

Chapter 5

Maisie said, "It's unnecessary. It'll dry faster with the wind blowing."

"Go dry it," Seth said.

"I won't."

Ethan looked at her with her hair cascading over her shoulders and her face free of makeup. His gaze turned a little more gentle as he said, "You look better like this."

Maisie looked annoyed. "Well, it's all your fault for being such a successful businessman, Mr. Ford. If I were to leave the house looking like this every day, the media would probably make you out to be a frugal man who refuses to buy his wife something nice to wear."

He rubbed his nose without saying anything.

In truth, Maisie and Ethan's love story was a little like something out of a romance drama. During their school days, she'd been a good girl, and he'd been a bad boy. After graduation, they'd been a perfect couple who had supported each other through the difficulties of starting a business.

When Ethan had just graduated from college, he'd developed a game with a few of his coursemates. How many fresh graduates had money in their pockets? Ethan and Maisie had no choice but to rent the basement of a place in the suburbs of Shelkin City.

Food in the city was expensive, so Maisie had bought a secondhand gas stove and traveled to a market far away to buy groceries. She'd also carried the gas tank to the gas station to fill it up herself. Then, she'd cooked various dishes for Ethan.

She knew the prices of all the stalls at the market like the back of her hand. She knew which stall had discounts that day and which stall would give her a little something extra if she were to purchase above a certain amount.

Fresh fish cost five dollars a pound, so she would wait there until one of the fish died. Then, she would immediately buy it at one dollar a pound, which was the price for dead fish.

Maisie had worn the outfit she had on for three years. She'd washed it when it got dirty, and the jeans had faded from the number of washes. Even the T-shirt's material was thinner now.

Ethan seemed to also remember the difficult times they'd had when he'd been trying to start his business. He patted Seth's shoulder, saying, "I'll always remember the help you gave us at the time, Seth."

Ethan and his friends had developed their first game three years after establishing their company. Due to their inexperience, someone had tricked their source code out of them.

For the second game, they'd learned their lesson and hadn't gotten their source code stolen. However, an established gaming company had launched a game similar to the one they'd developed. Ultimately, their small company couldn't compete with the established one, leading to the failure of their game.

As for the third one, they'd finally managed to find an investor for the game, but the guy had run away halfway through. Another game had turned out to be a failure.

At the time, Ethan had basically given up on his dream. He'd wrapped his arms around Maisie as they lay on the bed in their cold basement. He'd said grimly, "I called my cousin, Mais. When he gets here, I want you to leave with him."

Maisie had almost exploded with rage. "What the hell do you mean by that?"

"Seth has a successful career and is handsome. Once you leave with him... life won't be so tough for you anymore."

Maisie had smacked him angrily. "What do you think I am?"

Ethan had suddenly burst into tears and held her tight. "I know I'm a failure, Mais. You're so beautiful and capable. I shouldn't be wasting your time. But when I think about how I might not see you anymore, I just want to die."

"So, you thought we could still see each other after introducing me to your cousin? What? Is it more exciting to have an affair with your cousin's woman?"

Ethan had smiled through his tears and tightened his hold on her. "Let's have ravioli for lunch, Mais."

At the time, they'd already run out of money and food. Where would the ravioli come from?

Later, Seth arrived. He'd been on a business trip to Shelkin City. When he saw the basement that was their home, he'd frowned deeply.

Then, he'd seen Maisie bustling around by the stove in her T-shirt and jeans, her hair tied up loosely. There wasn't any ventilation in the basement, and her face and hands were covered in grease. She'd still smiled brightly at him, though.

"Have a seat, Seth. I'll cook a couple of dishes while you two have some drinks."

Maisie had cooked two simple dishes—spicy fried peanuts and vegetable stir-fry. She'd used the most simple of ingredients and seasoning to prepare the tastiest dishes.

Seth drank some of the cheap wine they had and frowned at the taste. However, he had been completely sincere when he said, "I'm quite jealous of you, Ethan."

Ethan had been a little tipsy and didn't understand what he meant. He'd laughed and asked, "What's there to be jealous about? The fact that I live in a basement or that I haven't achieved anything in life?"

Seth hadn't answered.

Later, Ethan had never again brought up wanting to introduce Maisie to Seth.

Before leaving, Seth had stuffed a bank card into Maisie's hand. There'd been 100 thousand dollars inside.

She and Ethan survived for just over one year with that money. Finally, the fourth game Ethan and his friends had developed won the interest of angel investors. The first round of investment brought in over ten million dollars, and the game had been a huge hit.

It was also thanks to this game that Ethan's company had gone public, turning him into the billionaire he was now.

He now wore sharp suits and looked like an elite entrepreneur. His smile was roguish as he asked, "Have you made the call, Maisie?"

Maisie was pulled out of her memories. "What call?"

"Didn't you say you wanted to call the man you were with last night so I could meet him? Since Seth is here, invite him over, and we can have a meal together. Seth and I can help you see whether he's good enough for you."