in the bud.

He was afraid of scaring her if he gave in to his desires.

After all, she was still young, so he needed to wait.

Just when he was about to sleep, he received her message on Whatsapp. Although it was two simple words, Tristan had the urge to rush over to her right then.

Indeed, as long as it was someone he loved, his heart would skip a beat even though she didn't mean to flirt with him.

My self-control is getting worse.

After waking up the next day, Sophie got dressed and came out of her room. Susan had already prepared breakfast. Tristan was also awake and was reading the newspaper in the dining area.

"Come and eat breakfast. I'll send you to TS Entertainment after you finish eating." Naturally, he knew

that her focus was on TS Entertainment lately.

“Okay!”

Sophie sat down beside him and ate breakfast with him.

After they were done, Tristan drove her to TS Entertainment.

“Practising is tough, but don't overwork yourself. I'll come over in the afternoon and keep you company as you practice.”

“Tristan, you're already very busy, so you don't need to come over. You just need to show up at the concert!”

Seriously, he really has no need to come.

“I'll come if I don't have anything on in the afternoon. If I'm not allowed to go up later on, you must come down to fetch me, okay?”

Sophie chuckled.

Is there a place in this world where he can't go?

“All right. If you can't come up later, I'll go down to bring you up!”

“Go in now. I'll leave after seeing you go in.”

“Okay.”

Sophie turned to enter TS Entertainment. Clayton's Sky Media was already done for. All that was left to deal with was the issue of acquiring Sky Media, as Clayton refused to sell it.

Currently, Sky Media was a huge mess. The artists under the company were demanding to terminate their contracts. Only then did Clayton realize his company couldn't continue running, so he requested to meet Sophie.

Since she wants Sky Media, I'll give it to her. As long as she can let me off, I can give up on my company

Sophie agreed to meet him. The place she chose was still the cafe they went to the last time. Yet, this time, Clayton was already there when she arrived.

He no longer looked vigorous and confident like he did previously, even appearing pitiful.

However, he deserved everything that was happening to him. If he had not hurt Sunny, Sophie would not have done the things she did.

“Mr. Zales, why do you want to meet me?” Sophie asked composedly.

Seeing her calm expression, Clayton felt fury boil up in him.

If not for this woman, I wouldn't be in this state now! I'm living in anxiety and torment every day!

“Sophie, I know I did many wrong things back then, but I have apologized and compensated money. I can even give you Sky Media if you want. I only have one request—please let me off the hook.” Clayton had always been high and mighty, never once being so humble. Thus, it had taken all of his courage to muster those words.

“Sky Media? Do you think I still want Sky Media now? What use do I have with it? Your company is now a hot potato. No one will want it even if you give it to them for free.”

Sky Media was not a good company to begin with.

If it weren't for them managing The Wheelers once upon a time, Sky Media wouldn't have come this far to achieve its present-day achievements.

Yet, how did he treat The Wheelers?

"Sophie, you've got to be more forgiving. We will all go through ups and downs in our lives. Nobody can stand at the top all the time."

There is no need for her to be so unforgiving.

"Are you threatening me? People will go through many ups and downs, but you'll hit rock bottom now that you've met me. I'll ensure you'll never be able to get back on your feet in the future," Sophie sneered.

"Sophie, how can you be so vicious?"

"Am I vicious? Why don't you ask the artists your company manages? How do you usually treat them?"

Compared to Clayton, she was a much better person.

I won't offend anyone unless they mess with me first. However, if someone messes with me, I will make them suffer twice the amount I suffered. This is my principle.

"You! What do you want me to do?" Clayton couldn't think of any way out of this mess, as he had no more bargaining chips left.

That was the worst part.

"I don't need you to do anything. You will be punished by others for all the things you have done. Oh right. Do you even remember what those are?"

I bet he has already forgotten all the illegal things he did.

“But it's fine even if you don't remember. I'll slowly remind you.”

For the first time in his life, Clayton felt afraid.

Sophie Tanner isn't a simple woman. I thought she dared to be so arrogant because of Tristan. Now, it seems it's not because of him. Even without Tristan, she can make life a living hell for me.

Such hopelessness was a first for him.

“Sophie, what the h\*ll do you want me to do?” Clayton could not think of anything else to say.

“As I answered earlier, I don't need you to do anything. I can't decide what happens to you either. That said, nothing will happen to you as long as you didn't commit any crimes.”

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She would never wrongfully accuse anyone.

“What do you mean?” Clayton's face darkened when he heard her words.

What did she mean by that? Does she know something?

Sophie was pleased to see his expression change.

“You should know better than anyone else what I'm implying. Don't worry! You always thought there was no evidence, right? I'll gladly prove you wrong!”

“Sophie Tanner, you're seeking death!”

Clayton immediately got up on his feet.

“What? Do you want to fight? Try me! Let's see if you can beat me!” Sophie had never backed down from a fight.

With that, she left him behind, a haughty expression on her face.

When she was with him, she could barely force herself to look at him, let alone drink coffee.

Clayton sat alone in the cafe, speechless.

This girl knows too much! If this continues, I'm screwed.

“Clayton, are you okay?” Upon entering, Wilbur saw Clayton in that state and was worried the latter had gone crazy because of Sophie.

“Contact Willow!” Suddenly, an idea popped into Clayton's mind.

Willow was excited to receive Clayton's call. Naturally, she knew what he was going through.

However, she still held a glimmer of hope.

Clayton is so powerful. How can Sophie be his match? He's only temporarily going through some tough times. I'm sure he'll eventually climb back to the top again.

Thus, after receiving Clayton's call, Willow went over without hesitation and was shocked to see him in that state.

“Clayton, what happened? Are you okay?” Willow asked, concerned.



“Willow, do you really love me?” Clayton suddenly asked.

Willow gazed into his eyes and nodded solemnly.

“Yes, I love you. I want to be with you and have your kids!” she declared instantly.

“Okay, then let's get engaged!” Clayton said straightforwardly.

Willow was stunned speechless.

Did I hear wrong?

“Clayton, what did you say?”

“I said, let's get engaged. You go and discuss it with your family. Let's do it as soon as possible!”

“Why, Clayton?”

She didn't expect things to progress so fast.

“Are you willing? If you're not, I can find someone else. My grandma is sick, so she wants to see me get married and have a kid.” Clayton gave any excuse he could find.

“I see! All right, let's get engaged!” Willow threw all caution to the wind. Regardless of what Clayton is going through, he's still from a prestigious family. How can I give up on such a good opportunity? I will never let this chance pass!

Willow went home and told Charmaine about this matter, whereupon Charmaine could not help but frown. After all, she was a grown woman, so naturally, she sensed something weird.

“Willa, I know you want to marry into a prestigious family, but look at the state Clayton is in now! No one knows what will happen to him in the future. Moreover, it seems strange that he is proposing to you at such a time.”

Charmaine was very worried.

“Mom, what do you think of Zales Corporation?”

“Zales Corporation?” Zales Corporation was indeed powerful now, but nobody knew whether it would continue to be so in the future. “Willa, I suggest you wait awhile till the situation at Zales Corporation stabilizes.”

If Willow got engaged with Clayton from Zales Corporation, and he couldn't go back to being as successful as before in the future, she would be dragged into his mess too.

“Mom, this is my only chance. He only proposed to me because his grandma is sick.”

If I don't accept his proposal, he can get engaged to another girl. Then, I won't have any more chances.

“Mom, you must help me this time, no matter what! I must get engaged with Clayton!”

He's Clayton Zales and my only hope in life!

Charmaine hesitated for a while.

“Fine, I got it. But I don't know how to bring up this matter to your grandpa. He probably won't agree!”

“It doesn't matter whether he agrees or not. What's important is whether I am willing,” Willow announced, not caring about the consequences.

Grandpa only cares about Sophie, anyway. As long as she's around, he won't even look at me. Since he's only going to give everything the Tanner family owes to Sophie, why must I tell him what I'm planning on doing and who I'm marrying?

“What do you mean? Are you not planning on telling your grandpa?” Charmaine asked with a frown. She had a feeling that this matter was not as simple as it seemed, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it.

Willow shook her head.

“No. Mom, you can tell Dad about this matter. He probably won't be against this. When the time comes, you can just attend the ceremony with Dad!”

After pondering for a moment, Charmaine nodded.

“Okay, I understand.” Since Willow had already decided, there was nothing else Charmaine could do as her parent.

The main reason why Charmaine was willing to risk it was Clayton's high status.

If Clayton manages to make a comeback one day, we will become the upper class. I've already done so much to enter high society, so I can't give up now!

“Mom, don't wear such an expression. This is my choice. No matter what happens in the future, I will bear the consequences.” Mainly, it was because Willow believed her choice was correct.

“All right, as long as you have thought this through.” Charmaine could only hope Willow wouldn't regret this later on.

Clayton and Willow's engagement ceremony was put together in a hurry. Although time was short, he still invited many reporters.

Upon seeing the many reporters, Willow was satisfied.

At first, she was worried Clayton wasn't sincere.

Now that she saw the number of reporters, she finally believed that he genuinely wanted to marry her. I haven't felt like the center of attention in such a long time! I've always enjoyed such a feeling since birth. Indeed, Clayton can give me everything I want.

"Clayton, I'm so happy!" Willow said with a smile as she held his arm.

"As long as you're happy. Don't worry. I'll treat you well in the future," Clayton declared half-heartedly.

Now that I'm considered a son-in-law of the Tanner family, I don't think Sophie will be too harsh on me.

Naturally, Yale and Charmaine also came. Realizing that Clayton truly was getting engaged with Willow, Charmaine was relieved.

"Mr. Zales, you must treat my Willow well in the future!" Charmaine uttered in concern.

Clayton nodded and hummed in agreement, not at all appearing polite.

Clayton's attitude made Charmaine uncomfortable, but upon recalling his status, she bore with it.

"You all enjoy yourselves. I have something to attend to with Willow," Clayton declared before leaving, dragging Willow along.

## Chapter 419

Unable to keep her thoughts to herself any longer, Charmaine asked Yale, "Do you think Clayton harbors ulterior motives? Does he truly want to marry our Willow?"

I can't help feeling uneasy. No matter how I look at it, Clayton doesn't seem to have feelings for Willow at all.

“What's with that wild imagination of yours? Regardless of how terrible the Zales are, they're still an upper-class family. What could they possibly want with Willow? For goodness' sake, stop letting your imagination run away with you. No matter how much Mr. Tristan likes Sophie, he isn't willing to marry her. Isn't that as clear as day now that Mr. Zales and Willow are getting engaged?” he replied. That'll be the pride of our family, and I'll be able to hold my head high in the future.

After a brief pause, he continued, “To be honest, I thought at first that Willow had lost. After all, Mr. Tristan never paid any attention to anyone. But now that I've seen how he treats Sophie—the way he keeps hiding and being secretive about their relationship—it clearly shows he's only fooling around. Wealthy men are all the same.”

It's a joke to think that one can get into a serious relationship with these capitalists. As long as we can gain something from them, that's enough. There's really no need to care about other things.

“Is that really how it is?” Charmaine was still a little worried. Nonetheless, now that Willow had her heart set on being with Clayton, she knew it would be pointless for her to say anything more.

Clayton's and Willow's engagement ceremony was widely reported in the media. Naturally, that was partly Clayton's doing.

As for Willow, she basked in the widespread attention and did not feel he was using her in the slightest.

Meanwhile, Josiah flew into a rage when he found out about it.

“Morgan, call Yale and tell him to bring Willow back immediately!” he roared. No matter what, Willow is still my granddaughter. How is it that I'm completely in the dark about her engagement? I can tell that Clayton Zales isn't a decent person. How could she get engaged to a man with ill intentions like him?

“I'll go and call him now. Just be careful not to get so upset that it affects your health,” said Morgan.

Getting mad now won't do any good and will only be detrimental to his health. Ms. Willow has always been like this. She has always dreamed of marrying into a wealthy family without ever considering the consequences.

"Go and make the call. I'm fine." Josiah was infuriated, so he kept insisting on calling them and telling them to return.

Yale was watching the engagement ceremony when Morgan called. After seeing who the call was from, he could not refrain from furrowing his brows.

However, the thought of Josiah's wrath still made him go to one side to answer the call.

"Mr. Yale, Old Mr. Tanner would like you to bring Ms. Willow back and call off today's engagement," Morgan said, conveying Josiah's wishes accordingly.

Yale frowned upon hearing that.

"Tell my father what's done is done and that he shouldn't concern himself with this matter," Yale answered bluntly.

"Mr. Yale, you know how Old Mr. Tanner's temper's like. There'll be serious consequences if you don't return now." Morgan was genuinely not trying to threaten them and was only telling them what would happen.

However, Yale grew enraged. "Do you still have any respect for me? Do you think I'm particularly useless? Is that why you're always threatening me? Is Sophie the only person you care about now?"

Whatever it is, I'm still a Tanner in blood and technically his superior. How can he, a mere butler, talk to me like this?

"I apologize if you think I'm being rude, Mr. Yale. Nonetheless, Old Mr. Tanner disapproves of this marriage, so you should come back soon."

"We'll return once the engagement ceremony is over." With that, Yale hung up and turned to go back into the venue.

When Charmaine saw the look of anger on his face, she could not help but ask, "What's wrong? Who was the call from?"

"It was Morgan. My father opposes this marriage and wants us to bring Willow back now."

"Now? But there are so many people here. Wouldn't the Zales family get offended if we take her away now?" she responded. There were also many media present, and she fretted over how they would

explain things to them.

"That's enough. You don't need to bother about this. We'll leave after the ceremony. We can't afford to upset the Zales family at this point, no matter what. Otherwise, how will we live our days in peace after this? As Willow's biological parents, as long as we have no objections to this marriage, it doesn't matter if Dad opposes it," Yale replied firmly.

Hearing that, Charmaine felt slightly more at ease.

My only hope now is for this union to proceed without any hiccups and that we can all get what we want. That's all I ask for. As for the other matters, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Meanwhile, Morgan dared not tell Josiah what happened after the call ended abruptly. Josiah was so short-tempered that Morgan was sure the former would not be able to take it if he told him what Yale said.

"When are they coming back?"

"You should get some rest first, Old Mr. Tanner. What do you feel like eating? I'll get the kitchen staff to whip it up for you," Morgan replied. Since Josiah was getting on in years, the doctor had advised having small but frequent meals, and it was time he ate.

"I asked you when they're coming back." With things as they were, Josiah was in no mood to eat. All he wanted was to resolve the matter.

Hence, Morgan had no choice but to reply, "They'll be back soon."

"I see. All right, then. You don't have to prepare anything for me, Morgan. I don't feel like eating right now," Josiah replied. How could he have the appetite to eat now?

"That Clayton is clearly using Willow!" Josiah growled after a pause.

And my son is utterly incompetent for not catching on to that. He must be over the moon now, thinking he has climbed the social ladder.

"The younger generation has their own lives and can take care of themselves, so you don't need to worry so much," Morgan said. That's the thing about age. The older one gets, the less likely one may willingly listen to others.

"I wish so, too. If everyone could be like Sophie, I'd have nothing to worry about. I wouldn't be like how I am now."

Alas, that son and granddaughter of mine are just the types of people who make others worry. They have too many desires that are difficult to satisfy.

At the mention of Sophie, Morgan immediately had the idea to call her. He felt she was probably the only person who could defuse the situation.

"I'll go and get you a glass of water, Old Mr. Tanner."

With that, Morgan went to pour a glass of water, then made the phone call while he was there.

As soon as the call connected, he said, "Ms. Sophie, if you have some time now, hurry up and come back. Something has happened."



Sophie was in the middle of practice when she received the call, and her heart lurched after she heard what Morgan said. "What is it, Morgan? Tell me properly. Has something happened to Grandpa?"

"Everything is fine for now. However, I'm at a loss on how to comfort Old Mr. Tanner. You'd better come back."

"Okay, got it. I'll head over right now. Stay by Grandpa's side, okay?" She always prioritized all matters related to Josiah. Hence, despite how busy she was, she would definitely make a trip back home first.

Sophie set aside the drumsticks she was holding and rose from her seat.

Upon seeing that, Sunny immediately hurried over to her and asked, "What's the matter, Sophie? Who was that?"

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"It's fine. You guys continue practicing. Something has come up at home, so I need to go!" Sophie informed them.

"What happened? Did something happen to Old Mr. Tanner?" Mark asked urgently. "I'll go with you."

"There's no need for that. It shouldn't be anything serious. Continue your practice. If something does come up, I'll give you a call."

Regardless of what happened, I'll handle it.

"All right. You can use my car." Mark tossed his keys to her.

"Great!"

Calling for a taxi is inconvenient, so I might as well take Mark's car.

Twenty minutes later, Sophie arrived at the Tanner residence.

Josiah sat alone in the living room, sulking.

It had been quite a while since he spoke. So much time has passed, yet none of them are back yet. That can only mean one thing—they don't want to come back. I guess no one listens to me anymore. Does everyone become this pitiful after they turn old?

Sophie caught Josiah's sad look even when she was still at the front door. Her heart sank.

What's wrong? Why is he all alone in the house?

“Grandpa, I'm back.” Sophie took a seat by his side.

Josiah's head jerked up at Sophie's voice.

“Why are you back? Haven't you been really busy lately with the upcoming concert? All while managing TS Entertainment and Tanner Group at the same time.”

“I missed you, so I came back. Is there anything more important than my grandpa in this world? Nothing,” Sophie answered with a grin.

Warmth spread across Josiah's chest at Sophie's sweet words.

Has my Sophie always been this good at talking? Every problem is no longer an issue with her here.

“What happened, Grandpa? You don't look happy. Tell me, and I'll analyze the situation for you!”

“Willow has gotten engaged to Clayton!” Josiah's anger spiked the instant he brought up this topic.

Willow always makes me worry.

“Clayton?”

Sophie was surprised at the news. She had spent the entire day practicing, so she didn't have the time to look at her phone and was unaware of the latest happenings.

“Yes, and I only found out through the news. With the media's rampant reporting, Willow's name will be tied to Clayton's every action in the future!”

Naturally, Josiah knew about the conflict between Sophie and Clayton.

That was why he was infuriated when he saw news of Willow's engagement with Clayton.

“Oh, it's just an engagement. Don't worry. They won't last till the wedding.” Clayton will be incarcerated before he marries Willow.

“Soph, this Clayton is a ruthless man. Be careful, okay? I don't think I can take it if anything happens to you.”

“Rest assured. What can happen to me? The person who should be worrying right now is Clayton.”

Just then, the sound of a car engine came from outside.

Yale, Willow, and Charmaine had brought Clayton back.

It was Clayton's first time visiting the Tanner residence. Disdain filled him as he studied the house.

“Come on, Clayton! I'll take you to meet my grandpa!” Willow said with excitement. It'll be fantastic if Sophie is here since I'll get to brag in front of her. Sophie has been with Mr. Tristan for so long, yet he doesn't even consider acknowledging her as his wife, which means he's just playing her. On the contrary, I'm already engaged to Clayton. Now the whole of Jipsdale knows I'm Clayton's fiancée.

Willow felt that her life was perfect.

How can everything be so perfect?

When the group reached the living room, they saw Sophie sitting with Josiah. A wave of happiness surged through Willow at the sight of Sophie.

Life is going smoothly for me! Everything is right where I want them!

Willow intentionally tightened her grip on Clayton's arm, her intention to flaunt blatantly obvious.

“I'm back, Grandpa! Sorry for not telling you beforehand about my engagement with Clayton. I—”

A glance from Josiah had Willow stopping mid-sentence, unable to continue.

“Hi, Grandpa. I'm Clayton Zales!” Clayton, on the other hand, was collected as he introduced himself.

Josiah merely let out a huff and ignored him.

One look at him, and I can already tell he's not a nice man.

Yale couldn't bear to keep silent anymore after seeing Josiah's attitude.

“Don't be like that, Dad! I know it's our fault for not telling you about the engagement beforehand, but aren't we here now to apologize to you? We're all family in the future. There's no need to make things awkward,” Yale said.

"I don't have such luck. We have some family disputes to settle, so please leave, Mr. Zales." Josiah didn't bother to mince his words.

Clayton slid a glance at Sophie and didn't say anything.

"I'll head back first, Willow. Talk it out with Grandpa nicely, no matter what the issue is. Don't make him mad," Clayton advised.

Willow felt wronged.

It's my freedom to marry whomever I want. How is it Grandpa doesn't have any opinion about Sophie and Mr. Tristan's vague relationship, but he suddenly has an issue when it's my engagement with Clayton? He even made me look bad. He's obviously biased against me!

"All right. I'll come and pick you up at night." Clayton patted Willow's face gently.

His gentle coaxing brought a smile to Willow's face.

"I'm sorry, Clayton. It's my fault for not dealing with the issue properly and putting you in such a position," Willow apologized.

It has always been like this. Clayton has a higher social status than me, so I have to be careful in everything I do.

"I'll be heading back now, Grandpa. I'll come and visit you another day." Clayton turned on his heels and left.

Only members of the Tanner family remained in the living room.

"Willow, I don't care what you're thinking, but annul the engagement this instance!" Josiah was blunt in his request. With Willow's character, he figured there was no point in talking it out.

Willow couldn't control her temper any longer at Josiah's request.

"I don't want any of the assets under your name, Grandpa, so don't intervene in my life. No matter what happens to me in the future, it's my problem. It has nothing to do with the Tanner family." That should be enough. Everything that happens in the future will be my cross to bear, and I won't drag the Tanner family down with me. I can finally do whatever I like now.

"What are you doing, Willow? Don't make your grandpa angry! Hurry up and apologize to him." Charmaine tugged on Willow's hand and dragged her closer to Josiah.

However, Willow didn't appreciate her mother's concern and flung her hand away.

"Leave this matter be, Mom. Grandpa has always been biased, and you know that. He's fine with Sophie and Mr. Tristan's ambiguous relationship but disagrees with my engagement with Clayton. What logic is this?" Willow couldn't accept Josiah's differential treatment. Even if I have a falling out with Grandpa, I won't budge on my stance.