

## Rewritten 281

### Chapter 281

Zach's car pulled up at the carpark of the mall.

Madelyn followed behind Zach, thinking they were heading straight fifth floor. But he went to the first floor, the jewelry section.

Zach walked up to a counter, where the salesperson seemed to know him. "Mr. Jardin, the Cartier you ordered last week has arrived. Please take a look and see if it meets your satisfaction." As she spoke, her gaze landed on Madelyn with a smile. "And is this lovely young lady your girlfriend? She would look stunning with it on.

Madelyn quickly denied, "You've got it wrong, I'm his sister." She thought to herself, 'Girlfriend? Ugh, no way!'

"Brother, I'll go upstairs first."

Just as she took a step, Zach grabbed her wrist. He pulled out a beautifully crafted diamond necklace. "Why not give this a try?"

"I don't want it!" Madelyn struggled, trying to free herself from his grasp. His expression darkened. He then spoke to the salesperson, "I'm sorry, she's been in a mood lately."

Madelyn thought to herself, Zach always acted like that around other people. He showed one side

of himself to everyone, but behind closed doors, he could be different. He seemed polite and

charming on the outside, but there was more to him that nobody else knew about.

Zach was so assertive that she couldn't refuse the necklace. He brushed aside her long hair and

put the necklace around her neck.

The necklace was simple and elegant. Madelyn had seen it in a fashion magazine before; it was the latest design from one of the top ten luxury jewelry brands, a limited-edition piece that was incredibly expensive and hard to come by, even if you had the money.

Madelyn couldn't figure out where he got all that money from. But even if he had tons of money, she didn't want the things he bought. It kind of felt like she was just some sugar baby to him. She thought to herself, 'He's buying me this fancy jewelry after doing that to me! What does he think of me?'

Seeing another necklace that was in the way, Zach's expression changed slightly, but it returned to normal after a few seconds.

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The salesperson immediately praised, "You have excellent taste, and the necklace suits her so well."

Zach turned her around and looked at her while gently touching the sparkling diamond. "Not bad,

it suits you really well!”

“Yeah right, but you didn’t even ask if I like it!” Madelyn reached over, undid the clasp of the necklace, and took it off, placing it into his hand. “Give it to Jadie or Yvonne! I won’t keep it. I have some clothes to shop for Rosario. Please excuse me.” With that, she left the jewelry store.

The salesperson watched as if she was witnessing a drama unfold. She kept on smiling and peeked at Zach. When she saw his expression, she didn’t want to make a peep. She thought to herself, ‘He seems so classy and good-looking, but who would’ve thought he’s a playboy. No wonder that girl was mad.”

This mall was the fanciest one where rich folks liked to go in Ventropolis. The salesperson had seen all sorts of crazy stuff happen here. Once, a super important CEO from a big company came with his sugar baby to buy a ring, but then his wife showed up and caught them right there. It was like a soap opera or something. After seeing all that, the salesperson didn’t really get shocked by much anymore.

“M-Mr. Jardin, do you still want this necklace?”

“Wrap it up.”

“O-Okay...”

Meanwhile, Madelyn made her way to the fifth floor, where they sold women’s clothes. Each piece of clothing had a price tag of five to six hundred dollars. Yep, not exactly cheap. But when it came

to spending money for Rosario, Madelyn didn’t really mind.

Madelyn might not have a good eye for men, but she sure knew her way around clothes. She

picked out two or three different styles of jackets. Just as she was about to pull out her card, Zach

beat her to it.

“This is for Rosario, you don’t need to pay.” She declined Zach’s kindness.

“When shopping, I always cover the bill for the ladies,” he insisted. Then he looked at the store

assistant and said, “Go ahead, swipe it!”

Zach’s attitude was firm as usual. Madelyn tried to protest, but eventually, she gave in.

The store assistant looked surprised for a moment, then quickly grabbed Zach’s card and swiped it

on the machine.

Zach signed the receipt, and they headed out after that.

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Madelyn thought to herself that she would pay him back that money. She did not want to owe him anything.

Zach led the way with the shopping bags. Neither of them brought up the recent incident.

Off to the side, Madelyn spotted a scarf she liked. It was handcrafted from silk. She checked the price tag and found it was also a thousand dollars.

Zach said, "Take it if you want it."

Madelyn replied, "Forget it. If Rosario knew, she'd never want to wear it." She wasn't materialistic.

Although the scarf was of good quality, it wasn't necessary, so she wouldn't buy it.

After a moment's thought, Madelyn did purchase two pairs of gloves. One was red, and the other was black, costing around two to three hundred dollars each, not too expensive.

They didn't spend too long shopping, just about thirty minutes or so, and Madelyn was all set to go with two big shopping bags. She didn't pick out anything for herself. Well, she didn't really need anything anyway.

"Mr. Jardin? Madelyn?" a voice they knew well called out.

It was Yvonne. She was heading over to them, with four serious-looking bodyguards dressed in

black suits trailing behind her. Yvonne looked really fancy, rocking high heels and a stylish.

Chanel cardigan dress from this year's collection Plus, her lipstick was a bold red shade. She walked all graceful and elegant.

Yvonne said, "What a surprise! Are you two shopping too?"

Zach nodded, greeting, "Hi, Ms. Young."

Yvonne moved closer and hooked her arm with Zach's. "Mr. Jardin, in the past, you never used to join me for shopping, but look at us now! It's not dinner time yet. How about we keep shopping for a bit? We can wrap it up just in time for dinner. What do you think, Madelyn?"

Madelyn, who kind of felt like she was just blending into the background, kept her face neutral and secretly hoped that Yvonne would just bring Zach away. "I've got some other stuff to take care

1. You guys go on without me! Oh, Zach... Can I have those black gloves?"

Yvonne wouldn't take no for an answer, "Don't say that! I know you want to see Ethan. He won't be

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dinner later! Besides, the gloves you bought, aren't they a gift for him anyway?" She added, "He'll definitely love them."

Madelyn calmly replied, "No! These are for Forrest, as a reward for his improved grades." She didn't intend to keep it a secret from them. She continued, "I have a supplementary class to attend. I won't disturb you."

Madelyn tried to take something from Zach's hand, but he didn't let go, his face growing dark. "Let's go together." He then said to Yvonne before leaving, "Ms. Young, I'm afraid I can't accompany

you."

As Yvonne watched Zach departing, her expression gradually soured. She cursed inwardly, 'You ungrateful fool. But oddly enough, the more he acted like that, the more she seemed determined to win him over. She thought, 'No matter what, he's ambitious. I just can't believe that YTCorp won't tempt him."

In the underground carpark, Zach tossed the items onto the backseat, and Madelyn opened the passenger door.

In the next instant, Zach grabbed her and leaned closer, planting a kiss on her.

Madelyn struggled, pressing against his chest. He had kissed her very few times today.

"Mmm..." Her still-swollen lips throbbed in pain as Zach nibbled them.

## Chapter 283

Madelyn was like an addictive drug for Zach. Once he kissed her, he got hooked and was not able

to hold back his lust.

Madelyn had been married to him for eight years in her past life. She had gotten used to his roughness, even in the most intimate moments.

Unable to control himself, Zach opened the passenger door and pushed her onto the seat.

“Don’t do this! We’re in a car park, someone could come by any moment.”

“I’ll be quick!”

“Are you out of your mind?” She didn’t want to go through that again. Scared, she tried to move to the driver seat door, wanting to flee.

Zach settled into the passenger seat and closed the door. He quickly pulled her back.

Madelyn looked around and noticed the carpark was full. She got even more desperate, she was almost about to cry. She turned to Zach and said, ‘Can we do it at your apartment instead? Not here, please!’

Zach had already unzipped his pants impatiently. He yanked down Madelyn’s black leggings, adjusted his position, and let her sit on his lap....

Tilting his head back with his eyes closed, he thoroughly enjoyed the sensation. “You’re doing it just fine. As long as you behave, I won’t go any further...” He spoke in a low voice, like he was

trying to hold something back.

Madelyn felt really humiliated. She bit her lip, trying not to cry.

With just one try back at his apartment, Zach already knew her sweet spots.

Half an hour had passed. Madelyn was lying on top of him weakly with glazed eyes. Zach had shown her that even if he didn’t have to enter her body, he could still drive her to climax.

He pulled out a tissue and wiped off the stain he had left on her. He asked, “Feel good?”



Madelyn quickly snapped out of it and gave him a surprise slap on his cheek. Her tears finally streamed down her face.

“Zach Jardin, I’m not your plaything.” Her voice quivered with anger,

Zach remained calm, even when Madelyn began pounding his chest and continued shouting at him. He straightened her top and said, “I’ll take you back to the Arnold residence later. If I find out

you’re making out with another man, I won’t let it slide, understand?”

Seeing Madelyn crying, Zach somehow felt annoyed. She did not reply, so he lifted her chin to

make her look at him. He asked, “Did you hear me? Talk!” His gaze was intimidating.

Tears slid down Madelyn’s chin and dropped onto Zach’s black shirt. She managed a faint smile, “Besides threatening me, what else can you do? You want to find a girl to satisfy your lust-why does it have to be me? You could go to Jadie, or Yvonne! Why me?” She pounded his chest

repeatedly again.

Zach softly brushed her hair and pulled her closer to him. He leaned down and kissed her on her

forehead, his eyes baring a deep sense of possessive affection.

“You’re not used to this now, but you’ll come to enjoy it,” he said softly, holding her hand and

giving it a tender kiss. 2

Madelyn thought, 'I can't let him have his way. It's so wrong! I need to do something before he escalates things further.'

Zach asked, "How about we find something to eat? What sounds good to you?"

"I want to go back to Ethan's place!"

Hearing that, Zach scoffed in his mind, 'Does she really want to go to the Arnold residence so badly? After what we did, does she believe she can still be with Ethan Arnold romantically? She's mine. I'll do whatever it takes to make sure of that, even if it means ruining her.'

Zach had a dashcam installed in his car, which could record everything that took place inside the vehicle. In fact, it had just captured their intimate moments. If she ever dared to go against him, he would use the recorded footage against her.

"How about trying that restaurant you mentioned last time? The Deli?" He suggested.

"Zach, I'll say it again. I want to go back to the Arnold residence!"

"Madelyn, I don't want to be mad at you, okay? Be a good girl," Zach said, sliding into the driver's seat. He gave her head a little pat and ran his fingers through her hair while he talked.

The Deli was pretty close to where they were. Madelyn had told Zach and Yvonne about it for

dinner. Last time, they didn't make it there. They went to a Japanese restaurant and had plum

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'But it doesn't matter now,' Madelyn felt that Zach's so-called "feelings" for her were just

something temporary. He seemed upset that she didn't like him anymore, so he did those things

to her.

Those feelings weren't really love; they were more like being controlling. She thought, 'Maybe... in

this new life, he could fall for Cecilia again. So, even if we end up together as a couple again, he'll

just leave me behind once he loses interest in me.'

That was why, this time around, no matter how many girls Zach liked, Madelyn had already

decided not to fall for him again. Even if she ended up feeling lonely for the rest of her life, she

wouldn't repeat the same mistakes she made before.

At The Deli, Zach had requested a private room, but Madelyn was worried he might try something

in a secluded place, so she quickly told the waiter, "We don't need a room, the main hall is just fine.

Zach smiled and told the waiter, "Main hall it is, as she wants."

"Right this way, please," the waiter said.

Finally, they both sat at a table by the window in the main hall, with Madelyn sitting across from

Zach.

The waiter brought over some sparkling water.

“Thank you,” Madelyn said.

Zach looked at the menu, thinking the food didn’t seem too special. He remarked, “Since you’re

the one who suggested this place, go ahead and order whatever you like.”

Ignoring him, Madelyn picked up the menu and

choose a few dishes she wanted.

The waiter jotted it down, “Miss, you’ve ordered only three dishes. Is that going to be enough for

both of you?”

Madelyn answered calmly, “I’m not sure what he wants, so he can order what he likes for himself.”

“Sure,” the waiter nodded.

Zach’s taste in food was different from Madelyn’s – he ordered a few spicy dishes.

Once the waiter had left, Zach asked, "Still upset about it?"

Madelyn didn't even look at him. "I went to the mall with you, and now I'm here having dinner.

What do you really want? I told you from the start that I'm not a threat to you. If you want the Jent

family's assets, take them, I don't care." She added, "Once I finish college, I'm planning to study art

in France. I might not come back to Venturia. Do a kind thing and let me go, please?"

Zach held her hand, softly stroking the back of her hand. Her skin was smooth and delicate. He

hadn't experienced enough pleasure with her yet, so how could he just let her go easily?

"You were the one who started this. You used to say you loved me, and now I have feelings for you

too. Shouldn't that make you happy?"

"Didn't I already tell you I don't want your love now!" Madelyn thought, 'If this is what you call

love, it makes me feel like I'm cheap! It's really heartbreaking!'

She remembered how she had desperately wanted this kind of affection from him in her past life.

Love had blinded her until just before her passing. 'He doesn't love me! He desires power and

status! His true feelings are always for Jadie, never for me! Even the smallest kindness he shows

me is all fake."

## Chapter 285

Zach and Madelyn exited the Deli after finishing their meal.

On the way to the Arnold residence, Zach asked, "Do you think everything can be back to normal?"

He drove with one hand while holding hers with the other in the backseat. He added, "Head back and rest. I've already canceled the camp for you. If you want to go out and have some fun, I'm happy to join you."

"Are you making decisions for me again?" Madelyn pulled her hand away forcefully. "How many times do I have to repeat myself! Zach, I don't like you anymore! Can't you get that through your head!"

She had done so much for Zach in her previous life, but he never took her seriously. After her rebirth, she decided to let go and create some distance. Yet, he persisted in getting closer, not willing to give her space. In my past life, he saw me as a tool to bring down my family, what's his plan for me this time around? Am I just a toy to him?"

Zach didn't respond, but Madelyn sensed his frustration.

When he paused at a red light and waited for it to turn green, he said, "I want to see this necklace

on you every time we meet in the future.”

Madelyn was taken aback. ‘Future? He’s still thinking about the future?’ She said coldly, “We won’t meet again. I’ll act like today never happened.”

Then she smirked, “What if Jadie finds out about us? How do you think she’ll react? You’ve made out with me while you are dating Jadie, isn’t that twisted?”

Zach’s brows knitted together. He abruptly hit the brakes, bringing the car to a halt on the side of the road. Swiftly undoing his seatbelt, he leaned over the center console to fold down Madelyn’s seat and pulled open her shirt. “In that case, I might as well make you mine now.”

“You’re insane! Zach Jardin, I’m only eighteen. If you dare touch me and my father finds out, he’ll kill you!” Madelyn gripped his hand tightly and clamped her legs together.

“That seems like a perfect plan. I can marry you without any issues, right? After that... no more need for school, just stay home and be a devoted wife and mother!” he said with a cold tone.

“Sorry, I made a mistake! Please, Zach!”

Suddenly, he grabbed hold of Madelyn's collar, his eyes giving off a menacing look as he smiled.

It's good that you recognize your mistake. From now on, spend three days a week with me, got it?"

Madelyn nodded, her eyes filled with panic. Tears rolled down her cheeks, mixing with her hair,

and her body shook uncontrollably.

Only then did Zach release his grip, proceeding to take off his suit jacket and offer it to her. He

thought, 'Defy me, and you'll never gain anything. It's better you learn to accept reality.'

The Arnold residence was situated in a quiet area, closer to the outskirts. The street appeared

deserted at this hour, with very few cars driving past.

Wrapped in the suit jacket, Madelyn sat in the car. She curled her legs up and lowered her head,

too afraid to say anything.

As Zach's car pulled up outside the grand estate of the Arnold residence, it slowed to a stop.

Madelyn was eager to leave, but the car door remained locked.

"...Please let me go!" Her voice was feeble.

Zach suddenly leaned closer, unfastening her seatbelt, causing Madelyn to tremble.



'She's scared now. Makes things simpler to manage in the future.' With this thought, Zach smirked. He held her chin and kissed her. 2

Madelyn closed her eyes, resisting the urge to push him away until he finally stopped.

Zach stopped as he noticed someone came out of the Arnold residence. "Send me a text before you go to bed, and forget about those plans of yours, alright?"

Madelyn's voice still held traces of his influence. "Alright."

"Head back now!" Zach gently wiped away the glistening moisture at the corner of her lips.

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Madelyn opened the car door and hopped out without hesitation.

The security guard patrolling by the entrance gate saw her. "Miss Jent," he called.

Madelyn didn't look up and quietly answered, quickly moving away. She still had to walk for about ten or twenty more minutes to get to the building where Ethan was staying.

The security guard pressed the Bluetooth earpiece in his ear. While watching Madelyn's figure fading in the distance, he spoke to Ethan, "Miss Jent is back. A black Audi A6 dropped her off!"

Ethan asked, "Did you see who was driving?"

"No, the driver didn't get out."

"I see." Ethan hung up the phone.

After a ten-minute walk, Madelyn finally got to the destination.

A servant spotted Madelyn when she quietly got to the doorstep.

The servant hurried over, and her voice was filled with concern as she said, "Miss Jent, you're finally here. Mr. Arnold called quite a few times not long ago. He was worried about you and wanted to talk to you! You should give him a call!"

Madelyn replied listlessly, her voice weak. "I'll call him later. I want to go upstairs first."

The servant noticed Madelyn's red eyes, as if she had been crying, and the suit jacket she had on didn't seem like it belonged to Ethan. The servant could feel that something was wrong with

Madelyn, but being just a servant, she didn't dare to pry.

Madelyn walked into her room and quickly locked the door. She took out her phone, only to see that it had no more battery and had turned off. She plugged it in to charge and then went to the

bathroom, washing off all the dirt and grime from her body.

She spent a whole two hours in the shower before stepping out. Water drops fell from her shapely body, her long hair wet. She stood on the soft carpet with no shoes, and as she looked at the tall window that acted like a mirror, she noticed not just the marks of kisses spread over her body but also scratches from her nails in a few places where she had scrubbed herself. It was a distressing sight.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. "Miss Jent, Mr. Arnold told the kitchen to make you some chicken soup, and I've brought it up. It won't taste good if it gets cold."

Madelyn picked up a robe nearby and put it on. Thankfully, the robe covered those marks. She answered, "Okay." "

When she opened the door, the servant stood there. She reached for the soup. "Thanks."

"It's my pleasure, Miss Jent. Please get some good rest."

"Sure."

Madelyn put down the chicken soup and remembered she had to call Ethan.

He answered quickly, but Madelyn spoke first. "I'm sorry I made you worry. My phone died, and I just got back to charge it."

Ethan replied kindly, "No worries. I had Leyton go get you, but when he didn't find you, I got worried... thought something might be wrong. Is Rosario alright?"

"Just had a little fall... She needs some bed rest for a while, nothing serious. I am not able to join you for dinner later. I've already eaten."

Ethan's voice was soft, "That's alright. Just rest up now that you're home."

"Okay"

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In the Arnold Corporation's office, Ethan had many photos on his desk. They captured moments of Madelyn and Zach holding hands as they exited The Deli, and also the scene in the mall where he helped her put on the necklace.

Additionally, Ethan knew that they had spent an hour in the car. Although its windows being tinted enough to prevent prying eyes from seeing inside, it wasn't hard to tell what they were doing during that hour.

Ethan asked, "Lately, Azure Corporation has secured a few projects, right?"

Leyton responded, "Not many, but these projects are quite important collaborations for Azure Corporation. Zach Jardin has been handling only the major ones, while his assistant, Kevin Harrison, is overseeing the rest."

"Hayson isn't around, and he's probably enjoying the free time. You should approach a few more companies to partner with Azure Corporation."

"If I do that, won't that be paving the way for the Jent family?"

"It's just some inconspicuous collaborations. We can use this money to pacify them. Projects worth a few hundred thousand aren't worth much to Arnold Corporation anyway."

"Understood. I'll get on it right away!" Leyton thought to himself, 'Mr. Arnold is practically delivering money to the Jent family's doorstep for the sake of Miss Jent.'

Several days passed, and the next day was a weekend. Even though Ethan was usually busy with work, he had time to relax.

Ethan woke up at six-thirty in the morning for a jog while Madelyn was still fast asleep.

Around eight o'clock, she finally woke up. She had gone to bed early last night, as she had to attend a golf training session at Supreme World today.

Her slightly curled long hair was casually brushed with her fingers, and with a hair tie in her mouth, she headed downstairs to find Ethan in white sportswear. He tipped his head back to drink water and took the towel a servant handed him to wipe the sweat off his face.

Seeing her coming down from upstairs, Ethan exchanged a glance with the servant by his side. Understanding the unspoken signal, the servant headed to the kitchen and brought out a table full of breakfast.

There were creamy oatmeal, flaky croissants, and scrambled eggs.

Madelyn used a clip to secure her hair, pulling it up into a bun at the back of her head.

“Good morning.”

Ethan offered a faint smile. “Good morning. Did you sleep well?”

Madelyn nodded. “Aren’t you working today?”

It was rare for her to see him dressed in sportswear at this time. She guessed he had just returned from a jog outside.

“I haven’t spent quality time with you in a while, so I thought I’d make some time to be with you.”

There wasn’t much emotion in Madelyn’s eyes.

Apologetically, she said, “I have a golf class today, and I can’t cancel it. I’m sorry.”

Tiger Irwin’s golf class was indeed quite expensive. She felt bad wasting it like this.

Ethan felt a slight disappointment in his heart. “I thought we could finally have some time alone together...”

Sitting at the dining table, Madelyn tore a piece of croissant. “Next time. I’ve skipped the tuition. classes for quite a while now, and I can’t afford to fall behind in Class One. Besides, my classmates are just as skilled as I am excelling. If I don’t put in the effort, I might end up at the bottom.”

“Is the academic pressure at Ventrocloud High really that heavy now?” Ethan asked.

Madelyn smiled softly. “I don’t have a talent for studying, so I have to rely on hard work. I wish I had a photographic memory, so I wouldn’t have to do so many practice books.”

She continued, "How about you? You told me before that you were a student at my school as well.

Were you also a top student?"

"That's all in the past; there's no need to bring it up again." George's voice came from outside, and he approached, greeting Madelyn. "Good morning, Miss Jent!"

Madelyn responded, "Good morning, George!"

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Ethan sipped his creamy oatmeal, pushing up the sleeves of his shirt and revealing a hint of a blue tattoo on his forearm. The intricate veins patterned across his skin, moving and curving as he ate, adding a touch of mystery and charm. "George, you're here. Got something to say?"

"Yeah, it's about Mrs. Arnold Sr...." George glanced at Madelyn briefly, seeming a bit uncertain about continuing.

Ethan prompted, "It's alright."

George had been pretty busy lately, handling things at the main mansion of the Arnold estate since the head butler there was on sick leave.

"Mrs. Arnold Sr. caught a cold recently and wants to see you, and also... Miss Jent!"

Madelyn focused on her creamy oatmeal, keeping her head down. When she heard those words, her face froze in surprise. She thought to herself, "Why does Ethan's grandmother want to see me? Is it just because she's sick, or is there something else?"

Ethan tapped his finger on the table, looking thoughtful. Then he turned to her gently, "Would you like to go see my grandma?"

Madelyn put down her spoon and gripped her dress. After a moment, she lowered her head and stammered, "Um... I'm sorry..." She stood up, accidentally dropping the spoon, and quickly picked it up. "I'll be late if I don't go now. I should get moving."

She slung her backpack over her shoulders.

Ethan stood up quickly too. "I can drive you there."

"No need, the driver is waiting at the door. I'll manage on my own. Thanks!"

"But Madelyn...!"

Before he could say more, Madelyn had already left. What was supposed to be a special time for them turned into a hurried and tense situation. He couldn't help but feel that his impatience had made her uncomfortable.

A touch of frustration crept over him as he leaned his forehead on his hand, uncertain about the next steps to take.

He noticed that she maintained a certain distance, even after he had rescued her from the Jent Residence. At his own home, she retreated to her room, dedicating her time to studying, drawing, and reading. She mostly avoided interacting with others.

Ethan had simply wanted to take her out to change the atmosphere, to show her different places.

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more.

Taking a deep breath, Ethan decided, "You go ahead. I'll join you shortly."

George suggested, "Should we consider having Miss Jent see a psychologist? If she keeps

isolating herself like this, it might not be healthy for her."

Ethan's emotions suddenly surged. The bowl he was holding slipped from his hand, crashing to the ground and breaking. "You think she's not hiding well enough from me? Just leave!"

George barely flinched and nodded, "Yes, sir!"

After George left, a timid servant approached to clean up the mess.

Ethan's sudden outbursts were not uncommon; in the past, they had been even more intense. He had even injured some servants before, and a few had narrowly escaped serious harm.

Upon his return, the household staff became more apprehensive, aware of Ethan's temper. However, they observed that Ethan mostly restrained himself in Madelyn's presence. Now that she was gone, they were even more careful, speaking less and moving with great caution. The whole place felt heavy, suffocated by tension, and everyone worked with extra care.

What Ethan wasn't aware of was that Madelyn's tendency to withdraw wasn't just due to the dynamics of the Arnold family; it was an internal struggle she was facing.

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Madelyn had avoidant personality. Whenever she felt upset, she used to dodge her worries. When

sadness or pain hit her, she would opt to be alone, seeking solace within herself. Occasionally, she even tried to forget, using that as a way to find some relief.

She did want to confront her problems, but fear held her back. Social interactions and specific

situations triggered her unease, so solitude became her refuge. Even when Ethan made efforts to



draw her out of her cocoon, she found it difficult to step into the open.

At the Arnold residence, apart from meal times, Madelyn mostly retreated to her room, engaging in activities she enjoyed – drawing, studying, and listening to music. She kept to herself and

rarely interacted with others.

In the Supreme World, Madelyn's golf instructor, Tiger, brought her a piece of cake. "Take a break

and have something to eat."

After setting her golf club aside, Madelyn sipped some water before accepting it from Tiger's

-hand. "Thanks."

"I could tell something was off with you all morning. A sweet treat might lift your spirits."

Madelyn managed a faint smile. "How did you figure it out?"

Tiger took a sip of water. "With you, it's not too hard to tell. Some folks wear their emotions on their faces when something's bugging them. And for many, physical activity becomes a way to

release pent-up feelings."

"Maybe it's because of the stress from studying lately. On top of that, I've got all these different classes that leave me with hardly any time to do the things I actually enjoy."

Tiger crossed his left leg over his right and nodded in agreement. "Hmm, yeah, stress can really pile up. It's a challenge for anyone. But aren't there some things you like within all of this?"

Madelyn thought for a moment. "I don't think there's anything in particular that I like. The things

I enjoy, my father never allows me to do them."

"Do you enjoy painting? I've got a painting here. Would you be interested in checking it out?"

"What kind of painting?" Madelyn felt curious.

Tiger glanced at his wristwatch; practice time was already up. "Follow me."

He led her to an exclusive office on the upper floor. In a cozy corner, a painting about three meters long was covered by a black cloth. Tiger moved forward and revealed the artwork. "Pardon the

room, it's a bit untidy."

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"No worries."

In truth, his room was very clean, spotless even, giving the impression that it hadn't been used for

a while.

Tiger unveiled the enormous painting.

At first glance, the painting took Madelyn aback. "This...This is! Aishalya Dejean's 'Noctis Stellata' "? But isn't it believed to be lost?"

Aishalya Dejean stood among the top ten most influential painters globally. She had created just five paintings in her lifetime, each capable of mesmerizing the world. Yet, she had always remained mysterious, never making a public appearance.

The world only knew that Aishalya Dejean had vanished after completing “Noctis Stellata”, when she was just twenty-six. For decades afterward, she produced no more art. Speculation swirled, with many believing she had passed away. The truth remained shrouded in mystery.

“A present from an old pal. But I can’t say for sure if it’s authentic or a reproduction. How about

lending me a hand in verifying it?”

Madelyn’s heart surged with a mix of excitement and delight that was hard to put into words.”

May I take a longer look at it?”

Tiger responded, “Sure, take your time.”

Madelyn’s fingers brushed the glass frame delicately, her gaze fixed on the masterpiece inside. The painting’s colors and intricate details were so vivid that they seemed tangible, drawing her

deep into the scene.

Madelyn had seen Aishalya Dejean’s works only once before, and this was her second encounter.

Thirty minutes drifted by.

“It’s genuine.”

“You’re sure?”

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Madelyn nodded firmly. "I'm certain."

Tiger crossed his arms and smiled, thinking that she finally smiled today.

"It looks like my friend didn't deceive me after all. But how do you know it's authentic?"

Madelyn shook her head. "I don't have an explanation, but there's a familiarity in this painting

that I can't ignore. I'm convinced it's real."

"I understand." Tiger chuckled softly. "If you say it's real, then I believe you."

"You're quite the savior for your friend. Not many would part with something so valuable."

"It's not something that's mine to possess. If I accept it, I'll owe someone a significant favor. And

favors have a way of needing repayment sooner or later."

"True enough."

"Did you save his life?"

Tiger smiled, glancing down and shaking his head. "I won't talk further about that. Let's grab a

meal. I've been away for a while, and I heard they've introduced some new dishes. Interested in

trying them out together?"

She replied, "Definitely."

Madelyn didn't feel much distance from her golf instructor, mostly because they had a history.

together. She had started learning golf when she was thirteen, and their association spanned five

years. Over this time, Tiger had maintained a comfortable boundary, never crossing lines.

Sometimes, when she was down, he would use subtle gestures to lift her spirits without being

intrusive. Just like when he showed her the painting today.

Madelyn enjoyed painting, a fact that Tiger had known for a while.

The two of them took the elevator and arrived at a restaurant within Supreme World. It was their familiar spot. Quite a few people were there for a meal at this time. It wasn't a place just anyone could visit, so those who came were either wealthy or influential.

After ordering their food, Madelyn went to the restroom.

In the dim corridor outside a private room, Madelyn saw Kevin. In the brief moment their gazes met, Madelyn quickly averted her eyes. She thought, 'If Kevin is here, that means Zach is too.' She had no idea Zach would be at Supreme World.

Realizing there was no time to use the restroom, she decided to leave.

1/2

"Sorry, something came up suddenly, and I need to leave. I won't be able to have dinner with you

this time.”

Tiger nodded. “Do you need me to drop you off?”

“No need, the driver is waiting for me. I’ll just head there directly. I’m really sorry about this.”

“It’s okay, no need to apologize. Take care on your way back.

“Sure.” Madelyn thought to herself, ‘If I had known Zach was here, I would never have come.”

She was also relieved that Zach had been occupied with his company’s affairs lately, leaving him with no time to bother her.

Just as Madelyn was about to step into the elevator, ready to leave, her hand was suddenly grabbed by a force, accompanied by a pungent scent of alcohol.

In the hushed safe passage, Zach had Madelyn pressed against the wall. He leaned against her back, his hands at her waist, lifting her hem and slipping inside, groping that tender spot.

Madelyn caught his restless hand, her voice hushed, “What are you trying to do? Someone might catch us.”

His warm, slightly boozy breath brushed over her neck, teasing her nerves with delicious shivers. Zach, towering over her with his tall frame, completely shielded the petite Madelyn. He teased her, peak, each touch sending a spark, “If Kevin hadn’t informed me, I wouldn’t have known you were here. Planning an escape, were you?” 3

He intended to tease her, so he playfully tweaked her peaks, causing her breath to hitch in mixed feelings. “Hey... Hey no! Cut it out!”