

Pursuing 51

Chapter 51 Who Are You Really

Sophie did not need to do self-studying sessions on Saturday night, so she went to Monarch Mall and bought a gift. Just as she was about to head home, she encountered Eustace and the others.

Eustace looked like he was in the middle of an angry outburst, and the few technicians beside him barely dared to take a breath.

“Captain Sheppard, isn’t that Ms. Tanner? Maybe we should ask her for help.” Although Danny was embarrassed about failing the pursuit despite being a professional technician, he knew that Sophie was rather brilliant. Maybe she’ll be able to help us out.

“Ms. Tanner?” Eustace looked in the direction Danny was staring in and saw Sophie, who had her head lowered as she used her phone.

The young woman was wearing a set of ordinary clothes that she bought off Amazon. Her hair hung loosely over her shoulders, and she looked plain. Despite so, many people were still looking at her.

After all, she was pretty, and pretty people would always catch the attention of others easily.

“Yes.”

Eustace and Danny then walked over.

Noticing a sudden shadow looming over her, Sophie raised her head only to see Eustace.

“Anything I can help you with?”

“Ms. Tanner, can you do us a favor?” It was quite an urgent matter, and if they messed it up, everyone in Monarch Mall would die.

In response, Sophie took out a piece of chewing gum to put in her mouth before she asked, "What is it?"

Eustace pulled Sophie to the side.

"A desperado has run into Monarch Mall and is now hiding in here. It's Saturday today, and there are lots of people in Monarch Mall."

"Can't you just go in and arrest him?" I'm not a police officer. I can't help with that, can I?

"Well, the thing is, he has a bomb on him."

If not for the bomb, I wouldn't have called him a desperado.

"We'll only give him too much pressure if so many of us enter. And a cornered beast will definitely do something wild and unpredictable. That's why we need to pinpoint where he is. This man is an intelligent criminal. Our people can't figure out where he is exactly, and the longer this drags on, the more danger the people inside will be in."

They were in Jipsdale, and this was the Monarch Mall. If anything were to happen here, Chanaea would become the laughingstock of the whole world.

Most importantly, there were plenty of patrons in Monarch Mall, and they were all going to die.

After Sophie heard what was going on, she bobbed her head.

"Okay, I'll help you out."

Hearing that, Eustace led Sophie to a black car where a technician was still trying to trace the criminal's whereabouts.

Sadly, he could not even find a single clue. He had never encountered someone as brilliant as the criminal. It was as if someone else was covering the criminal's tracks for him.

Danny asked the technician before the machine to stand up and invited Sophie to sit down.

Still chewing on the gum, Sophie's slender fingers danced elegantly across the keyboard.

Eustace watched her work from behind her, hoping that she could speed up even more.

"Someone's helping him."

Sophie frowned. She knew then the criminal case was getting complicated.

There's more than one man, and they had entered Monarch Mall with ulterior motives.

"Do you have any way to track him down?"

"Yes."

Lines and lines of code appeared on the screen as Sophie fought against the hacker behind the criminals.

Five minutes later, the screen of the other party's computer turned black, and he could not turn it on anymore.

"What the f*ck? What kind of person did Eustace find who can actually hack my computer?"

Now that no one could help the criminal hide anymore, all Sophie needed was a minute before she found him.

A red dot appeared on the screen.

“You’re amazing, Ms. Tanner!” Danny could not help but cry out.

“You can go apprehend him now.”

“Thank you. I’ll transfer you the monetary reward for this.”

“Okay,” was all Sophie said.

Eustace then hurried away to arrest the criminal. As the criminal had a bomb on him, he also brought men from the bomb squad.

“Ms. Tanner, you’re fantastic! Can I ask you some questions?”

“Sorry, but I have some matters to attend to.”

With that, Sophie stood up to leave.

“Danny, who is she? She looks young!”

“Yeah, she’s only eighteen. Don’t feel jealous, though. Some are just born a prodigy.” Some people were gifted individuals who could do anything with ease. On the other hand, some could never become geniuses no matter how hard they tried. Nevertheless, all one needed to do was to do their best.

Just as Sophie stepped out of the black car, Tristan called.

“Where are you? I’m coming to pick you up.”

She doesn’t listen to anyone at all. I told her to rest at home because she’s sick, but she’s running everywhere!

"I'm at Monarch Mall," Sophie replied.

After the call ended, she stayed in her spot and waited for him.

However, no one expected the criminal to jump off the building.

Many people were entering and leaving Monarch Mall at that time, so when they saw a man falling to his death from the building, they screamed.

Eustace immediately asked his men to seal off the place.

"Hurry up! He still has a bomb on him that hasn't been defused!"

The men from the bomb squad rushed over. However, it was their first time seeing such a complicated bomb design, and for a moment, they had no idea what to do.

"Evacuate the people," Eustace promptly ordered.

He then walked over to Sophie.

"Ms. Tanner, please leave quickly. The bomb will go off at any time."

They haven't dismantled the bomb even after such a long time?

"Captain Sheppard, seems like your men aren't efficient at all!"

They can't track down the guy, and they don't even know how to defuse the bomb. The government's wasting their money on them by giving them such high pay!

“The other party’s a Ph.D. student of the prestigious Athene University. He’s very smart.”

“I never thought that the famous Captain Sheppard would be scrambling for excuses.”

At that, Sophie handed him the bag in her hands.

“Hold this for me. This costs ten million, so don’t lose it.”

That was all she said before walking toward the bomb, about to defuse it.

Eustace grabbed her.

“What are you doing? Don’t you know how dangerous this is?”

Sophie pulled her hand away from his.

“Don’t worry. I won’t haunt you if I die.”

At that, Eustace handed the bag to his subordinate before entering the scene with Sophie.

“Captain Sheppard, leave now! There’s only a minute left!”

The men from the bomb squad had decided to retreat from the scene. After all, the people had all been evacuated, and what they prioritized most was the safety of the people.

“Move aside.”

“Young lady, this is too dangerous! You need to run, now!”

Sophie did not want to waste any more breath on him, so she shoved him aside and crouched down to take a glance at the bomb. Then, she took the equipment from the side.

“Captain Sheppard, this is a real bomb!”

This isn’t a game! Is this girl not afraid of dying?

“Both of you should evacuate now,” Eustace said to the two bomb squad technicians.

“Captain Sheppard...” was all the two technicians could say before they realized that there was no time left.

Thus, they began running away from the scene.

“Get down,” Sophie ordered.

Eustace had always been the one to order others around, but a young woman was now the one giving orders. Nevertheless, he still did as she said.

After Sophie cut the green line, she then cut the red one.

Everyone on the special police force was sprawled on the floor. Even the men from the bomb squad could not defuse the bomb, so all of them were sure that it would go off.

However, ten seconds passed. Then, twenty. Thirty. A minute.

Sophie stood up and began walking away.

When she saw Eustace still sprawled on the ground, her lips curled.

Her smile was what greeted Eustace when he lifted his head.

It was a blinding grin.

“Who are you really?” he asked, staring at the young woman in front of him in confoundment.

Chapter 52 A Show To Watch

“Just someone ordinary.”

Sophie was not afraid of Eustace looking into her.

“An ordinary person who knows how to defuse a bomb?” Clearly, Eustace did not believe her.

“I’ve read a few books in relevance to the topic.” If it wasn’t for the urgency of the matter, Sophie would not have defused the bomb herself. “What’s the matter? Are you going to arrest me?”

“No. I’m just curious about you.”

“There’s no need for that. I simply like reading books.”

“Regardless of everything, thank you. I’ll buy you a meal another day.”

“It’s fine. Also, I don’t want the reporters to find out what I’ve done. It’s annoying.”

Sophie then took her bag from a police officer and quietly left the barricaded area. There were many reporters outside, and she did not want to speak to any of them.

There’s still blood on me. I should go back and clean myself up. I probably look quite frightening at the moment.

When she took out her phone to look at the screen, she realized that Tristan had called her multiple times.

She called him back.

“Where are you? I’m out right now. Wait, I see your car. Don’t move. I’ll come over now.”

All Sophie wanted was to leave the area as quickly as she could while not catching anyone’s attention.

Meanwhile, after ending the call, Tristan alighted the car to wait for her. However, the first thing he noticed on her was the blood on her shirt.

Instantly, he strode toward her.

“What happened?” I was only away from her for an afternoon. Why is she covered in blood now?

“I’m fine,” was the only thing she said to him.

“You’re covered in blood, but you’re telling me that you’re fine?” Tristan growled, and the air around him turned cold.

Who is it? Who’s the one who dared lay a finger on my woman?

“It’s not my blood; I’m not hurt. So don’t worry.”

After making sure that it really was not her blood, Tristan became at ease. He then opened the car door for her to enter the front passenger seat.

“Ms. Tanner, how did you end up covered in blood after your shopping trip?”

“Bad luck. I met a piece of trash.”

Sophie hated criminals with high intellect the most. They’re so smart, but instead of putting their intelligence to good use, they choose to commit crimes.

Once Sophie returned to Wisteria Apartments, she took a shower and changed into a set of fresh clothes.

She threw the bloodstained clothes into the trash can, but when she thought about how the housekeeper was going to notice it, she tied up the trash bag and planned to throw it out later.

“Let’s go. Felix is going to have an early celebration for Ysabelle’s birthday, and Ysabelle told me that I have to bring you there.”

Ysabelle and the others were at Gold Sea Club. The place was the most luxurious five-star club in Jipsdale.

Just as Tristan and Sophie entered the car, Ysabelle called.

“Soph, hurry up. Everyone’s waiting for you. What’s the matter with my uncle? Why does he need to take so long to pick someone up?”

“Something happened, so you guys can start eating first if you’re hungry.”

“We’re not. You can take your time. There’s no need to hurry.”

With that, Ysabelle ended the call.

“She’ll take a little while longer. Soph’s a little busy right now.”

“What can a student be busy about? I’d say it must be because she doesn’t care about your birthday.”

The one who spoke was Winter.

“Winter, I don’t like the way you’re talking about Soph. If she says that she’s busy, then she must be busy. If you’re in a rush, you can leave first.”

Ysabelle was upset to hear Winter talk about Sophie in that way.

“Ysabelle, I don’t mean anything by it. I just don’t think tardiness is good. It’ll make her seem uncultured.”

The smile on Ysabelle’s face dropped. “Winter, I doubt talking behind someone’s back is a cultured behavior.”

“Winter, you can leave first if you’re busy,” Charles uttered unhappily. This woman keeps talking smack about Sophie. If Tristan were to hear her, even I wouldn’t be able to protect her.

Winter clamped her mouth shut.

If it wasn’t for Tristan, I wouldn’t have wanted to come to this place! Besides, what kind of witch is Sophie to make Ysabelle so protective of her?

“All right. Don’t be mad anymore. We’re all friends here,” Felix said, trying to defuse the situation.

“Who’s friends with you?” Ysabelle huffed, still angry.

Felix patted her head.

“Ysabelle...” There’s really nothing I can do about her.

Ysabelle smacked his hand away.

“You’re messing up my hairstyle.”

Right then, a server opened the door to the room, and Tristan entered with Sophie.

The moment Ysabelle saw Sophie, she beamed.

“Sit here, Soph!”

Ysabelle pulled Sophie to a seat beside hers.

To Sophie’s left was Ysabelle, while Charles was already sitting on her right. In other words, there was no space left for Tristan to sit.

“Uncle Tristan, why are you still standing there? Take a seat!”

When Charles saw Tristan looking at him, he stood up and offered his seat to the latter. “Here you go, Mr. Tristan.”

We’re just having a meal. Does he really need to stick by her side?

Tristan took Charles’ seat without any hesitation.

With that, Winter was sitting by Tristan’s other side.

She did not care why Tristan was sitting there as long as she was sitting beside him.

Felix then asked the server to bring the dishes over.

“Ysabelle will be having her birthday tomorrow. Old Mr. Lombard will surely take up most of her time tomorrow, and there’s nothing I can do about it, so I’ll be celebrating her birthday here today. Thank you for coming, guys!”

Felix opened a bottle of 1982 Château Lafite-Rothschild.

The server then filled the glasses of the people by the table, but when she was about to fill Sophie’s glass, Tristan stopped her.

“Just a hot glass of milk for her.”

“Of course, mister.”

“It’s Ysabelle’s birthday today, so all of us are drinking a little. Ms. Tanner, could it be that you’re not of age yet?” Winter asked.

Tristan ignored her.

The others did the same, and Winter turned gloomy at once. It felt as if someone had slapped her across the face.

“Happy birthday, Ysabelle!”

Sophie took her glass of milk and stood up.

“I’m glad that I’m friends with you, for you make me hate Jipsdale less.”

Ysabelle lifted her glass of red wine as well.

“Soph, it’s my pleasure to be friends with you too. We have to be good friends for the rest of our lives, okay? You have no idea how much I like you!”

The two toasted, and Ysabelle took a sip of her red wine while Sophie took a sip of her milk.

“Happy birthday, Ysabelle! You’re all grown up before I even knew it.” Charles lifted his glass as well.

“Thank you.”

Meanwhile, Sean only lifted his glass in Ysabelle’s direction. He was a man of few words, after all.

“Thank you.”

Felix then put a meatball on Ysabelle’s plate.

“Our Ysabelle’s finally all grown up.” I’ve been waiting so long for this day.

Sophie was only inattentive for a split second, and when she came back to her senses, she realized that there was much more food on her plate than before.

At that, she could not help but glance at Tristan.

Is he trying to feed a human or a pig?

After a few mouthfuls, Sophie lost her appetite. Just a glimpse at her plate, and she already felt full.

Hence, she put all the meat onto Tristan’s plate.

When the others noticed her actions, they stared at her.

Winter sneered, thinking, Sophie must have a death wish! Everyone knows that Tristan is a germaphobe, but Sophie just gave him the food that she has bit into before. Guess it's time for me to just sit back and watch the show.

"What's the matter? Why are you all looking at me?"

Then, Tristan ate the food that Sophie had bitten into in front of everyone.

Charles gaped at the sight of it. Is this still the Mr. Tristan that I know?

Even Sean was dumbfounded. I guess that's the end of Mr. Tristan, huh?

Meanwhile, Felix did not have much of a reaction. What's wrong with that? I'd be glad to eat anything Ysabelle can't finish, but sadly, I don't have the chance to do that.

At the same time, Winter was shocked to her core, Where did Mr. Tristan's principles go? Isn't he the one with the most principles? Could it be that he's no longer a germaphobe?

With that thought in mind, she mustered up the courage to put a piece of barbecue ribs onto Tristan's plate.

Chapter 53 In His Arms

Tristan instantly furrowed his brows, evidently upset.

"Excuse me."

"Yes, mister? What can I do for you?"

“Bring a new plate for me.”

Everyone was rendered speechless. So, he’s still a germaphobe; he’s just fine with Sophie.

Winter’s face turned purple with rage. Does he hate me that much? Besides, I was using a new fork!

“Ms. Tanner, I heard that you have good grades. Did you rank second in grades?” Sean abruptly mentioned.

“It’s just average.”

“Ha,” Winter sneered. That’s nothing to be proud of. She’s just a nerd.

“Ms. Tanner, you’re quite good with your words. Maybe you can think about studying law. If you actually do that, you can come and work at Burtons’ Law Firm.”

The best lawyer from the best law firm in the country was offering her a place in his company.

Winter frowned. When did Sean become such a bootlicker? Isn’t Burtons’ Law Firm the hardest place to get into? It’s a hundred times more challenging than the examination for civil servant job applications.

“Thank you for the offer, but I’m not interested in becoming a lawyer,” came Sophia’s reply.

“It’s still a while before the start of the university entrance exam. You can take your time to consider this.”

It was the first time the others had heard so many words from Sean.

“Okay.”

“Ms. Tanner, there’s a revolution going on in your company. I wonder what thoughts you have about that?” There were many women who looked pretty, but there were few who had a brain. Winter felt that she was the latter, for she handled her perfumery business well, and that was why she looked down on Sophie.

“Nothing much.”

“Ha,” Winter gleefully chuckled. I knew it. She’s nothing but a bimbo!

“Winter, I’m the main character of the day. Why are you so focused on Soph?” Ysabelle was well aware that Winter was targeting Sophie. If it wasn’t for Charles, she would have flipped the table in fury.

“Sorry. I’ll down a glass to right my wrong,” Winter said as she picked up a glass, feeling much better.

With that ongoing mess in the Tanner family, I’m sure Sophie isn’t living her best life right now. As long as she’s unhappy, I’m happy.

“Finish your milk.” Tristan handed Sophie the glass of milk.

Sophie sighed in exasperation, but she still took the glass from him.

After all, he was doing that for her sake, and she figured she could not embarrass him like that.

Winter scoffed in disdain at the sight of Sophie’s meek demeanor. She’s just Tristan’s pet. He’ll get sick of her eventually. If she’s not cunning enough, she won’t survive in our social circle.

After the meal, they went to the most famous bar in Jipsdale called Nocturnal.

Ysabelle was not of age back then, so they never brought her to places like Nocturnal. However, now that she was finally of age, she insisted on going to the bar.

Sean and Charles walked in the front while Felix and Ysabelle were behind them. After those four were Tristan and Sophie, with Winter walking last.

She could not help but clench her fists at the sight of the two in front of her.

If it wasn't for Sophie, I would have been the one beside Tristan.

Once they were inside Nocturnal, Felix and Ysabelle went and sit on a two-seater couch while Sean sat in an armchair.

The couch Sophie and Tristan sat on was the middle three-seater couch. When Winter saw that there was space left on the couch, she tried to take a seat beside Tristan. However, Charles pulled her away to sit beside him.

"Charles, what are you doing?" I didn't even do anything yet!

"Don't make Mr. Tristan mad. You won't be able to bear the consequences."

In fact, I don't think anyone in Jipsdale is able to bear the consequences of angering him.

Winter did not want to admit defeat, but she was afraid of actually infuriating Tristan.

Naturally, Nocturnal's manager knew who these people were. Thus, he arranged the best seats for them.

Then, he hired the best bartender to serve them.

"Mister, please make me the best cocktail."

This bartender is so handsome!

“Of course, my lady.”

With that, the bartender began whipping up a cocktail for her. Indeed, he was the best bartender in Nocturnal. His moves were suave, and the glass was flying from one of his hands to the other. The very sight of his performance kept everyone on the edge of their seats, and the ending them cheer as well.

“Here you go, miss.” The bartender handed a colorful cocktail to Ysabelle.

After taking a sip of the cocktail, Ysabelle immediately gave the bartender a thumbs-up.

The bartender then made a cocktail for everyone.

“Hurry up! Let’s hurry over there before the seats run out!”

“I’m so excited! I came here to see my favorite celebrity today!”

“Me too!”

“Mark’s my favorite singer! I heard that he frequently sings in this bar!”

“Will he be singing today?”

“No, he’s here as the DJ today.”

“It’s Mark, my favorite singer! I can’t believe I’ll be able to see him here today.”

Ysabelle was thrilled.

“Soph, why don’t we go over there to take a look?”

“Sure.”

Sophie got to her feet and went with Ysabelle to see her favorite singer.

“I’ll head there too.” Tristan stood up.

“Me too.” What the hell? Isn’t Ysabelle a little too happy to hear Mark’s name?

Alarm bells were ringing in Felix’s head.

“Count me in,” Winter said as she stood up. She had decided to follow Tristan wherever he went. After all, if it wasn’t for him, she would not be there at all.

Mark was already on the stage, and he was dressed in an oversized black T-shirt and a pair of black distressed jeans.

His getup was simple, but the simplicity of his clothes made his ear stud even more eye-catching.

As he remixed the song, he swayed his body to the beat.

He was only moving his body to the rhythm, but his fans were screaming until their throats were sore below the stage.

Ysabelle kept trying to squeeze her way to the front. Meanwhile, Felix, who was afraid that those crazed fans would hurt Ysabelle, kept his arms spread out to protect her.

“Soph, come over quickly!” Ysabelle cried out upon reaching the innermost of the crowd.

Sophie had no choice but to squeeze her way into the crowd as Tristan shielded her in his arms.

The further they went into the crowd, the less space there was.

Hence, Tristan ended up wrapping his arms around Sophie so that no one could touch her.

Finally, Sophie reached Ysabelle.

Winter came with them, and she tried to follow them in. Sadly, she only managed to take a few steps into the crowd before she ended up getting pushed out of the crowd.

“You!”

Winter was furious. What a bunch of uncivilized girls!

She tried to enter the crowd again, but a plump young woman pushed her to the ground.

Winter landed on her bottom, and pain shot up her body from the fall.

She jumped to her feet, ready to lose her temper at the other young woman, but her voice was drowned out by the screams of the girls around her. Everyone ignored her.

In the meantime, Tristan was still holding onto Sophie.

He was not interested in Mark, so his attention was on the people around them. He was not planning to let anyone, regardless of whether they were a man or a woman, come into contact with Sophie.

“Ah! I’m so happy today! Mark, I love you!”

Felix pursed his lips upon hearing Ysabelle's screams.

"I'm going to ask for an autograph later." In the blink of an eye, Ysabelle had turned into a happy fan who was eager to meet her favorite celebrity.

Not long after, the song ended.

Mark turned around to whisper something to the host, and the host beamed upon hearing his words.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you're in luck tonight. Mark has said that he would like to sing a song to thank you all for your enthusiasm. However, he has asked to work with a lucky fan."

Chapter 54 So Cool

"Ah! Me! Pick me!"

The fans cheered even louder and wilder.

"Now, I wonder who will that lucky fan be?"

Darkness enveloped the bar, leaving only a beam of light shining down on Sophie.

"And there we have it! Our lucky fan today will be that stunning woman!"

Sophie was speechless.

"Oh, my God, Soph, you're going to work with my idol! Ahhh! That is so amazing! You've got to get me an autograph, okay?" Ysabelle was beyond excited.

"Do you not want to go? If you don't, we can leave now," Tristan asked.

“It’s fine. I’ll do this for Ysabelle. It’ll be her birthday present.”

In the next moment, it was as though a miracle had happened because the fans parted ways and a clear path magically appeared in front of Sophie.

“Shall we?”

The ladies screamed in delight when they saw Mark extending the invitation gracefully.

“Shh...”

Mark signaled the others to calm down.

The fans had always listened to him, so the place turned silent a moment later.

Mark led the way and brought Sophie up onto the stage. However, Sophie had no intention of singing at all. She walked toward the band and whispered something into the drummer’s ears. The drummer stood up immediately after to let her have his seat.

Mark grabbed the microphone, walked to Sophie, and greeted her.

“It’s been a while since we last saw each other.”

Sophie ignored him. D*mn, this guy is still as immature as ever.

Mark nodded to the other members of the band.

“I didn’t realize that Sophie knows how to play the drums,” commented Felix, who was rather surprised.

“Neither did I.”

The music played, and Sophie turned to Mark. Their eyes locked before their performance began.

Sophie spun her drumstick in a way that made her look cool.

The lights landed on both Mark and Sophie.

When Sophie played the drums, her style was so breathtaking that every move she made stirred Tristan’s heart.

Tristan rarely went to concerts, but the way Sophie played the drums at that moment... She was mesmerizing, and for a moment there, he felt as though that drum set was perfect for her. It was almost as if she was born to be a drummer.

Many fans were unhappy at the beginning when they weren’t chosen as the lucky fan and couldn’t hang out with Mark. After seeing Sophie’s performance, however, everyone was pacified.

They thought that the lucky audience member was cool and worked perfectly in sync with Mark.

The song was over soon. Sophie put the drumsticks away and planned on getting off that stage right away.

“Let’s have dinner together,” invited Mark.

“I’m busy.”

“You’re still as cool as ever,” commented Mark. He couldn’t help smiling at that. “But I don’t care. I’ll be leaving Jipsdale in a few days for my tour, so you must have dinner with us.”

“Is that a threat?”

“No, I wouldn’t have the guts to do so. The band can’t afford to lose you.”

“Mark, I’m sure you know this, but I only joined the band for fun. I never intended to make a career out of this.”

“I know. That is why I’m asking you to have dinner with all of us sometime. For old time’s sake,” said Mark. He never overstepped or pushed her.

“Fine.”

Eventually, Sophie agreed to go to dinner with him.

Back then, she joined Mark’s band because she was bored. Their band happened to be looking for a drummer, so she auditioned for the role.

“Give me an autograph. My friend’s a huge fan.”

“Not a problem.”

As a prank, Mark signed his name on her coat.

Sophie walked down the stage and made her way back to Tristan.

“Let’s go home.”

The concert was over, so the fans returned to their seats.

Tristan narrowed his eyes when he saw the signature on Sophie’s coat. A dangerous aura oozed out of him.

I guess I'll have to get someone to break that superstar's hand.

"What's wrong?" asked Sophie. Is it just me or is he angry again?

"It's nothing. You let him touch you, huh?" replied Tristan as he pointed at the signature on her coat.

Sophie was speechless.

She took off her coat right away and handed it to Ysabelle.

"Here, the autograph you asked for."

In truth, Sophie didn't expect Mark to sign on her coat either.

Ysabelle hugged Sophie tightly in her arms after getting the autograph she had been dreaming about.

"Ah, Soph! I love you so much," she exclaimed. She never imagined that she would actually get her hands on Mark's autograph.

Oh boy, did I just offend Uncle Tristan? Why is he looking at me as though he's going to kill me?

Felix was surprised as well. He didn't think that Tristan would be jealous of his own niece.

Isn't that a little too possessive?

Winter didn't get to push her way in earlier, but she saw Sophie's performance from afar with the rest of the crowd.

My guess is that Sophie knows that supposed superstar, Mark. How else could they work so perfectly in sync? Relationships between band members have always been messy. Who knows? Maybe the two of them have a complicated past together.

She was convinced that Sophie would be in hot waters if any incriminating evidence was exposed. I'm certain that the powerful Tristan would be pickier with women.

The group of five returned to their seats soon after. Ysabelle was still excited and kept staring at the autograph.

"It's just a signature, isn't it? I can sign a dozen for you in a minute. Is it really necessary to stare at it like that?"

"Pfft, I'm not interested in your signature. Not all signatures are valuable, you know?"

"Ysabelle, that's a little harsh, isn't it? My signature is worth millions... maybe even more. How is it worthless to you? D*mn, you're terrible at valuing things."

Ysabelle shouted a little too much earlier, so she was parched. She picked up the cocktail sitting right beside her and sipped some.

"Ms. Tanner, do you know Mark personally? The two of you worked rather well together, and he chose you out of all the fans here tonight. Did something happen between the two of you?" asked Winter while feigning curiosity.

"Is that true? Soph, do you really know Mark?"

"Nope. I was just lucky."

"Oh, that makes sense, too. You have always been a lucky one."

Winter harrumphed. It was obvious she didn't believe a word Sophie had just said.

Sophie didn't care, though. As far as she was concerned, what Winter thought had nothing to do with her. There was no need to care about a random woman at all.

"You must've learned how to play drums in the past because your performance earlier was amazing."

Winter refused to change the topic. She kept pushing and asking about it.

"Ms. Quigley, you seem especially interested in my past. May I know what exactly it is you want to know?"

Impatience shone in Sophie's eyes.

"That's not it at all. I just wanted to keep a casual conversation going. Isn't that why we sat down here together in the first place?"

"That's enough, Winter!" growled Tristan as he glared at her.

She doesn't get to butt in on Sophie's past, regardless of what it was like.

"Yeah, he's right. Come on. Let's drink instead," suggested Charles. He was truly annoyed with his sister.

Why must Winter try to humiliate Sophie? It's not as though Mr. Tristan will fall in love with her if she does that.

"Soph, you were so cool earlier! Even a straight woman like myself was on the verge of falling for you!" complimented Ysabelle. She still hadn't recovered from her shock.

"Let's play darts," suggested Winter.

“Sure. What are the stakes?” asked Ysabelle. She was especially high that night, so she was down to play anything.

“The loser must find a person they like in Nocturnal and kiss him or her.”

“Winter,” warned Charles sternly once again.

“Oh, come on, Charles. The whole point of coming out here is to play. Besides, it’s just a kiss. It’s not like I’m asking for anything drastic.”

Winter was setting up a trap. If Sophie were to lose, she would be forced to kiss a stranger. On the other hand, if Sophie were to win the game, Winter would point out that Sophie was an experienced player in bar games despite her young age. That would make her seem like a rowdy girl.

“Since Winter is so adamant about playing the game, let’s do it then.”

Winter didn’t expect Tristan to support her like that. She couldn’t help feeling delighted and encouraged.

Chapter 55 Anticipating The Kiss

“Are you okay with it, Soph? We don’t have to play the game if you don’t want to.”

Ysabelle was certain that Sophie could do most things well, but throwing darts was a game that needed constant practice. I wonder if she ever played it before.

“It’s fine. We can play if that’s what you want.”

Sophie smiled warmly, and it was as though she was letting Ysabelle do whatever she wanted on her birthday.

"I love you so much, Soph," said Ysabelle. In a way, Sophie was the perfect boyfriend material. "Seriously, if you're a guy, I would marry you in a heartbeat."

Sophie smiled without saying anything else.

"Ms. Tanner, you truly are incredible. It seems like you can do everything with ease."

Winter was bidding her time and planning ahead. The higher the pedestal she put Sophie on, the more it would hurt when Sophie inevitably fell.

Sophie, however, didn't think much of it. It's just a game of throwing darts, so how hard can it be? I'll just let her think that she's winning for a little longer.

"Do you need Mr. Tristan to give you some private lessons beforehand? He was the one who taught you how to play pools the last time, right?"

"There's no need for that. Since Ms. Quigley is that eager to lose, let's just play."

Sophie was truly irked by Winter's behavior. After all, it shouldn't matter what her relationship with Tristan was like. Winter still had no right butting in on the matter.

"Hah," replied Winter. She couldn't help scoffing. "Before that, though, let's make things clear. This is just a game, so regardless of how things turn out to be, no one is allowed to hold a grudge, okay?"

"Winter, let's just play. Why are you talking so much? What's the point of saying all that, anyway?"

How have I never noticed that Winter is so annoying before?

"I'll go first," said Ysabelle. She stood up and tossed the dart right away.

"Ten points," said Felix. He couldn't help chuckling a little. Ysabelle's skill is really... something else.

“What are you laughing at, Felix? Do you think you can do better? Fine, go on, then. You can go next.”

“Sure,” replied Felix. He stood behind the line, adjusted his stance, and threw the dart. “Twenty-five points. See that? That is how you do it.”

“Hmph!”

That good-for-nothing Felix is deliberately messing with me!

“Soph, it’s your turn.”

Sophie made her way over. She picked up a dart and tossed it mindlessly.

Even so, it managed to hit the bull’s eye.

Everyone was instantly speechless.

The same thought flashed across their mind. My gosh, can she be any more nonchalant?

“Huh... I didn’t think my luck will be that good. Throwing darts is all about luck, right?”

Winter was even more delighted.

Although she was the one who suggested the game, she had never thought about winning it.

In fact, she was determined to lose the game. Only then would she be able to kiss Tristan.

After all, it was just a game. She figured that Tristan wouldn't be able to complain even if she were to kiss him.

"Wow, you play so well, Ms. Tanner. You must frequent clubs often and play regularly, huh?" Winter asked.

Sophie sneered. Ah, so that's what she has been planning.

Charles and Sean were up next. Both had trained with the special forces before, so games like that were nothing to them.

Hence, their results were virtually perfect.

"It's your turn, Mr. Tristan."

Winter was smiling brightly. Yes, I will surely lose now.

"You should go ahead. I'll be the last one," said Tristan.

Winter didn't have the guts to disobey since it was Tristan who told her to play first. There's no way Tristan is that bad at throwing darts, right? At worst, he will definitely get some points.

Winter made her way to the right spot, grabbed a dart, and threw it as well as she could.

In the end, however, she got the worst result with only one point.

"I'm so sorry. It's been a while since I last played this game, so I under-performed," said Winter sadly. She pretended to be disappointed, but she was actually brimming with happiness.

She reckoned she finally had the chance to kiss the man she loved, who was right there in Nocturnal.

"It's your turn, Mr. Tristan."

Winter was getting a little eager.

"Soph, why does it seem as though Winter wants to lose the game? Is it just me, or is she that obvious?"

"It's not just you. She wants to lose so that she can kiss Tristan. Can you really not see that?"

Sophie would have to be an idiot to not know what Winter was planning.

"Huh? What the hell? How shameless can that woman get? I can't believe she came up with a plan like that. Does she really like Uncle Tristan that much? Ugh, this is so disgusting. She is not worthy of him."

Ysabelle would never have put two and two together if Sophie hadn't pointed it out.

"Well... What do we do now? We can't let her kiss Uncle Tristan, can we?"

"What is there for us to do? This is about your Uncle Tristan, and no one can do anything if he's okay with her kissing him," Sophie replied.

"No, that won't do. Anyone else can kiss him but her!"

"Why not? Aren't the two of you on good terms?"

"She and I are no longer friends, okay? I mean, did you see how she repeatedly goes after you today? I don't want to be friends with her anymore."

As far as Ysabelle was concerned, anyone who dared to go after her best friend would be deemed an enemy. She didn't even care who that enemy might be.

Tristan gracefully made his way over and picked up a dart.

Winter's gaze moved with the dart.

Her heart began thumping fast.

The opportunity was so close that she began picturing what it would feel like to press her lips against his. She had been dreaming of that kiss for so long, but she never had the chance to realize it.

In a way, she had to thank Ysabelle for it. If it hadn't been for her, Winter would never have had an opportunity like that.

"Oh my gosh, Uncle Tristan..."

"What the hell?" said Felix. He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

"Uh, Mr. Tristan..."

Sophie didn't say anything. She simply blinked. Okay, he definitely did that on purpose!

The dart fell out of the board, so Tristan was the one with the lowest point of zero points.

Winter's smile faded right away. And here I was expecting that kiss eagerly. Yet, this is all I got for waiting patiently?

The kiss she had been dreaming of, the opportunity she had been dying for... Everything faded just like that.

"I bet Uncle Tristan saw through her schemes. How is he so smart? Man, he lost so perfectly."

Ysabelle was cheering inwardly. I'm okay with Uncle Tristan kissing anyone so long as that person isn't that scheming b*tch, Winter.

"Mr. Tristan, you..."

Winter lost her voice. T-That means he saw through my schemes.

The other men present knew that Tristan lost on purpose because it was too obvious. I guess he just wants to kiss Sophie, huh?

"Excuse me, I have to go to the restroom," said Sophie. Sh*t! Winter set this stupid trap, and I am not paying for her mistake!

Hope began flaring within Winter again after hearing Sophie excusing herself to go to the restroom.

She figured that Tristan couldn't possibly kiss one of the other boys, and since Ysabelle was his niece, kissing her would be inappropriate. That meant that Winter was the only option available.

Obviously, she would be much happier to have Tristan kiss her instead of being the one who had to take the initiative to kiss him.

Winter licked her lips a little, and her heart thumped faster.

Sophie had just stood up when Tristan suddenly grabbed her wrist and pulled firmly. She fell onto his lap right away.

She hadn't even registered what had happened before Tristan planted his lips on hers.

Winter was speechless.

So... Tristan had been waiting for the opportunity to lose as well...

"Mmm!"

Sophie struggled to break free, but Tristan's hold on her was strong. He did not give her a shot at escaping.

Chapter 56 Feeling Under The Weather

Sophie was running out of breath. Will I be the first person to die from kissing due to suffocation? Will the media report my death tomorrow?

Winter clenched her fists. D*mn it! How could this happen when I thought everything was within my control?

"You see that, Winter? No matter how hard you push, some things just won't go your way, so please stop testing Mr. Tristan's patience."

"I want to go home now, Charles. I'm feeling a little under the weather." Winter could not take it anymore. She stood up and left without even bidding Ysabelle farewell.

Ysabelle was just as stunned. Oh, my God. Uncle Tristan is taking advantage of Soph now. What should I do?

If the person were someone else, Ysabelle would have walked up and fought him to the death. B-but it's Uncle Tristan!

She did not have the courage to go against Tristan.

She could only pinch Felix's arm with all her might to vent her frustration.

Felix exclaimed in pain, “Hey! What’s wrong with you? Why did you pinch me?”

Felix had no idea what he did to deserve that. I didn’t even do anything! And that’s what Mr. Tristan does best anyway. He has his way with women, and I’ll never be half as good as him.

“It’s all your fault. If you didn’t insist on celebrating my birthday early, Uncle Tristan wouldn’t have a chance to take advantage of Soph. Who else can I blame?” Ysabelle vented her anger on Felix.

Since she could not express her frustration in front of Tristan, she could only release her anger on Felix.

“Belle, think of it this way. You like Soph very much, right? Wouldn’t it be great if she became your sister-in-law? You two will be able to stay together forever!” Felix was proud of the idea.

Meanwhile, Tristan finally released Sophie when she thought she was about to die from suffocation.

She wanted to get up, but the lack of oxygen in her brain due to the prolonged kiss caused her to stagger and fall back into a sitting position.

However, this time, she fell on a particular part of a man’s anatomy.

Sophie, who had always been a calm person, could not remain so when she realized what she was sitting on. She snapped her head up and met Tristan’s burning gaze. “I’m sorry. I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“It’s all right.” Tristan tried to tame the raging monster in his lower torso.

But no matter how hard he tried, he could not suppress the desire in his voice.

His reaction made Sophie even more embarrassed. However, the more embarrassed she was, the calmer she would be. It’s just a kiss, isn’t it? It shouldn’t bother me. It’s a game anyway, and we all agreed not to get mad no matter what the outcome was.

Yet somehow, her heart was pounding furiously. It was as if her heart was about to leap out of her chest.

Sophie began to wonder why she allowed Tristan to get to her. I've never felt like this before!

"It's getting late. I should go home now. How about you guys?" said Sean, who was a man who led a disciplined lifestyle.

"Well then. Let's call it a day. Felix, could you send Ysabelle home for me?"

They could not drive because they had been drinking all night, but their drivers had arrived to send them home.

"Sure, don't worry. I'll send her home safely," Felix replied. I want to spend more time with her too.

"Let's go. I'll send you home," Tristan said to Sophie in a gentle voice.

Sophie still felt a little dizzy when they got into the car.

She could not believe that was how she had lost her first kiss.

"What's wrong? Do you think I took advantage of you? Why don't you kiss me back, and we'll call it quits?"

Tristan's suggestion rendered the young woman speechless.

"No, thank you. I'm all right." Sophie gritted her teeth. There's nothing I can do. I can only suck it up and move on.

Even when she woke up the next day, she could not resist touching her lips after recalling last night's incident. Oh, come on, Sophie! It's just a kiss! Grow up!

When Sophie was about to go out for breakfast after freshening up, the doorbell rang.

She opened the door and saw Tristan standing outside with breakfast in his hands.

“You could have opened the door yourself, couldn’t you?” Sophie did not understand why he had to ring the doorbell since he was the house owner.

“I told you this is your private space now, and I can’t simply trespass on your premises unless there’s an emergency.” Tristan wanted to respect her privacy.

“Let’s have breakfast. We’ll get you an evening gown after this.” She has to wear an evening gown for Ysabelle’s birthday party tonight.

“Don’t get me wrong. I realized you didn’t have an evening gown in your wardrobe the other day, so I decided to take you out and get you one.”

“You don’t have to explain further. I’ll do as you say.”

Sophie was not someone who would put on a hypocritical front. I’ll get an evening gown if the party requires me to wear it.

Sophie was still in her sleepwear as she had just woken up.

Her sleepwear was a mauve pink short dress that exposed her slender and fair legs. She looked exceptionally seductive in that attire.

The two of them had breakfast together. Today’s breakfast suited Sophie’s tastes, so she ate quite a lot.

After that, Sophie went to change while Tristan waited for her in the living room.

Sophie wore a simple long-sleeve white t-shirt with a pair of jeans and a cap. “Come on. Let’s go!”

Tristan could not help but question himself after seeing Sophie’s youthful look. Am I too old for her?

While they were on the way to the store, Tristan asked, “Sophie, does age matter to you in a relationship?”

Upon hearing that question, Sophie, who was enjoying the pleasant weather and the view of passersby on the road while resting her right arm on the windowsill, turned around to look at the man.

Tristan cleared his throat to hide his awkwardness when he realized Sophie was staring at him.

“It’s just a random question I had in mind,” Tristan said. While some young girls like boys their age, some prefer older men. I wonder what’s her preference.

“Me? I like young men—good-looking ones,” Sophia answered and giggled.

Tristan blanched at her words.

He then brought her to a store that specialized in custom-made evening gowns.

Sophie wondered why he brought her here as she knew the evening gowns were all custom-made. The designers would have to take the customer’s measurements and design a dress according to the customer’s demeanor. Tonight is the party, and we don’t have time to make a new one!

Meanwhile, the designer from the store came out to greet Tristan.

“Bring me Ms. Tanner’s evening gown.”

“The gown is ready, Mr. Tristan.”

The designer instructed his subordinate to bring out the evening wear.

“You made a gown for me? But how? I don’t think I’ve come here before!” Sophie wondered.

The designer responded with a grin. “Mr. Tristan gave me your photo a week ago and asked me to make an evening gown for you.” “You looked amazing in the photo, but you look even more fabulous in person! You’re what our brand is about. Would you like to become our model?”

Chapter 57 Private Territory

“Thank you, but I’m not interested in becoming a model.” Sophie never liked others knowing about her private life.

“Oh, I see. That’s such a shame because I think you’re born for it. You don’t have to reject me right away, though. Sleep on it, okay? If you happen to change your mind, call me anytime.” The designer passed Sophie her business card.

Right then, the assistant brought over the dress Tristan had ordered them to custom make. “Ms. Tanner, please come over with me to try the dress out. If needed, we can alter it on the spot.”

The assistant then led Sophie to the changing room and helped her put on the black dress.

“The dress fits you like a glove, Ms. Tanner! Mr. Lombard is going to be over the moon when he sees you in it.” The assistant was dumbstruck. Although the girls who had gone there to custom-make dresses were all pretty, Sophie was the prettiest of them all.

“Thank you.” Sophie had been praised for her looks ever since she was young. Hence, she was already numb to such compliments.

“I’ll help you tie your hair up!” The assistant tied Sophie’s auburn hair up to reveal her beautiful neck.

Although Sophie wasn't wearing any makeup, she was still stunningly beautiful.

"We're done!" The assistant opened the door, and Sophie headed out.

When Sophie came out, Tristan was on the phone in front of the floor-to-ceiling window. Upon hearing the sound of footsteps, he turned around gracefully. Right then, he saw Sophie walking toward him in that black dress.

He was usually a composed and calm man. However, at that moment, he was stunned to the point he could not speak. I knew she was going to look good in black. It seems like I have good eyes for such things, after all. Indeed, Sophie looked very alluring dressed in that black sleeveless dress.

He then hung up the phone and approached Sophie.

"How is it? Do you like it?" The sleeveless dress stopped just right above the knee. Its design was meant to showcase her beautiful legs and stunning arms.

"Isn't it a little too short?" Tristan wasn't pleased when he realized all the men at the party would stare at Sophie's legs.

"No, it isn't. The length is perfect for an evening gown! All that it's showing are the arms and legs." The designer was thrilled with the dress. As a designer, her primary aim was to be able to get her customers to showcase her impeccable designs.

The designer then approached Sophie to check out the dress. "The area around your waist is still a little loose, though. Ms. Tanner, you have such a slender waist!"

Sophie had a spectacular figure. Despite being slim, she had all the assets a woman would want on her body.

"It's all right." Sophie wasn't bothered. Nonetheless, she was in love with the dress.

“Ms. Tanner, Mr. Lombard had personally picked this out for you.”

“Thank you.” With that, Sophie went to the changing room to change into her own clothes.

The designer wanted to alter Sophie’s dress, so Sophie and Tristan sat on the couch and waited.

“Mr. Lombard, your suit is ready.” The assistant brought Tristan’s suit out and asked, “Do you need to try them on?”

“That won’t be necessary. You can just leave them there.” His suits were always tailored there, so he was quite sure everything would fit nicely.

“It’s getting late. Shall we have lunch first?” Tristan asked.

Sophie nodded in response. Since she had just had a hearty breakfast, she wasn’t hungry. However, she was getting bored while waiting.

After instructing the assistant to send the dress and the suit to a particular location, Tristan brought Sophie to a fancy restaurant.

The moment Sophie sat down, she received a call from Ysabelle.

“Soph, where are you?” Ysabelle’s schedule was packed that day, so she had only found the time to ring Sophie.

“I’m at Dream Restaurant.” Sophie was talking to Ysabelle and flipping through the menu at the same time.

“What? You’re only having lunch now? By the way, you must come over tonight, okay?” Ysabelle was worried that Sophie wouldn’t show up.

"I know, Ms. Lombard. I'll be there. That's all, right? I still have matters to attend to, so I'll be hanging up now." With that, Sophie hung up the call.

Seeing that she had finally gotten off the phone, Tristan asked, "What would you like to eat? They serve good steak here."

"I'll have a salad to go with the steak, then."

Tristan ordered the dishes.

When the steak was served, Tristan helped her cut the steak into small pieces.

Being the handsome man that he was, he looked dashing even when he was cutting steak.

After he was done cutting, he served the plate to Sophie.

"Mr. Tristan, thank you so much for today. You don't have to accompany me to get the dress, actually. I can do it on my own." Knowing how busy Tristan was, Sophie was surprised that he would spend so much time with her. After all, getting a dress is just a small matter.

"Don't worry about it. These are all things I want to do. As long as that's the case, I don't find them tedious at all." Tristan continued cutting the steak.

After lunch, he found out he had left something behind at Lombard Group. Hence, he brought her along to the legendary Lombard Group's headquarters.

"I'll just wait in the car."

"It's fine. Let's head up together so that I can show you my working environment." Upon saying that, he went and opened the car door for Sophie.

Sophie had no choice but to get out of the car.

Lombard Group's headquarters was the most luxurious commercial building in Jipsdale. It was a ninety-story skyscraper.

Tristan brought Sophie along to the ninetieth floor using the elevator meant for the CEO.

The entire ninetieth floor was reserved for the CEO, and it had all the facilities one could ask for.

It was divided into two sections. One was for work, and it comprised the CEO's personal office and five offices for the secretaries. Apart from that, there was a luxurious conference room and a massive pantry.

The other section was Tristan's private space, and it was designed like a presidential suite.

"Do you stay here?" Sophie asked, knowing that she was staying in his unit at Wisteria Apartments.

"I would stay here whenever I'm caught up with work."

Lombard Group had all sorts of subsidiaries dealing in different industries. When he took over the company, there were a lot of things he needed to familiarize himself with. Furthermore, the power struggle within the company was a thorny situation to deal with.

When that happened, Tristan would just stay there and work endlessly.

Hence, the place was properly equipped, and he had everything he needed. After all, he wasn't one to mistreat himself.

"Have a look around, okay? I'll go to the office to get some things ironed out. I'll be back once I'm done." Tristan brought her to his private area.

Once Tristan left, Butterfly's call came.

"What's up?" Sophie asked.

"Phantom, something bad has happened. Someone was attacking Wings of Light's firewall."

"And?"

"Nothing happened in the end, of course. After all, you've personally set up Wings of Light's firewall. No one's going to be able to break it. Still, there seems to be a loophole in our firewall. If you're free, come over and have a look, will you?" Despite her confidence in Sophie, Butterfly was still slightly worried.

Chapter 58 Fake Invitation

Since someone was trying to go against Wings of Light, they had to deal with the situation carefully.

"Okay. I'll go over once I have the time," Sophie answered.

Wings of Light was an organization Sophie had formed three years prior. When she first established it, she had written the program herself to strengthen the firewall.

Ever since then, countless top hackers worldwide had tried to breach Wings of Light's firewall because they wanted to know the organization's secrets.

However, no matter how many times they tried, no one had succeeded in doing so yet.

Therefore, Sophie was very confident in the programming sequence she had written.

After being heavily involved for a while, Sophie found Butterfly to take over her place as the leader of Wings of Light. After that, she would only involve herself occasionally.

“By the way, have you been close with Tristan recently?” Upon hearing that Sophie would go over, Butterfly breathed a sigh of relief and went on to gossip. “Phantom, I know you like the thrill, but Tristan isn’t someone to mess with. I’m worried about your safety.” Due to Sophie’s tender age, the other members were quite protective of her.

“I know.” In fact, Sophie had heard all about Tristan. “Don’t worry. I can take care of myself. I’m not afraid of Tristan.”

Throughout the eighteen years of her life, Sophie had never been scared of anyone.

“Oh, right! When Tristan was in Horington, a dozen mercenaries tried to kill him. I need you to help me find out who those people were,” Sophie uttered.

“But there are a lot of people who want Tristan dead, no?”

Needless to say, a lot of people wanted Tristan dead because Lombard Group’s existence posed a lot of problems for the others financially.

“Phantom... Don’t fall for Tristan’s good looks, okay? He’s not right for you,” Butterfly warned. Phantom can get whatever she wants in life. She doesn’t need to get involved with Tristan.

“You’re overthinking it,” Sophie answered.

“Am I? Am I really overthinking it? I do wish that’s the case, then.”

“All right, that’s enough. Find out about the mercenaries and get back to me.”

“Okay. I’ll be as quick as possible.”

Nothing in the world could hide from Wings of Light.

“If that’s all, I’m going to hang up now.”

“Remember to come over to the headquarters,” Butterfly reminded before hanging up. What a tough life I’m living! Ever since I took over Wings of Light from Phantom, I’ve been busting my chops to run it. Am I the most pitiful person on earth or what?

After Sophie hung up the call, she started gaming on her phone.

Tristan walked in and saw what she was doing. He then approached her and sat next to her to watch her play.

Sophie only exited the game after she was done.

“It’s about time. Let’s go,” Tristan said.

“Mr. Tristan, is it okay if I don’t stick together with you?” The people who were attending the party were from the upper-class social circle. If she were to show up with Tristan, they would garner too much attention, and she preferred to keep a low profile.

“What’s wrong? Do you not like being with me?” Tristan’s mood suddenly dampened.

“Well, I don’t like the attention, so—”

“You’re a star. You’ll attract attention wherever you go.”

Sophie was rendered speechless.

“Fine. Since you don’t want to be with me, do as you please then,” Tristan added.

Sophie didn't say anything in response. Is Mr. Tristan throwing a tantrum?

Indeed, Tristan wasn't happy. He had already shown her so much, and yet, she didn't even want to be seen together with him in public.

Sophie wasn't experienced in coaxing others. Hence, she kept silent as well when Tristan was giving her the cold shoulder.

Ysabelle's birthday party was held on Diamond Cruise.

By six-thirty in the evening, a lot of the guests were already seen boarding the cruise ship with their invitation cards in their hands.

There were a bunch of reporters at the dock, and they were all trying to board the cruise ship because the public was very curious about the Lombard family. However, the security on the cruise ship was strict, and there was no way they could get on the ship.

As for those who had boarded, their phones were all confiscated. In order to safeguard the Lombard family's privacy, they couldn't risk any photos getting leaked.

Just then, a black Mercedes-Benz arrived at the dock, and Willow was seen getting out of it. Dressed in a yellow gown, she had her hair tied up, and she was holding a silver color purse.

She had heard about Diamond Cruise in the past, but that was the first time she saw the ship with her own eyes. Therefore, she was filled with excitement.

Meanwhile, the cruise ship was packed with all the prominent families in Chanaea.

Considering how incomparable the Tanner family was with the other prominent families, she never had the chance to get into their social circle. Finally, I'm going to get close to these people today!

The driver opened the car door for Louisa, and she was seen wearing an exquisite pink gown and matching high heels. Her hair was also styled the same way as Willow's.

She walked toward Willow excitedly because that was going to be her first time boarding Diamond Cruise as well.

"Let's go, Willow! I'll bring you in." Louisa couldn't wait to get inside the cruise ship. Since the party is attended by youngsters, this is the perfect chance to find a date!

In truth, the Yarborough family was nothing compared to the other families there.

"Louisa, I only have the chance to attend such a party because of you."

At the same time, she felt like a superstar because of the number of reporters there taking photos of her, and she was so caught up in the moment that she had forgotten who she was.

"Willow, you're my best friend. Considering how good of an opportunity this could be, it's only natural that I'm bringing you with me." Willow was the only person whom Louisa could get a sense of superiority from.

Obviously, Willow was well aware of that. However, she could only get opportunities as such when she was with Louisa.

Hence, she didn't mind Louisa finding a sense of superiority over her.

Louisa gave the security guards her invitation card, and they scanned it on their system.

The screen showed: Access denied.

The security guards tried again, and the same result was shown.

“Miss, I’m sorry, but you have a fake invitation card. You’re not getting on the cruise ship.”

“What? You must’ve gotten it wrong. How is it possible that my invitation card is fake?” Louisa was in disbelief.

“Miss, I’m sorry. It’s a fake invitation card.”

“That’s impossible!” Louisa was enraged. “Do you know who I am? There’s no way my family has gotten a fake invitation card.”

“Well, I’m sorry. I don’t know who you are, and I don’t care. The one thing I’m certain of is that you’re not getting on.”

“You...” Louisa was furious. “I’m not going to waste my breath on you. I’m Ms. Lombard’s best friend, and I’m here to celebrate her birthday. No matter what, I’m getting onto the cruise ship today.”

When Louisa tried to drag Willow onto the cruise ship, the security guards stepped forward and stopped them.

“Please leave. Otherwise, don’t blame us for taking extreme measures.”

Louisa thought they were just bluffing, so she tried to push her way through. However, the security guards held them up and brought them away from the cruise ship.

“Louisa, what’s going on? Didn’t Mr. Yarborough give you that invitation card?” Willow asked. This is so embarrassing. The reporters are taking photos of us.

“Wait. I’m calling my dad to find out what’s going on. I bet it’s just a mistake on their end. It can’t be fake!”

Right then, a taxi arrived at the dock. Sophie pushed the door open and exited the car.

The moment she got out of the car, the reporters started taking photos of her frantically and making comments.

“That young girl in the black dress is stunning! Who is she?”

“Indeed! With her demeanor, she’s surely an aristocrat.”

“She’s even more graceful than the celebrities!”

Chapter 59 Tear You Apart

“Oh? Which wealthy family is she from?”

Upon hearing that, Louisa and Willow turned around and saw Sophie walking toward the cruise ship.

“Why is she here? How did the Tanner family get an invitation from the Lombard family?” Louisa was curious because even the Yarborough family didn’t get invited.

“I have no idea.” Willow clenched her fists in anger. Since she didn’t get on the cruise ship, she wasn’t going to let Sophie get on it either.

Willow and Louisa stopped Sophie in her tracks.

“What are you doing here, Sophie? Do you know where this is? You’re not worthy of being here.” Louisa was so boastful she had forgotten her own invitation card was a fake.

“Indeed! Soph, you can’t go aboard the Diamond Cruise without an invitation, you know? Since it’s impossible for you to get on it, I would suggest you leave now before you embarrass yourself!” Willow taunted.

“Get out of my way.” Sophie wasn’t in the mood to entertain their nonsense.

"Do you have an invitation card? Like this one. See?" Louisa asked while waving her invitation card in Sophie's face. She was sure Sophie wouldn't have been invited.

"I mean, look at that miserable face of yours! I'm sure you weren't invited," she added.

"Is that any of your concern?" Sophie ignored the two of them and walked toward the cruise ship. I wonder if Tristan is here yet? That guy is so strange.

Louisa suddenly grabbed Sophie's hand and said, "I'm just reminding you out of kindness. There's no way you're getting on that cruise ship without an invitation. So could you please just leave before you embarrass the whole Tanner family?"

Sophie was pissed, so she grabbed Louisa's hand and pinched her.

Louisa yelled out in pain. "Ouch! What the hell are you doing, Sophie? You're hurting me. Let me go!"

"Didn't I warn both of you before? Didn't you understand when I told you guys not to pester me?" Sophie asked.

"What are you doing, Soph? Let go of Louisa!" While saying that, Willow was walking toward Sophie to stop her.

Sophie instantly shot her a gaze. Willow got spooked and backed off. She was scared because she was well aware of what Sophie was capable of.

"You're such a b*tch, Sophie! Let go of me now! Otherwise, I'll make you pay!" Louisa was in so much pain by then that she started having cold sweat.

"What a foul mouth. Since your parents never bothered to teach you a thing or two about manners, I guess I would have to teach you some lessons myself." With that, Sophie let go of her hand and gave Louisa two hard slaps across her face.

Louisa was stunned. Did that b*tch just slap me? How dare she hit me?

“How dare you?” She was infuriated. Just when she was about to pounce at Sophie, she saw her contemptuous glare. Louisa immediately froze.

“You’d better hide the next time you see me. Otherwise, you’ll be getting something more than two slaps.” Sophie took out a napkin from her purse and wiped her hands before throwing it into the bin.

The reporters were excitedly snapping photos of what happened. Noticing that, Sophie called Butterfly and told her to get rid of all the photos.

Afterward, she walked toward the check-in booth with Louisa’s and Willow’s eyes glued to her.

“Miss, may I see your invitation card?” the security guard asked.

Sophie frowned. It’s just a party. Why is an invitation card needed? Ysabelle didn’t even give me any card.

“I don’t have one,” she told the security guard.

“Miss, I’m sorry. But you can’t go in without an invitation card.”

The guests at the party were all rich and powerful. That was why the security was extremely strict.

Just then, Sophie received a call from Ysabelle.

“Why aren’t you here yet, Soph?” Ysabelle asked.

“I’m here. But did you forget to give me an invitation card?”

“Invitation card? Oh! I’m so sorry. I must’ve forgotten. It’s fine. Pass the phone to the security guard.”

Sophie handed the phone to the security guard. Upon hearing Ysabelle’s voice on the other end of the line, the guard panicked.

“Oh! I’m so sorry. I didn’t know you were Ms. Ysabelle’s friend! Please go ahead!”

Sophie walked right into the cruise ship after having her phone handed back to her.

Louisa and Willow could only watch as Sophie walked into the party they wished so much to attend.

“How is that possible? How did Sophie get on the cruise ship without an invitation card? We were denied access even when we had our invitation cards!” Louisa was baffled.

Willow kept mum. Why does everything seem so easy for Sophie?

Louisa once again went to the security guard and grumbled, “She didn’t have an invitation card, right? Why did you let her in when you’ve denied us access even though we have invitation cards?”

“Miss, if you insist on being a nuisance here, I would have no choice but to call the police.” The security guard was getting irritated.

“You—”

Willow pulled Louisa away when she saw an argument was about to take place.

“Forget about it, Louisa. Let’s just leave.” Willow was embarrassed.

“Forget about it? How could I? Sophie hit me just now,” Louisa complained.

“Louisa, haven’t you humiliated yourself enough?”

Louisa went quiet. Indeed, she had never been so humiliated before.

“I swear to make her pay! I must make her pay!” Louisa kept mumbling to herself all the way to the car.

After getting on the cruise ship, Sophie didn’t see Tristan around, although most of the guests had arrived.

In the meantime, she wanted to find Ysabelle so that she could give her the present she brought along.

However, someone purposefully bumped into her, causing her to drop the present.

“Oh, I’m sorry. It was an accident.” The girl that knocked her over then bent down to pick up the present.

“Give it back.” Sophie glared at the girl coldly. She definitely did it on purpose.

“I’ve seen all kinds of things! Don’t be so petty.” The girl opened the box and saw a rock inside. She couldn’t help but chuckle.

“You’re giving a rock to Ms. Ysabelle? Are you serious?” one of the other girls asked.

“You’re giving Ms. Ysabelle a rock? That’s so cheap!” another added.

“Don’t push it, girls. Has anyone heard of the Tanner family before? This is the third eldest daughter of the Tanner family. Her family has already disowned her! I guess the best she could do is a rock!”

The socialites on the cruise ship were all discriminating against Sophie.

“What are you girls doing?” Suddenly, Winter showed up and stood beside Sophie. “This is Ms. Ysabelle’s best friend. She will not be happy with how you girls are treating her best friend.”

“Winter, it’s not that we’re treating her poorly. But Ms. Sophie is being such a cheapskate by giving Ms. Ysabelle a rock as a present! We’re just standing up for Ms. Ysabelle,” one of the socialites argued.

“Give it to me.” Sophie was starting to get impatient.

“It’s just a d*mn rock! Why are you so anxious about it? I have plenty in my backyard. If you want some, feel free to come over and pick them up yourself.”

“Hahaha!”

The socialites were having the time of their lives making fun of Sophie.

Sophie walked toward the girl who knocked her over and snatched the present. While she was at it, she stomped her heel into her foot.

“Oh, I’m sorry. It was an accident,” Sophie apologized sarcastically.

With a heel in her foot, the socialite instantly squatted down in pain while holding her foot.

Chapter 60 Present

“Danielle, are you all right?” her friends asked before helping her up.

“F*ck you! Do you know how important my feet are to me? I’m going to make you pay!” Since Danielle Judd was a ballet dancer, her feet were her invaluable assets.

“Oh, is it? Then, you shouldn’t pester me anymore. Otherwise, I’m going to make sure to incapacitate your feet. Treat this as a lesson.” With that, Sophie ignored them and went to look for Ysabelle.

Winter walked toward Danielle and pretended to be considerate. “Are you okay, Danielle? Didn’t I tell you not to act impulsively?”

“Winter, you know I’ve always been interested in Mr. Tristan, right? What’s so good about that wild girl?” Danielle raged. She’s nothing compared to me in terms of family background and looks!

“Well, you can’t force your feelings upon others, you know? That’s enough. Stop causing any trouble. Otherwise, Mr. Tristan isn’t going to be happy about it,” Winter advised.

“I know.” Danielle was still incredibly frustrated. However, she was aware of how scary Tristan could be. Although she liked him a lot, she was scared of him more.

“That stupid, poor girl. How dare she get on Diamond Cruise and wrap up a rock as a present? I’m sure Mr. Tristan is just fooling around with her,” Danielle grumbled.

“All right. Enough. You’ll get in trouble if Mr. Tristan hears that,” Winter warned.

At that moment, Tristan had arrived on the cruise ship.

The cruise ship then set sail shortly after.

Upon seeing Tristan, the socialites started posing seductively.

“You’re here, Mr. Tristan!” Winter dashed toward him and asked, “Would you be my partner tonight, Mr. Tristan?”

There was going to be a dance later that evening. Hence, Winter wanted Tristan to be her dance partner. Since he didn’t come with Sophie, that means I have a chance to dance with him!

"I'm sorry. I already have a dance partner." Tristan turned her down.

He then cast a glance around, but he couldn't find Sophie. She must've gone to look for Ysabelle.

"But, Mr. Tristan—" Winter was about to ask again.

"Winter, don't make me repeat myself." Tristan had always been impatient with other women.

As she watched him leave, Winter's face turned grim.

Just then, Danielle walked up beside her and scoffed, "Winter, don't you think Mr. Tristan is way out of your league? How could you be shameless enough to ask him to be your partner?"

She was provoking Winter on purpose.

She wasn't happy with the fact that Winter was acting all high and mighty. You had the audacity to offer yourself up? Jokes on you for getting rejected.

"What did you say?" Winter was enraged.

"You should mind your attitude, Danielle," she added.

"What's wrong with my attitude? Since we both like Mr. Tristan, why should I treat you nicely?" Danielle argued.

"Oh? I wonder what would Mr. Tristan think when he finds out you were bullying Sophie!"

"You!" Danielle didn't expect Winter to use that against her.

“Know your place, Danielle. Don’t ever crave for something that isn’t yours,” Winter taunted. You’re not worthy to fight against me.

Sophie saw Ysabelle lying on her bed upon walking into her room. Isn’t she worried about messing up her hair?

Ysabelle sat up immediately when she saw Sophie. “Finally, you’re here! I thought you bailed on me!”

Sophie went over to sit on the bed as well. “It’s your birthday. How could I miss it? You look so pretty, Ysabelle,” Sophie said sincerely.

Ysabelle leaned on Sophie’s shoulder and said, “I’m not as pretty as you, Soph. You look mesmerizing in that little black dress.”

If Ysabelle hadn’t seen Sophie fight with her own eyes, she wouldn’t believe she could fight so well with that slender waist of hers.

Ysabelle couldn’t help but wrap her arms around Sophie’s waist and asked, “Why don’t you just marry me, Soph?”

Sophie laughed upon hearing that. Does this girl not filter her words when she speaks?

“Why are you laughing? I’m serious. Honestly, I’m capable of doing everything except for giving birth.” Ysabelle was promoting herself enthusiastically.

“Really?” Sophie asked.

At that moment, the door to Ysabelle’s room was pushed open, and a cold voice followed.

“Uncle Tristan, what are you doing here? This is my room!” Ysabelle was unhappy.

Tristan's gaze fell upon Ysabelle's arms, where she was holding Sophie's waist. Truth be told, he wasn't happy with what he saw.

"Your dad asked for you. Go see him in his room," Tristan said nonchalantly.

"Oh? All right, then. Wait for me here, Soph. You can have a rest here if you're tired. I'll go see what my dad wants from me." Ysabelle didn't dare to defy her father's instructions.

"Sure. Go on. Don't worry about me." Sophie had quick adaptability.

Ysabelle then left to find her father.

"Come here," Tristan ordered.

Since Tristan and Sophie were alone in the room, his voice turned alluring.

Sophie remained still despite his order. Why should I go just because he asked me to? I have my pride.

"Fine. If you're not coming here, I'll go to you," Tristan added.

Sophie instantly stood up and walked over after hearing that.

"What do you want?" she asked.

Tristan took out a jewelry box and revealed a necklace that looked exquisite and expensive.

"I forgot to give you this," he said.

Tristan bought it because he knew the necklace suited her the moment he laid eyes on it.

“Mr. Tristan, this is too expensive. I can’t accept this.”

“I’m just lending it to you.”

Sophie was rendered speechless. Fine. What else can I say to that?

Tristan then walked behind her and put it on for her.

“How much does it cost? What if I can’t afford to pay you back if I lose it?” Sophie wasn’t well-off at all.

“It’s quite expensive, actually. If you lose it, I would have no choice but to sell you.”

Sophie went speechless again. Why do I keep humiliating myself?

“It’s almost time. Let’s go,” Tristan said.

Considering Tristan’s posture, Sophie thought it was only natural if she coiled her arm around his.

Although she didn’t want to bring too much attention to herself, Tristan was leaving her with no choice.

The two of them then strolled toward the grand hall on the cruise ship while holding each other’s arms. By the time they arrived, most of the guests were already there.

The socialites were all clenching their jaws in jealousy when they saw Sophie holding Tristan’s arm. That d*mned vixen! What does she think she’s doing? How dare she hold his arm?

In truth, Tristan had never been a fan of such events. Although he had attended a few in the past, he had never brought along a female partner.

However, not only did he bring a female partner this time around, but he also let her hold his arm.

The socialites were so annoyed that they wanted nothing more than to rip Sophie's arm off of him.

Tristan leaned toward Sophie and whispered, "Don't worry. I'm here with you."

He was so near to her she could feel his breath on her cheeks.

Sophie felt rather helpless when she saw the stares the socialites were giving her.

Great, I think I just made myself a ton of enemies tonight...

"Mr. Tristan, don't overdo it." His actions were a little too affectionate to her liking.

"All right." Despite his words, Tristan proceeded to wrap his arm around her waist.