

Pursuing 511

Chapter 511

"Do you know how worried I was when I couldn't get in touch with you? Sophie, to be honest, I'm really angry now."

After struggling to sit up in bed, Sophie gave him a gentle hug.

"I know what I did this time was wrong, and I apologize for it. I'll not repeat my mistake going forward."

"No, you didn't do anything wrong." Her actions were understandable, considering how much she cares about the members of The Wheelers.

When he hugged her tightly, she felt a sense of being grounded.

"Your presence brings me peace."

She had never felt that way all this while. Ever since she arrived in Horington, she had gone about her life independently.

Regardless of what happened, she would carry the burden herself and face all dangers alone.

But now, she finally had someone to share her burden with her.

"All right. Let's not talk too much, as your body still hasn't fully recovered. Just clear your mind and recuperate at home for the next few days." I will deal with everything else.

"Mr. Tristan, what happened to Quinton?" She believed that Mark was not involved at all.

Knowing Mark like the back of her palm, she was certain he wasn't capable of such an act.

"I'm already worried sick by what happened to you, yet you still have the bandwidth to be concerned about someone else? The old fogey is doing well, but I guarantee I will not let him off the hook."

Tristan was never one to forgive and forget. Furthermore, Quinton had crossed his threshold this time.

"Why? Are you going to plead for mercy on his behalf?"

Sophie shook her head.

"After what he has done to me, I wouldn't let him go too. Having said that, he's still Mark's father. It's necessary for him to be taught a lesson, but we must consider Mark's feelings."

"So?" What is she trying to say? How does she want to deal with this?

"Tomorrow. I'll meet with him tomorrow." Perhaps there's a chance to remedy the situation.

Rendered speechless, Tristan was annoyed.

So what if he's Mark's father? There's no way I'm going to let the matter slide.

Sophie gave his lips a peck.

"I know you care a lot about me, but I really want to resolve this matter by myself. Can you not get involved, please?"

If he were to take action, Quinton would be done for.

"You..."

Faced with her request, Tristan was bereft of words.

Nevertheless, he could never say no to the woman who was everything to him.

"I'm sorry, Tristan. I promise to be more careful next time."

I'm sure he must have been frightened to the core.

"I really want to be by your side twenty-four hours a day. This wouldn't have happened if that were the case."

He couldn't let her out of his sight for a single minute.

Naturally, his words brought a smile to her face.

"Tristan, I'm thirsty. Can you get me a glass of water?"

Tristan poured one for her without a moment's delay.

Meanwhile, Ysabelle's album was extremely well-received.

Although it still paled in comparison to The Wheelers, she was off to a good start with a growing legion of fans.

After a busy day at work, she finally learned of what happened to Sophie at night.

Without a moment's delay, she rushed to Wisteria Apartments.

The sight of Sophie lying in bed caused her to break out in tears.

“What's wrong with you?” Sophie was taken aback.

Why is she raining tears the moment she came in?

“Did someone bully you? Tell me who it is. I'll seek revenge for you!” Sophie even thought that someone had hurt Ysabelle.

However, her words ended up making the latter cry harder.

“Someone really did bully you! Who was it?”

Why is she sobbing so pitifully?

“Sophie, how can you still be concerned about me in your current condition? Who has the gall to try and harm you? I'm going to kill them this very instant!”

This is all my fault. If I had gone to have lunch with her, this wouldn't have happened.

“Sophie, this is on me. I shouldn't have allowed you to go alone in the afternoon.”

What am I going to do if something happens to Sophie? I'll definitely be consumed by guilt for the rest of my life.

It turns out that she thinks it's her fault.

At the thought of that, Sophie let out a sigh of relief.

“I'm fine, Ysabelle.”

“How can you call yourself fine looking like that? Quinton is an a*shole. We must teach him a lesson!”

Even though he's Mark's father, harming Sophie is still something unforgivable.

“All right. Stop crying now. If you continue, my place will be flooded by your tears.”

By then, Sophie barely had any energy left to speak, but she was moved by the concern shown to her by so many.

All this while, she had learned to face life with a certain tenacity and was used to doing so alone.

Hence, her heart was warmed by those who cared for her.

Thereafter, Ysabelle gave her a hug.

“Sophie, don't ever do this again. Whatever it is, tell me about it, and I'll go together with you.”

I might not be a fighter, but I'll still do my very best to protect her.

“Okay. I got it. No matter what, I'll take you together with me, so stop crying now, will you?”

“Mmm-hmm.” Ysabelle sniffled.

Felix, who had come along with Ysabelle, felt sorry to see Sophie in her state.

“Mr. Tristan, I agree with you that we shouldn't let Quinton go free.”

Sophie is one of ours. An attack on her is an attack on all of us. If we don't teach him a lesson, everyone will think that we are pushovers.

"Don't get involved in this." Since Sophie intended to deal with it herself, he had no choice but to agree. After all, he could never bring himself to deny her wishes.

"Sophie, will you show him mercy on Mark's account?" Ysabelle was cognizant of how much she cared about the members of The Wheelers, particularly Mark and Sunny.

"Enough with the questions. You should spend more time dating Felix instead of sticking your nose into this."

Tristan simply wanted them to leave so that Sophie could finally get some rest.

"Uncle Tristan, what's that supposed to mean? Felix and I aren't a couple."

Despite her knowledge of his feelings for her, she still hadn't come to a decision about whether to get into a relationship.

"Ysabelle, what are you saying? Do you intend on abandoning me? How can you mess with me by dumping me after leading me on?"

Ysabelle was rendered speechless.

What's going on? How did this end up about me leading him on?

"Enough talk. Both of you can scram now." Sophie needs rest, and yet, these two are babbling needlessly here.

"No, I want to stay by Sophie's side. Sophie, I want to be here with you!"

“Stop calling her Sophie. You should be addressing her as Aunt Sophie, all right?” Tristan blurted.

His words dumbfounded Ysabelle.

What? Call her Aunt Sophie?

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Even after Felix led her out, the bewildered expression on Ysabelle's face still remained.

“What's wrong? Once Sophie and Tristan are married, wouldn't she become your aunt?”

What's the big deal? Why does she look so shocked?

“Why did this issue never cross my mind before this? All this while, I assumed that both of them would be together and stay in Jipsdale. The matter about family hierarchy never occurred to me.”

As Sophie was a good friend and younger than her, she felt awkward addressing the former as “Aunt Sophie.”

“All right now. Stop overthinking it. Even if you rack your brains, it won't change a thing anyway.”

The limited capacity of her tiny brain isn't suited for thinking about these.

Ysabelle still couldn't help herself as she let out a sigh.

The feeling of being demoted within the family hierarchy is just indescribable.

“In that case, you'll have to address her the same way if both of us get together, won't you?” Ysabelle asked wryly.

“As long as we can be together, I'm willing to call her 'Daddy,' let alone 'Aunt Sophie.'”

What the f*ck?

“What in the world do you see in me?” All this while, she was puzzled by the question.

Since he has watched me grow up, he must have seen me in diapers and with mucus dripping out of my nose, so how did he bring himself to like me?

The matter never stopped confounding her.

“I like everything about you.”

One doesn't need a reason to fall in love. If everyone knew the answer to this question, there wouldn't be so many people in the world troubled by love.

Naturally, Ysabelle felt as if she was on cloud nine after hearing his words.

“Fine! In that case, you'll have to court me properly, as I have never experienced the feeling of being pursued before.”

She didn't want to miss the journey of courtship despite being certain of her feelings for him.

“Relax, I'll definitely not disappoint you.” She will have everything a girl deserves.

Back in the apartment, Tristan made some oatmeal for Sophie because her food options were limited by her current condition.

“Here, have some of this.”

She needs to eat something no matter what, as she hasn't had anything since noon.

“Have you had anything yourself?” He had been by her side ever since the incident and had no time to eat at all.

“Don't worry about me. I'm not hungry.” True to his words, he wasn't.

“Come on, Tristan, I know you're worried about me, but I'm fine now. You should go grab a bite.”

“I'm aware that you're all right, but I just can't stop worrying about you. All I want to do now is watch over you.”

His response left Sophie speechless.

It looks like the incident has scarred him.

“Open your mouth.”

When Tristan insisted on feeding her the oatmeal, she had no choice but to comply.

As she ate slowly, he patiently followed her pace.

“Don't tell Grandpa about this. Otherwise, he will only worry.” Now that I'm fine, there's no need for him to be unnecessarily concerned.

“Mmm-hmm. I understand. Old Mr. Tanner called just now, but don't worry. I didn't tell him anything.”

After spending so much time with her, he naturally understood her concerns.

“Thank you.” Considering Grandpa's advanced age, he shouldn't have to worry about such things.

After finishing half of the oatmeal, Sophie had enough.

"I'm already full."

She wasn't someone who ate a lot, to begin with. Now that she barely had any appetite, it only took a little to fill her.

"Is it because you don't like the taste of my oatmeal? I can get Felix to pack something from The Crown." I cannot let her settle for less on my account.

Sophie grabbed his hand to stop him.

"The oatmeal is fine. I really had enough."

"All right, then."

"Can you now go and have some food?"

Truth be told, he wasn't hungry at all.

"I really don't feel like eating."

His words triggered a frown on her face.

"Tristan Lombard!"

She didn't address him as Mr. Tristan in order to show him how much she wanted him to have a proper meal.

"Fine. I know."

After ordering food to be delivered, Tristan ate inside her room. It was then that she began feeling helpless when it came to his behavior.

What am I going to do? I hope this doesn't end up being traumatic for him!

Meanwhile, when Sarah heard about what happened, she prepared something delicious for both Sophie and Tristan right away.

William, too, rushed into the kitchen the moment he saw her busy herself inside.

"What occasion is it to have brought you inside here?" Due to how busy she was, Sarah was seldom in the kitchen despite the fact that she was a good cook.

"What are you cooking? It smells delicious!"

"Dad, this isn't for you. I'll cook for you the next time I'm free."

"What? This isn't for me? Then who are you preparing this for? Do you have a boyfriend now?" Who else is deserving of her cooking?

"Tristan's girlfriend."

William was at a loss for words.

"How can I be less important to you compared to her?"

I know he has a girlfriend, but I have not seen her before. And now, she has taken my place in this household?

“Dad, I'm making some nutritious soup for her, as she has suffered a minor injury. Why are you even jealous?”

“I'm coming along with you!”

Having not met Sophie before, he was filled with curiosity as to who she was.

However, Sarah shook her head at once.

“Now that she isn't feeling well, you'll just get in the way. Let's do it next time instead. All of us can have a meal together.”

Does she think I am annoying?

“Anyway, I need to go now. Whatever you feel like having, just get the housekeeper to make it for you.” Sarah prepared to leave after packing the food.

“Sarah, can I not go with you?”

Sarah's head shook earnestly.

“It's not like you don't know your son's temperament. He's just not ready for you to meet her yet.”

“I'm his father. He should be the one obeying me.”

Sarah responded with a shrug.

“To be honest, it's pointless for you to tell me that. It's not like I can do anything about it.” I'm sure he knows Tristan's character better than I do.

“Hmph! Fine. It's clear all of you don't respect me now that you have all grown up.”

What else can I say?

“Dad, you know we're not like that. Anyway, I'll arrange for a meal together another day.”

Since Dad is aware of Sophie's existence, it's just a matter of time before they meet.

Subsequently, William disapproved of Sophie even though he had yet to meet her.

She was hurt? If she's the kind that gets injured easily, she probably isn't a good fit for Tristan, for he lives an unpredictable life filled with dangers. As his wife, she should be capable of sharing his burden instead of making him worry all the time.

Despite the impression he had, he figured that he needed to meet her before judging any further.

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Sarah came over with some food. She served Sophie a bowl of mushroom soup before serving another bowl to Tristan.

“Have some soup!”

“Thank you, Sarah,” Sophie said gratefully. She felt guilty for getting into trouble, causing everyone to worry about her.

Sarah chuckled. “We're a family, so please don't stand on formalities. We must teach Quinton a lesson so he'll learn from his mistake.”

How dare he hurt one of us? Who gave him the guts to do so?

“All right, you don't have to worry about this. I know what to do,” Tristan told her. He didn't want to talk about this anymore.

"Mm." Sarah stopped thinking about the matter.

Despite not knowing what happened for real, she wouldn't press on as Tristan told her not to.

"What's wrong? Are you feeling unwell? You only ate a little." Sarah was upset at how Tristan didn't finish her soup. After all, she spent a few hours cooking it!

"I'm not hungry," came Tristan's reply.

"Tristan, drink more soup. I think Sarah's soups are amazing," Sophie insisted. He's an adult. How can he eat this little?

"Okay."

Hearing that, Tristan got himself another bowl of soup.

Sarah rolled her eyes. I knew it. My little brother is all grown up and belongs to someone else now. I might be his elder sister, but he won't listen to me. Nevertheless, it only took one casual comment from Sophie to make him do as told. How can there be such a vast difference between us?

After finishing the soup, Tristan wasted no time in getting rid of her. "You can leave now."

"Tristan, you ingrate. I spent a few hours cooking the soup for you! How could you kick me out after finishing it?" Sarah complained. The real reason she came here was to visit Sophie.

We didn't even get to talk for long. How could he ask me to leave now?

"Mr. Tristan, you should get back to work. Let me chat with Sarah," said Sophie.

"I'm not busy," Tristan quickly replied.

Indeed, work wasn't important now, for his top priority was Sophie.

Sarah snapped, "Tristan, what are you doing? Sophie and I would like to chat in private. Do we need your approval for that?"

She then pushed him out of the room.

Others might be afraid of him, but as his sister, she wasn't scared of him at all.

When Sophie and Sarah were left alone, Sophie could finally heave a sigh of relief.

"He cares about you a lot. Don't take it to heart," Sarah said.

Of course, Sarah would side with her brother. In fact, she felt terrible for him as he had never acted this way before.

Since he was young, he had extraordinary self-control and would get everything he wanted with his own ability.

This time, he obviously got a shock.

He was flustered because he cared too much about Sophie.

Sophie nodded. "I know, Sarah." She could understand why Tristan acted that way.

"Mm. You need to be careful from now on. I was shocked to learn about it, so I can understand how Tristan felt."

Sophie bobbed her head in response. I was too careless.

“Remember to be nice to him for now. He'll return to normal in a few days,” Sarah advised. She was afraid Tristan was traumatized by the incident.

As the girls chatted inside, Tristan went to the living room. When Felix arrived, he saw Tristan smoking alone there.

It had been ages since Felix saw Tristan smoking.

Hmm, I think he rarely smoked after meeting Sophie. I remember him saying second-hand smoke isn't good for ladies.

“What's wrong?” Felix broke the silence.

They grew up together, so it was pretty obvious something was off about Tristan.

“Oh, it's nothing. I suddenly had the urge to smoke. That's it,” Tristan answered calmly. I can open the windows later. That way, the smoke will clear in no time.

“Mr. Tristan, you don't have to think too much. Look, she's perfectly fine now. Everything's all right,” Felix comforted him.

Sophie was indeed capable enough to be able to protect herself even after taking the drug.

“Mm,” Tristan grunted.

He knew she was fine now, but thinking about what could've happened would still cause dread to gnaw at his insides.

What would I do if something happened to her? I cannot lose her.

Felix suddenly asked, "To be honest, will it bother you if Sophie were to lose her virginity this time? Would you still want her?"

Hearing that, Tristan pinned Felix with a withering glare. "Do you think I'm that kind of person? I'm only worried about one thing—she got hurt. No matter what happens, I won't give up on her."

Fine. It seems that I was too superficial to think that way.

Sighing, Felix inquired, "Then why are you in a dilemma?"

"I'm not in a dilemma. My heart aches for her so much that I can hardly breathe," Tristan replied honestly. He assumed no one could understand how that felt.

Felix nodded understandingly.

He would also feel the same if the girl he liked were to experience that.

In fact, he dared not imagine how he would react if Ysabelle were to go through that.

"Fortunately, everything turned out fine. Isn't that right?" Felix responded.

Fortunately, it was Sophie who went through the ordeal. She was strong enough to stop things from going astray.

Felix couldn't envisage what would happen if Ysabelle were in Sophie's shoes.

“But I still feel bad. We've been together for a long time, and I know what kind of person Quinton is. However, I did nothing to stop that matter from happening.”

“That wasn't your fault. No one knew Quinton was bold enough to carry out that act,” Felix protested.

He was of the opinion that Tristan shouldn't be blaming himself for the incident.

Right then, Arius returned and overheard their conversation.

“Mr. Tristan, everyone knows you care about Sophie a lot. However, the incident wasn't your fault,” Arius said in an impartial tone. “If you keep blaming yourself, what would Sophie think?”

“Yes! Sophie will be sad if you keep acting this way,” Felix chimed in.

It was Quinton's fault, so all they had to do was to punish Quinton for his misdeeds.

There was no need for Tristan to overthink.

“Mm.”

That night, Tristan and Sophie were left alone. Sophie had recovered completely.

Tristan was dealing with work in his study, so she stayed in the living room to watch a TV show.

The show playing on the TV was really boring, but she kept watching it.

In the end, she gave Mark a call.

The latter was pretty startled to receive a call from Sophie.

He initially dared not answer her call, but what was done could not be undone.

No matter what, he still had to solve the problem. After convincing himself, he answered her call.

"Sophie, this has nothing to do with others. It was my sole decision. You know how much I like you," Mark said hastily.

Sophie was speechless. Does he think he can solve the problem by saying that?

Mark urged, "Why aren't you talking? Are you mad at me?"

"Mark, we've been friends for years. Do you think I don't know who you are? It's really upsetting to hear that from you," Sophie responded.

Everyone knew his character, so there was no need for him to say those words just to protect the culprit.

They weren't fools, after all.

She assured him, "Don't worry. I won't hurt your father."

Quinton was his father, so she was willing to give him one more chance.

"Sophie." Mark felt pain flare up in his heart. "I'm sorry for hurting you."

He never wanted to see any of them get hurt, but alas, things didn't turn out the way he wanted.

"Stop apologizing to me," Sophie replied impatiently. That wasn't what she wanted to hear.

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Quinton had been in agony ever since he learned Sophie's boyfriend was Tristan. He knew the matter couldn't be resolved easily.

After all, Tristan was known for his ruthless methods.

This time, the person he tried to harm was Tristan's girlfriend.

Mark told him to stay out of this, but there was no way he could do that. At this age, he could accept any outcome, but Mark's life had just begun.

He couldn't allow his son to bear all responsibility when it was his fault.

Thus, Quinton decided to look for Tristan himself.

Despite being a big shot in society, he was nothing compared to Tristan.

He waited a long time outside but didn't even get to catch a glimpse of Tristan's face.

When Felix accompanied Ysabelle to Wisteria Apartments, they saw Quinton standing outside.

"What's wrong? Why are you staring at him?" Ysabelle asked curiously when she saw Felix glaring at the man. Who is he? I don't remember seeing him previously.

Felix replied angrily, "He's the one who drugged Sophie."

He wanted nothing more than to teach Quinton a lesson, but it wasn't his place to do so. I need to head

upstairs and let Mr. Tristan know that he's here.

Ysabelle gasped. "What? It's him?"

"Yes!" Felix's memory was good enough for him to remember Quinton even though he had only met the latter once.

Ysabelle snarled, "Wait here for me. I shall go beat him up to take revenge for Sophie." He must pay the price for trying to harm Sophie!

Felix held her arm and dragged her back. "Stop it. You should stay out of this. Let's head upstairs now," he responded.

Tristan remained indifferent after learning that Quinton was downstairs.

"Uncle Tristan, you can't let him off easily," Ysabelle insisted.

"Go and keep Sophie company," Tristan ordered.

"All right." Ysabelle left to do as told.

Felix asked, "Won't you teach him a lesson?"

Tristan's voice remained calm as he replied, "We should let her deal with the matter."

There was a chance Sophie wouldn't be satisfied with what they would do to him.

"Okay."

Since Tristan had said that, Felix couldn't argue anymore.

“Sophie has an affectionate nature, so I don't think she'll give him a harsh punishment.”

Ysabelle went into the room and told Sophie about bumping into Quinton downstairs.

Scowling, she hissed, “Sophie, don't you dare forgive him after what he did to you. Do you hear me?”

Not every deed could be forgiven, for forgiving wasn't obligatory.

Sophie asked, “Quinton is downstairs?” What a coincidence. I wanted to talk to him, anyway.

Ysabelle nodded. “Yes. I wanted to get out of the car to teach him a lesson, but Felix stopped me from doing so,” she complained furiously.

He deserves to be taught a lesson. Otherwise, he will never learn from his mistake.

“Sophie, are you listening?”

“I need to head outside,” Sophie said suddenly.

She walked out of the room after saying that.

“Wait, where are you going? Uncle Tristan wants you to rest, so you should stay here,” Ysabelle called out.

Sophie felt fine, so she assured Ysabelle, “I said, I'm fine.”

“But where are you going? Don't tell me you're going downstairs to meet Quinton.”

“Yes.” Sophie bobbed her head.

It was a good opportunity to clear things up.

Ysabelle felt speechless. Why would she want to meet Quinton?

“Sophie,” she said wheedlingly.

Obviously, she was against Sophie meeting that man. There was no point for Sophie in doing so.

“Just leave me be,” Sophie's reply was curt.

Of course, Ysabelle wouldn't let her be and ran out after her.

When Tristan and Felix saw Sophie, they instantly knew what she was up to.

Tristan offered, “I'll accompany you downstairs.”

No matter what she wanted to do, he would be by her side.

Sophie looked at him. “I don't think you should come with me.”

If he was there, their conversation might not go well.

Tristan was determined. “I insist.”

Sophie shrugged. “Fine, then.”

She knew he was worried about her and gave in easily.

Felix and Ysabelle shared a look. Indeed, Mr. Tristan has no principles before Sophie. Even if Sophie asks him to kill someone, he'll do that without hesitation!

"I want to be there, too!" Ysabelle raised her hand. She wanted to teach the man a lesson personally.

"Why would you need to be there? Stay here with Felix," Tristan refuted immediately.

Ysabelle pouted indignantly. Why can't I be there?

Felix tugged at her arm. "All right, let's stay here. We can date at home."

Ysabelle glowered at him. Why would I date him at home?

Sophie paid no heed to them and went downstairs with Tristan.

Downstairs, Quinton felt his heart leap to his throat at the sight of Sophie.

It wasn't the first time he saw Sophie, but he was still afraid of her.

Throughout his years in the underground circles, he had never been afraid of anyone. However, on that day, he was quaking in his boots.

The three of them went to a nearby café.

Inside, Quinton dared not take a seat and remained standing.

"Mr. Tristan, I know what I did was unforgivable, and I'm not asking you to forgive me, but this has nothing to do with Mark and his mother. Please spare them," he pleaded.

Tristan said nothing, but it only took one look from him for Quinton to tremble in fear.

The older man knew that his act of harming Tristan's girlfriend was unpardonable.

He dared not utter a word. Only those who had a death wish would have the guts to become Tristan's enemy.

Sophie held Tristan's hand.

The man was far too intimidating. If he were to stay, they couldn't talk in peace.

"Why don't you wait for me outside?" she suggested.

"I'll be here, so don't worry. I won't say anything," Tristan responded. He would support any decision she was to make.

"Quinton, I came today because you're Mark's father. Otherwise, you wouldn't even have a chance to talk to me," Sophie began.

She wanted to be clear about that.

Hearing that, Quinton could feel his heart sinking.

She's scarier than Mr. Tristan when she's vicious.

"Sophie, I'm sorry. It was all my fault. But you have to know that this has nothing to do with Mark. Please, spare his life," he pleaded.

Mark was his only son, so he was willing to risk his life to save him.

"I came here for one reason—to help Mark gain freedom. Let him do whatever he likes even if he doesn't continue singing as long as he doesn't take over Emerald Gang," Sophie stated.

Quinton knew he didn't have any right to state any condition, so that was most probably the most mercy they could grant him.

If he didn't agree to Sophie's condition, things might get even worse.

"Okay, I agree. No matter what happens in the future, I won't force Mark. He is free to do whatever he wants," came his reply.

Mark must be an important friend to Sophie for her to consider his feelings even after what I did to her.

I'm glad Mark has a friend like her.

"Don't worry. I'll be in charge of Mark and his mother's safety," Sophie promised. She knew he was worried about that.

"Okay!" Quinton had nothing else to say.

After all, it was all his fault, and he should be the one bearing the consequences.

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"You, on the other hand—"

"Anything works. You can take my life as long as you agree to spare them," Quinton interjected hastily.

He actually loved his family dearly.

However, he was an uncultured man who had no idea how to express his feelings.

"If you're afraid of affecting your relationship with Mark, I can take my own life," he offered, not wanting to arouse any conflict between them.

Sophie shook her head. "No need for that. You just have to watch your behavior from now on."

That was her objective for meeting him today. After making things clear, she was prepared to leave.

"I..." Quinton trailed off hesitantly. I don't have to die?

That had never crossed his mind. After all, he was already prepared to die before coming here.

Tristan glanced at him.

"Mr. Tristan, I..."

Sophie might be done, but Tristan had yet to say anything. Will he spare me for real?

Tristan uttered, "Since my girlfriend has made a decision, I won't lay a hand on you. Stay away from us.

Otherwise, you might suffer if I happen to be in a foul mood."

He wasn't in a good mood now, but he had promised Sophie that he would respect her decision.

Sophie held his hand gratefully, for she knew it was hard enough for him to make a compromise for her.

That was the only way she could offer him comfort.

"I'm fine. I wouldn't have let him go easily if I were in your shoes, but since I've given you my word, I won't interfere," he assured her.

Tristan would respect each and every of her decision.

"I know."

Of course, Sophie knew what he was thinking about.

They had been together for some time, so she assumed she knew him well.

"Thank you. Don't worry, for I promise to be obedient." Sophie shot him a wink.

Sophie had always been cold and indifferent in public, but she had learned how to act adorable in front of Tristan.

Tristan reminded her, "Don't learn those stuff from Ysabelle. You are you. No matter what you do, I won't get mad."

Warmth spread across Sophie's heart as she flashed him a smile.

"I won't want to make you sad," she teased.

Tristan nodded. "By the way, since my dad has found out about you, we should meet up with him for a meal."

They would have to meet one day.

William must be waiting for them to initiate a meeting after learning about Sophie.

“Sure,” Sophie agreed readily.

They were in a stable relationship, so it was time for her to meet his father.

“What does your dad like? I shall prepare a gift for him.” Sophie knew it wasn't polite to show up at his house without a gift.

“Don't worry about that. I'll prepare everything you need. For the next few days, get some rest at home. You shouldn't head to classes for now,” Tristan advised.

He was still worried about her.

Sophie protested, “I'm fine, Mr. Tristan. You don't have to worry.”

I was drugged, and now I'm perfectly fine. Why are they acting as though I was critically ill?

The new semester had just begun, so there were many things going on at both Jipsdale University and the University of Medicine.

Sophie wanted to learn everything necessary as quickly as possible instead of wasting more time here.

Meanwhile, Ysabelle's song went viral.

No one knew what had happened, but it suddenly became popular. In the blink of an eye, Ysabelle was now the goddess of nerds.

Felix was upset to read the comments the nerds made about Ysabelle on Twitter and Reddit.

Ysabelle belonged to him. He wanted nothing more than to make them blind so they would stop gawking at her.

Ysabelle came back home to see Felix staring at his phone on the couch. She had no idea what made him that engrossed, for he had a weird expression on his face.

“What's wrong? What are you reading?” she asked. As a public figure, she had to accept all sorts of comments.

Even if they were criticisms, she had to get used to them as soon as possible.

Felix pulled her over so she could sit in his lap.

“I know you love singing, and I support you, but it's uncomfortable to read these comments about you,”

he grumbled.

How dare they call her a woman with youthful looks with big boobs? I shall find the netizen who posted that comment and make him pay the price.

“I suggest you stop reading these comments to avoid getting mad. The netizens can be rude or nice, and there are also many haters. There is no need to get mad at them. Look how furious you are. However, the netizen who made that comment had probably forgotten what he posted,” Ysabelle told him.

Felix huffed. “It looks like I'm not calm enough.”

He actually didn't mind what others said about him, but when it came to Ysabelle, he just couldn't tamper his emotions.

“All right. You're the only person I like. Does that work?” Ysabelle tried to placate him. It was pointless to care about what other people said about her.

“Mm.”

Meanwhile, Quinton told Mark that he wouldn't need to take over Emerald Gang anymore.

Quinton seemed to have aged overnight.

Seeing that, Mark felt bad. He wouldn't end up this way if it weren't for me.

Quinton told him, "You are free to do what you want. Sophie is a good friend. If it weren't for you, she wouldn't have let me go easily. I'm glad you have a good friend like her."

Sophie and Tristan were around, so no one would dare to bully Mark in Jipsdale.

That was enough.

"Mark, you can ignore me from now on. Remember to take care of your mom, though," he reminded his son.

Quinton abducted his wife and forced her into marrying him so he knew she had never loved him.

Nevertheless, he couldn't help but keep her confined by his side.

As things had turned out this way, there was no need for him to keep them by his side.

Quinton declared, "Let your mom do whatever she wants."

He was already tired of keeping her by his side for a long time.

Mark got worried. "Dad, are you all right?"

In response, Quinton flashed a smile.

"I'm good. Don't worry." He had no idea what would happen to him after leaving Emerald Gang, but nothing else mattered as long as Mark and his mother could lead a peaceful and blissful life.

Mark offered, "I can take over Emerald Gang." After all, he was slowly getting used to it.

Quinton shook his head. "Sophie's right. You're really not suited to be in a gang. It was all my wishful thinking, so I don't think it's fair to drag you into this."

Mark said nothing.

"Do whatever you like. You like singing, right? I believe you'll do a great job," Quinton added.

He then turned to leave.

I'm all alone now. No matter what happens in the future, I will bear all responsibility alone.

Mark was now free to do whatever he wanted, but he was slow to react.

Am I really free from Emerald Gang? I know I'm not suited to the role, but I did everything I could to do a good job.

The matter was resolved because of how his father harmed Sophie. Nevertheless, he couldn't bring himself to get excited.

Chapter 516

Mark did not know how to face Sophie, yet he knew he couldn't put off meeting her forever. Eventually, the two met at a café near the University of Medicine.

An odd feeling swelled in Mark's chest when he saw Sophie again after such a long time.

The first words out of his mouth were an apology. "I'm sorry, Sophie."

It was not the first time he was apologizing.

He did not think a lifetime of apologies could make up for his mistakes.

Sophie scrunched her brows in frustration. Why is he still so stubborn?

She stated firmly, "Didn't I say this before? I know this incident has nothing to do with you at all. It's all in the past now. Can we stop bringing it up?"

Getting over the incident was easier said than done for Mark.

She continued, "I only hope you can return to The Wheelers. After all, that's your favorite place in the whole world."

"Sophie—" Even now, she still had his best interests at heart.

"Sunny and the others are all waiting for you. Don't let them down, okay? Of course, if there's something else you'd like to do, that's fine too. I won't force you to return to The Wheelers if that's the case."

Sophie was careful to reiterate that he had the freedom to choose his future path and that no one could force him to do anything.

Mark uttered, "I'll return to the band."

The farewell concert may have been over, but performing in The Wheelers was still his dream. He would not give up on it now.

“Okay. Let's go back, then!”

Everyone had hoped Mark would return.

Suddenly, he said, “Thank you, Sophie.”

She smiled and replied, “We're past such formalities, don't you think?”

Sophie would not be the person she was today if she had never met Mark in Horington. A verbal expression of gratitude was insignificant in light of their history.

Nonetheless, Mark insisted, “I still have to thank you. It's because of me that you had to go through all that.”

Sophie always thought he had helped her a lot in Horington, yet in retrospect, the opposite was probably true.

In any case, they were certainly past the stage of such pleasantries.

Just then, Sophie suggested, “Do you want me to come along when you meet Sunny and the rest?” The poor drummer had been in a funk for the longest time.

Since he had agreed to return to The Wheelers, Sophie decided Mark should quickly meet with his former bandmates.

“Let's go together!” replied Mark.

Still, there were some concerns in his mind. We announced we were disbanding. What will the fans think of my abrupt return? I'm sure they'll think we did it for the publicity!

He knew these were small matters in the grand scheme of things. The most important thing was that The Wheelers would be reunited.

Sophie had no classes in the afternoon and accompanied Mark to the mansion. When they opened the door, they saw Sunny leaving with his luggage.

Sunny stood still and just stared silently at Mark.

Nothing Mark said now could change his mind; he was bent on leaving.

He said, "Sophie, I won't stay to chat with you all. My flight leaves at four. I'll miss it if I don't leave now."

His bandmates were distraught. "Sunny, are you really leaving? We haven't achieved our dreams yet! Are you just going to give up now?"

Simply put, none of them would be satisfied with such an outcome.

Sunny kept quiet. With things the way they were, what was the point in staying even if his dreams were unfulfilled?

Without Mark, they could no longer be The Wheelers.

Another bandmate piped up, "Stay in Jipsdale, Sunny! We've already come so far. We still have each other even if Mark's not around."

They had always stuck together since forming the band, and they dreaded the idea of going their separate ways.

"I'm sorry, Sunny! I must've disappointed you throughout this time. Everything's over now, though. I'm back, and I still want to be with all of you as we strive for our dreams!"

Sunny was taken aback at Mark's reply.

Wasn't he always unwavering in his decision to leave? He never returned no matter what we said, so what the heck is happening now?

Furious, Sunny retorted, "Did you think we were a bunch of people ready to come and go according to your whims, Mark?"

Just because you said you were coming back, did you think we would welcome you unequivocally with open arms?

Mark said, "I'm sorry, Sunny. I know I've disappointed everyone, but I truly wish to return now. I still want to be with everyone. Can you give me a chance to do that?"

It was true that he had been the one to split up the band.

His appeal fell on deaf ears. Sunny fired back, "I can't. I can't play this game with you any longer. It's too much to bear. Who knows if you'll suddenly abandon us again for some different reason in the future?"

Sunny's heart could not take it anymore.

It was better to call it quits once and for all.

"Sunny! You can't leave now that Mark's back!" His bandmates knew all about his childish temper.

It would take some time to coax him out of his sour mood.

As expected, Sunny replied peevishly, "That's his business. You need a main singer, and I'm just a drummer. I'm sure you can easily find someone to replace me."

I have the least presence in this band, anyway!

He was clearly throwing a tantrum. Sophie stepped forward and grabbed his shoulder.

"Sunny, I know you'd be the saddest person to see this group disband. Don't leave. Why don't we all stay in Jipsdale?"

"Sophie, I—"

Sophie interjected, "All right. Don't say anything else. We're all in Jipsdale now. Even if I don't perform onstage with you, I can continue composing songs with all of you!" The dream of creating rock music lived on in her heart.

Sunny's stance wavered.

I've always wanted to do that. Now, it seems as if my wish is coming true.

Mark approached Sunny and clasped his former bandmate's other shoulder.

He vowed, "I'm sorry again for what I did, but don't worry. I'll never bring up the idea of disbanding again! The Wheelers will stay together forever!"

The six members hugged each other, bringing a perfect ending to the band's reunion.

Over the next few days, Xandra was kept busy with the public outcry over The Wheelers' disbandment.

Comments had flooded TS Entertainment's Twitter page, and fans lined the walkways outside the company buildings.

They were all hoping that The Wheelers would stay together.

As she struggled not to drown in work, Sophie returned bearing news that The Wheelers would not disband. Xandra was understandably perplexed. “What? Do you mean The Wheelers won't disband?

Mark is coming back?”

Sophie repeated, “That's right. Nothing's wrong with your ears. I said that.” The Wheelers will not split up.

“How did you do that, Sophie? Mark doesn't seem like a person who would easily concede!” exclaimed Xandra.

Mark had seemed so resolved when he left that Xandra did not expect such a twist.

Sophie said to her, “I'll leave the rest to you, namely how to allow Mark to gracefully rejoin The Wheelers. Oh, and you need to think of a way to deal with fan comments about this being a publicity stunt!”

Xandra reassured her, “Isn't that part of my job scope? Don't worry! The Wheelers has been in the industry for so many years; these comments are nothing but water off their backs!”

She always knew Sophie had a soft spot for the band, but she did not realize the latter's concern was so deep.

“I don't want Mark to be troubled once he returns. The Wheelers is like my first crush. I want them to be happy and free,” explained Sophie.

“I know. Didn't you bring me in for The Wheelers in the first place? I'll make this the best PR response you've ever seen in history!” Xandra did not boast of many talents, but she knew her public relations skills were second to none.

Chapter 517

Ysabelle rushed over immediately after knowing The Wheelers weren't going to disband.

“Sophie, were they telling the truth? Are The Wheelers really not disbanding?” Ysabelle had met with a few of The Wheelers' members earlier.

She felt hopeful when she saw Mark at TS Entertainment again.

Sophie nodded.

“That's right. The Wheelers are not disbanding.” As long as Quinton didn't force Mark, the latter was undoubtedly willing to return because he genuinely liked music and rock.

Mark was born to rock.

“That's so great!” Ysabelle was overjoyed.

As The Wheelers' fan, she thought she was utterly blessed to become their junior under the same entertainment company.

After all, that was such a fortunate turn of events that most people wouldn't even dare to dream of.

“Sophie, you're truly my goddess. Why do I feel that you're capable of resolving every problem?”

The news about The Wheelers not disbanding became the trending headlines at once.

The first of the trending list was about The Wheelers' disbandment cancellation.

Second on the list was Mark Wheeler, while the third trending news was The Wheelers' operation.

That was how news was disseminated in the age of advanced information technology. Once something significant happened, all kinds of related information would become available online.

The Wheelers' fans were the happiest after they were informed that their favorite band wasn't going to disband.

A lot of people even shed tears of joy.

There was also a large group of fans arguing with those netizens who jeered at The Wheelers over the internet.

In the end, the fans finally stopped bickering with the haters after Mark published a message on Twitter to ask his fans not to bother themselves with the haters.

Still, The Wheelers became more popular following that incident.

Ensuing Mark's return, the first program the band participated in was a type of talk show, and all five band members were present.

During the show, Mark explained the reason behind his departure and why he decided to rejoin the band now.

“In the previous concert, there was another cool guest, Tanner. May I know if he will continue to be with the band?”

Everyone was very curious about Tanner, sparking many threads on the internet to discuss his identity.

“Tanner is a member of The Wheelers. In our hearts, he will forever be one of us. However, he won't be joining us on stage in the future.”

“What a shame. Tanner was able to garner the support of fans from both genders. I'm also very fond of him.” The host flashed a love-struck grin.

Staring at Sophie, sitting below the stage with sunglasses on, Mark smiled as well. That's right. I wonder what it will be like if Sophie makes a debut in the entertainment field. Her appearance can indeed charm everyone who lays their eyes on her. However, since she made her choice, we'll have to respect her decision. This outcome isn't that bad either since we can still spend time together in this manner.

“Mark, do you have a girlfriend? This is a question I'm asking on behalf of all the fans who greatly admire you.”

The public was extremely curious about their multitalented idol's love life.

“I have someone I love, but I think we'll never have the chance to be together.”

Despite his indifferent personality, many of Mark's fans felt their heart ache at the sight of his mien at that instant.

They wondered what he had experienced and who was the girl who managed to capture his heart.

Not to mention, the girl could invoke so much regret and sorrow in him.

At that moment, Tristan, sitting beside Sophie, held her hand.

Whenever such an occasion rose, he would feel that he was exceptionally fortunate for winning her affection.

There were simply too many people who fancied her, yet she chose him. Hence, he considered himself incredibly lucky to be with her.

“Okay. Let's go.”

There wasn't anything else left for them to do there. Besides, Mark and his band members were veteran artists, so Sophie and Tristan reckoned they knew how to handle the matters there.

As for the haters' comments, they didn't need to dwell on it either because everyone would forget about that incident after some time.

That night, inside the condominium at the University of Medicine, Sophie asked, "When are we meeting with your dad? Should I bring my grandpa along?"

Josiah had always wished to meet with Tristan's family, so Sophie planned to invite her grandfather to tag along.

"We'll do it next time. I know Old Mr. Tanner yearned to meet my family, but I'm still uncertain about my dad's stance, so I want to avoid upsetting Old Mr. Tanner."

Prior to the meeting, Tristan had to clarify things with his father because he would never allow anyone to harm Sophie.

"What type of girl does your dad like?"

Tristan frowned.

"His preference is the least of our concerns. The most important thing is that I like the way you are, and that's what matters."

Sophie chuckled. He's right. I'm fine as long as he likes me. I can't control how others feel anyway.

Knowing she was about to meet with Tristan's father, Josiah summoned her over.

"Sophie, you need to be more eloquent when meeting his father for the first time, okay? Also, you must wear the dress I bought for you on that day."

Her clothes are too simple and plain. Making a good first impression is very important. Sophie is an excellent girl, but at times, not everyone can see her beauty within.

“Grandpa, it's just a meeting. Why are you more nervous than me?”

“I'm not nervous. I just want you to be happy. If Tristan's father doesn't like you, I'm afraid you will be mistreated when you marry him.”

After all, such incidents were most pronounced among prominent families.

“Grandpa, don't worry. I won't let anyone bully me.”

Meanwhile, Tristan had gone back to the Lombard residence.

Upon seeing his return, William couldn't help but say, “I thought you'd forgotten your way home.” Is he truly that busy to the extent of coming home so rarely?

Tristan did not reply to him.

“Why are you so easily angered when I merely commented a little on your behavior?”

Since he was injured, Tristan hadn't gone back to the Lombard residence once.

He had utterly disregarded his father.

“Dad, you should know when to stop. Weren't you always bugging me about wanting to meet with my girlfriend? I've arranged a time for you two to get acquainted.”

“Are you finally willing to let me meet with her? I was under the assumption that you don't plan on bringing her back to the Lombard residence for the rest of your life.”

“I hope you'll mind your attitude. The only reason I came here today is to inform you in advance, not to make things difficult for her.”

William was rendered speechless. I haven't even done a thing!

“Tristan, is that how you speak to your dad?” Sarah nudged him. “Dad, Tristan likes Sophie too much. She's still young, so it will be best if you don't frighten her.”

Taking in his son's and daughter's demeanor, William's interest in Sophie intensified.

“Are you very fond of her as well?” William reckoned a girl who even Sarah liked wouldn't be so bad.

“Dad, Tristan's girlfriend is genuinely pretty impressive and pleasant.”

“Anyway, I've decided she's the girl for me, regardless of whether you like her,” Tristan warned William beforehand because he didn't want Sophie to be caught in any tight spot.

Chapter 518

“What are you saying? Am I really such an ill-hearted man in your eyes?” William demanded.

We haven't even met each other! It seems like Tristan's really smitten with this girl.

“I'm just reminding you to mind your attitude. Don't make things difficult for her,” Tristan replied. He planned to leave right away if his father did not play nice.

“Even if I don't like her, it doesn't matter and won't change your mind, right?” William snapped. He detested the notion that Tristan didn't even care about what he thought.

"Dad, why do you think that? You know that we both respect you! It's just that... Well, love can't be explained," Sarah muttered.

She was definitely on Tristan's side.

"Quit trying to brainwash me. Let me meet her first. If I don't like her, she won't stand a chance to marry into our family," William retorted.

He was not one to mince his words.

"In that case, it's better if the two of you don't meet," Tristan declared. It was obvious that William was not at all keen to meet her.

He had only brought Sophie to meet him out of respect for him. However, William seemed to take that gesture to mean that he had the right to dictate who Tristan could be with.

"You—"

William thought Tristan was being too arrogant.

"What do you mean? How dare you use that tone against me for a woman? Where are your manners?" William berated.

"Tristan, refrain yourself," Sarah reminded him. It was a happy occasion. How did it all turn out like this? "Dad, haven't you always wanted to see Tristan get married? He finally found someone whom he wants to spend the rest of his life with. Why are you acting like this?" Sarah asked.

That was absolutely unnecessary.

"What? He's finally found someone?" William found Sarah's words incredulous. It was Tristan who had always given the socialites the cold shoulder.

“Okay, Dad. I was wrong. My point is he's finally found someone he likes. Please don't get in the middle of this,” Sarah pleaded.

“All right. Don't you guys know I'm a well-mannered man? Even if I don't like her, I won't let it show. We're going to talk when we're back,” William said.

That should do it, right?

“I hope that you will respect my decision and don't interfere in my matters. Even if you don't like her, I hope that you will keep your opinions to yourself,” Tristan said.

After all, he would be the one to spend the rest of his life with Sophie, not William.

“You—” William stopped himself and instead said, “Well, now I'm really intrigued by this woman who has managed to charm you so.”

William had never seen him care about a girl so much.

His son had only gotten along well with Sarah in the family.

He never expected Tristan to change because of a woman.

William didn't welcome the change, however.

After all, Tristan would be the successor of the Lombard Group. It wouldn't do the group nor his son good if Tristan could easily be swayed by a woman.

Nonetheless, William knew it was not the time to make his thoughts vocal.

It would only serve to stoke the already burning fire in their relationship.

"All right. I will be sure to respect your girlfriend. Is that good enough for you?" William conceded. We're just meeting each other. Is it really necessary to sour things from the very beginning?

"I hope that you can keep your promise," Tristan said.

"Just look at him," William lamented.

He was rendered speechless by Tristan's defensive attitude.

On the other hand, Willow knew that Sophie was meeting Tristan's family.

She was fervently hoping that the Lombard family would look down on Sophie.

After all, Sophie didn't enjoy a good reputation here in Jipsdale.

"I'd like to see if she can still be that arrogant when she couldn't gain Old Mr. Lombard's favor! Doesn't she always think that she's the greatest? She's only meeting his family, and yet things are already so tense. This can only mean that she's not confident that she will be able to gain their favor, right? Hah!" Willow mocked.

Charmaine shook her head at Willow's ill-conceived thoughts about her own sister.

The daughter that had once been her source of pride and beacon of hope had turned into this.

"Willow, what are you doing? Go out and take a walk. You're going to get sick from staying at home all day. There are over a million on this card. Just spend it as you like," Charmaine said. She still favored Willow.

"Mom, when do you suppose Sophie will finally be down on her luck? I've been waiting for that day to come forever. I won't ever be happy as long as she's still around!" Willow said, completely disregarding what her mother had just said.

“Willow, what are you thinking about? She's your little sister. Besides, the matter with Clayton has

nothing to do with her,” Charmaine commented.

Clayton only had himself to blame.

“Mom, haven't you always taken my side? What are you saying now?” Willow retorted.

“I'm just worried about you. You're not doing well mentally. Don't care about others now. You should focus on yourself, all right?” Charmaine coaxed.

Even if Willow couldn't marry into an ultra-wealthy family, she should at least try to get herself into a well-to-do family.

However, Willow had given up on grooming herself and didn't even want to get out of the house. At the rate that things were going, how would she be able to marry into a good family?

“One more thing. Don't bring this up in front of others. Do you think Mr. Tristan will let you off the hook if he hears about this?” Charmaine warned.

Doesn't she know how much Tristan cares about Sophie?

Charmaine didn't think it was wise for Willow to keep challenging Tristan's bottom line.

Willow's mental state was in a disarray now.

She had given up the hope of surpassing Sophie.

However, if given a chance to drag Sophie down, Willow wouldn't even bat an eyelid to take it, even if it meant that she would get destroyed too.

Willow didn't think Sophie deserved to have everything going her way.

Noticing that Willow wasn't listening to a word she said, Charmaine shook her head and headed out of her room.

Willow had dragged herself into a dead-end. She couldn't get out of the abyss herself, nor would others be able to help her.

Charmaine reckoned that perhaps only time could heal her troubled daughter.

Meanwhile, Tristan had arranged for them to meet up at Blossom Garden.

It was a really nice place. Ordinary people wouldn't be able to secure a reservation there, guaranteeing their privacy.

Ysabelle was more nervous than Sophie when she knew that the latter was meeting her grandfather.

"Sophie, you don't actually have to be so nervous. My grandpa is a really nice man. Even though he's strict toward my dad and Uncle Tristan, he's really nice to me," Ysabelle reassured her.

"Okay. I'm not nervous. Don't worry," Sophie replied.

"Hmm, I think my grandpa will like you," Ysabelle said. She had confidence in her friend.

"Okay," Sophie said, though she was unsure of her own chances.

She had only met William once, and she knew nothing about what he liked or disliked.

“Well, you need to get ready now.” Ysabelle had wanted to accompany her, but Tristan forbade her from tagging along.

Ysabelle had no choice but to listen to the man.

“So, how are you doing with Felix?” Sophie asked. Ever since the two of them started dating, Ysabelle appeared to be more radiant than ever.

“He treats me well. I've been bullying him since the beginning. I can't believe I didn't realize he had a crush on me earlier. Am I really that obtuse?” Ysabelle asked.

She had always wanted to have a boyfriend, and yet she was oblivious to the fact that the man who had always been right beside her actually liked her.

“There's nothing wrong with being a little obtuse. You've just become an adult anyway. In fact, your timing is just right,” Sophie replied.

“You're right.”

Ysabelle thought the timing was just right too.

It was not too early nor too late.

She was right on time, pursuing things that she had always wanted to do the most.

Chapter 519

“Boss, this is Jipsdale. You can't do as you please, okay?” He was still against the idea of coming here, though they had already arrived.

After all, it was Tristan's turf.

If they were not careful, they wouldn't even know how they died.

There was a white snake on Nicholas' arms. It would seem like the snake was venomous, but he liked it.

"Alex, you're getting timider and timider by the day. It's only Tristan. What can he do to us? Go back if you're that afraid," Nicholas said.

Alex was rendered speechless.

It was impossible to not be afraid of the man. Tristan was as vicious as Nicholas himself.

After what happened in Anglandur, Alex was sure that Tristan wouldn't let them off the hook that easily if he knew that they were there.

"I've told you that I must take Sophie back with me this time, no matter what it takes. So, you can quit with your nonsense now," Nicholas warned.

Why won't he stop talking if he knows I won't listen to him?

"Boss, Sophie sure has a hand in what happened last time. She won't follow you back home. She

doesn't like you. Why can't you see that?" Alex pleaded.

As Nicholas' subordinate, he knew he shouldn't say such blunt words.

However, he just couldn't bear seeing Nicholas get blinded by his own infatuation.

Nicholas' eyes burned with murderous aura.

“Alex, why don't you mind your own business?”

“Boss, I know that you'll get mad, but this is the truth. You have to accept it,” Alex continued.

Nicholas took out a gun and fired a shot at Alex's leg. Despite his bleeding leg, Alex did not budge.

Some truths were like bitter pills that were hard to swallow.

However, Alex still felt the obligation to voice out his concern.

“If we fall into Sophie's hands, she will not show mercy to us. Just look at what happened last time!” Alex added.

“This is all because of Tristan. If he dies, Sophie will surely follow me back home,” Nicholas insisted.

He was an exceptionally stubborn man.

Once he made up his mind, there was no changing it.

“But...”

“Take him away. I don't want to see him,” Nicholas said to another subordinate.

“Boss—”

The consequences would be dire if Javier knew that Nicholas had come here.

However, Nicholas was unwilling to listen to a word Alex had said now.

Nicholas knew that it would be too late if he didn't come here now.

He didn't want to wait anymore.

Despite knowing full well the price he would pay for his actions, Nicholas was there.

He vowed that he would bring home the girl whom he loved.

Nobody would be able to stop him.

Butterfly sent a message on her way over to Blossom Garden.

Butterfly: Phantom, didn't you ask me to tail this person? He's come to Chanaea, and he's at Jipsdale now!

Phantom seldom entrusted her with anything. Hence, she wanted to do it right.

Phantom: Okay.

Sophie furrowed her brows.

They haven't learned anything from last time. How dare they come all the way here this soon?

Butterfly: Do you need me to do anything?

She cared a lot about Phantom, and she knew how difficult it was to deal with Nicholas.

Phantom: You don't need to do anything. You just have to ensure your own safety. Don't get yourself hurt.

Pleased by Phantom worrying about her, Butterfly replied: You're worried about me! Don't worry. I am best at tailing people.

Nonetheless, Phantom wouldn't risk Butterfly getting hurt.

Butterfly: Understood!

Noticing Sophie's odd demeanor, Tristan couldn't help but ask, "What happened? Why are you getting upset? Are you nervous?"

"Hmm. I'm all right," she muttered.

Am I feeling nervous? That can't be it. I'm just meeting an older man.

Then again, Sophie knew that her apprehension was because she cared about Tristan, and in turn, what his father thought of her. As long as she could gain the old man's favor, things wouldn't be difficult for Tristan.

Tristan held her hand.

"You're getting together with me. So, you don't need to care about gaining other people's favor. I like you just the way you are," Tristan said.

Other people's opinion didn't matter.

Having such a considerate boyfriend by her side made Sophie feel really safe.

"I know."

She knew that he would do everything to safeguard her.

William had already arrived when their car pulled into the driveway of Blossom Garden. The old man was in a private room, accompanied by Sarah.

“Look at the time now. Why aren't they here yet?” William grumbled.

It was only their first meeting, and yet Sophie was late.

William couldn't help but think that they were not taking him seriously.

“Dad, why the hurry? There's still plenty of time before the agreed time. You're the one being early. Do

you have prejudice toward Tristan's girlfriend?” Sarah asked with a frown.

If that were the case, things would be much more complicated.

William said nothing.

Well, it seems like Dad really doesn't like this girl.

“Dad, you haven't even met her. Why do you dislike her so? Did someone say something to you?” Sarah asked.

Still, William remained silent.

“Dad, Tristan really likes her. Don't go over the line. Otherwise, it will be really difficult for him,” Sarah advised.

“Sarah, do you really think that girl can cut it? Tristan needs an equal who can help him, not someone who needs his protection twenty-four-seven,” William finally said.

He just thought a girl who couldn't fend for herself would burden Tristan.

“Sophie isn't a girl who only mooches off a man. She is a really opinionated woman, and I believe that she is an equal who can stand by Tristan at the top,” Sarah explained.

“Hmm.”

She's a Tanner, huh? I don't seem to recall any great family called the Tanners in Jipsdale.

Right then, Tristan arrived and led Sophie into the private room.

William immediately recognized Sophie as the girl who delivered his coffee back then.

She had left a good impression on William, owing to her good looks. William had thought that the girl's temperament was too outstanding to be an ordinary girl who served coffee.

“Sir, it's nice to meet you. I'm Sophie Tanner.”

“Really? I believe this is not our first meeting,” William replied.

Sophie knew that he was talking about what happened back in Lombard Group.

“I am sorry. It was impolite of me not to greet you properly back then,” Sophie admitted.

Seeing as she readily admitted to her mistake, William did not pursue the subject further.

Besides, he was afraid that Tristan might leave with her right away if he didn't drop it.

"You're Sophie Tanner, correct? May I ask which Tanner family we are talking about?" William asked.

"My grandpa is Josiah Tanner!" she replied. Sophie was proud of her grandfather. Hence, she quoted his name right away.

The name rang a bell to William.

"Ah, I see."

Even though he had heard the name before, William knew the Tanners were not considered a prominent family in Jipsdale. Hence, he didn't have much impression of what the family actually did.

"Where are you studying right now?"

"University of Medicine and Jipsdale University," Sophie responded.

"What?"

William was taken aback. Can one attend two famous universities at the same time?

"Dad, did you know that the chancellor of Jipsdale University and Capston University both came looking for Sophie after she chose University of Medicine?" Sarah said proudly.

She beamed with pride at the thought of Sophie's achievement.

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"I see," William commented upon Sarah's explanation.

Many of their acquaintances were typically enrolled in famous universities. However, for people like them, who were in the upper echelons of society, being studious was a far less useful trait than developing new connections.

William continued questioning Sophie about the Tanner family, and the latter answered all his questions calmly and gracefully.

Her elegance was right up William's alley regarding his preference for a daughter-in-law.

Alas, it's a shame her family background isn't ideal. It's not a match for our Tristan at all.

Sophie was no fool, to begin with. She immediately sensed William's disapproval of her.

Nonetheless, he was Tristan's father, and she wisely kept mum about her postulations.

After their meal, Sophie handed the gift she had prepared to William, who did not even spare the item a glance.

Tristan was understandably upset about his father's behavior.

He did not want to blow up in front of Sophie and swallowed his discontent. Be that as it may, he secretly held her hand to reassure her that he was on her side no matter what.

His gesture also told her that everyone else's opinions did not and would not sway his feelings for her.

Sophie shot him a grateful smile.

In truth, she was hardly bothered by William's actions. Nothing much could fluster her, considering what she had experienced to get to where she was today.

William largely maintained a gentlemanly approach to the meeting.

Despite his dissatisfaction with his son's girlfriend, he never voiced his feelings openly. While it was far from a cheerful meeting, the atmosphere was spared from becoming too awkward.

When William noticed his son was more focused on refilling Sophie's plate than his own, he could not help but frown. What happened to my revered and formidable son?

After the meal ended, they exchanged pleasantries before Sarah sent William home.

"Dad, are you unhappy with Sophie or something?" His behavior had put something of a downer on everyone's mood.

"Yes."

He reckoned there was no need to hide his negative opinions of Sophie from his daughter.

Sarah asked, "Is it because of her family background? I always believed you were an open-minded person. I didn't think you would dislike someone because of these extrinsic factors!"

"I am rather open-minded, but in reality, family backgrounds are still an important determinant behind a good match! Besides, I've never even heard of Tanner Group! I don't need her to add any achievements to Tristan's name, but she can't drag him through the mud by association," argued William.

My son stands at the pinnacle of society! How can he become weak because of a woman?

"Dad, Sophie is talented enough to bring Tanner Group to new heights. The company has already undergone massive improvements since she took over. But that's not the most important thing here; your son can't live without her."

Sarah had never spoken truer words.

She continued, "It's a Herculean task for people of our social status to find someone we truly like. That's why I hope you won't stop them from dating each other."

Sarah had always had a soft spot for Tristan since they were young.

Aware of how much her younger brother adored Sophie, she wanted to appeal to their father on his behalf.

Instead, William replied, "In fact, it's better if he doesn't have such strong feelings for her, or she'll become his Achilles heel." Then, it's too easy to become hurt.

"But Dad! Is that how you feel toward Mom? Don't you love her at all?" Sarah was distraught. How could he think like this?

William said sternly, "That's enough. Don't talk about your mom to me."

She better not come back after deciding to leave us. I can still be happy alone. In fact, I am happy alone.

Sarah shook her head in resignation, out of ideas on how to convince her stubborn father.

She warned, "Are you going to look for Sophie? You better not pull a stunt like that. If Tristan finds out about it, he's going to explode!"

"As if that scares me," retorted William.

I'm his father. What can he do to me?

Meanwhile, Tristan and Sophie were still at Blossom Garden.

"What's wrong? Are you upset?" Tristan knew his father's behavior had been far from ideal, but he had stressed earlier that other people's opinions of their relationship would not sway his decision.

Sophie replied, "I'm not, but what should we do? Your dad doesn't seem pleased with me."

"Did you forget what I said? Just ignore him. You're dating me, not him. You don't have to care about his feelings."

Naturally, William's blessing was the best-case scenario. However, if the old man took issue with their relationship, Tristan was happy to lead his life outside his father's scrutiny.

We can live happily without each other's interference, yes?

Sophie explained, "I just don't want your life to become difficult."

"Will you leave me because of that?" That was the only concern on Tristan's mind.

She shook her head. "Why would I leave you over such a reason?"

She had already decided to be with him, and she would face any hurdles life threw at them hand-in-hand.

I'll never let go of his hand.

Her words were exactly what Tristan wanted to hear.

He declared, "That's right. No matter what challenges life throws at us, all we have to do is to hold hands tightly and face them head-on. There won't be anything we can't overcome."

Tristan vowed he would not allow anyone to harm a single hair on his girlfriend as long as he was still alive, even if the perpetrator came from his own family.

Sophie reminded him, "Of course, so don't let your relationship with your father go to ruin over this. There's really no need for such animosity."

She did not want him to become estranged from his father because of her. "Don't worry," she added. "I'll do my best to impress him."

"Didn't I say so earlier? You don't need to try harder to impress anyone else. I'm happy with you, just the way you are. Don't ever change yourself to fit other people's standards."

Sophie waved off his concern and said, "All right, all right. I've decided to be with you, so I'll solve this problem myself. Don't worry, okay?"

Tristan was exasperated by her insistence.

In the end, he merely advised, "Fine. If my father tries to meet you alone, just ignore him."

He knew his father would not give up so easily.

The man was sometimes stubborn to a fault.

"Okay."

Before Sophie could begin dealing with Nicholas, the man-in-question showed up at her doorstep.

When Sophie arrived at the small forest of University of Medicine, she immediately knew Nicholas was lurking nearby.

She announced, "Come on out, then. Didn't you come all the way here to have a face-to-face conversation with me? What's the point in playing hide-and-seek with me at this stage?"

Nicholas jumped out of a tree, clad in a black windbreaker.

The garment was stylish and well-cut, emphasizing his handsome appearance.

He greeted her, "Didn't you miss me after not seeing me for such a long time, Sophie?"

"Miss you? Go to h*ll." Sophie was irked by his conceit. Why would I miss him? There's nothing between us. He's the only willing participant in this imaginary relationship.

Nicholas did not appear angered by her words. Instead, he said, "But I missed you so. I've been thinking about you all the time since you left. That's why I came here to meet you. Aren't you moved by my romantic gesture?"

Sophie deadpanned, "Didn't you learn anything from our last encounter?" She had not expected him to solve all his problems so quickly and seek her out that soon.

"Honestly, you really hurt me last time. How could you go against me? I never imagined your betrayal at all."

"Hah!" harrumphed Sophie.

Why shouldn't he expect that? We're enemies, after all.