

## Standing before Love Chapter 342

“Are you going on a trip? Will it be a long one?” Myra felt quite uneasy.

Tony squeezed her hand and laughed. “I’ll definitely bring you and our child along if I have to go on a trip.”

“Then what’s going on?” Myra stared at the document placed by her hand with a confused look on her face.

At that moment, Tony seemed to sense her uneasy feeling; he curled his lips into a smile and suddenly stared at her squarely in the eyes while asking, “Myra, what if I’ve decided to go after the Stark Group? Will you feel upset about this?”

“What?” Myra wondered if she misheard Tony’s words and her eyes widened in surprise.

As soon as he saw her expression, he couldn’t control himself; he let out a deep, rumbling laughter and patted her on the head. “No matter what happens, you must trust me, alright?”

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On the other end, Gemma had intended to make her way to the Hart Group. She hailed a waiting cab then covered her head with her clothes and entered the car. Upon arriving at the destination, she got out of the car but was stopped by the driver as she had not paid her fare. Thing was, she had escaped from the hospital in a hurry so she didn’t have a single cent on her. Although she tried to make a run for it, she didn’t succeed because the driver had grabbed hold of her and refused to let go.

Fortunately, Gideon had expected her to turn up at the Hart Group as soon as he received the phone call from the bodyguard. As such, he was already waiting there. He paid the fare and then forcefully dragged her into his car.

“I don’t want to go! Gideon, I want to talk to Tony! I need to clarify things with him! I’ve ended up like this because of him, so he can’t just cast me aside!” Gemma struggled to escape. All of a sudden, the cloth that was covering her face dropped to the ground and her scary-looking face was exposed. She shrieked in fright as soon as she saw herself in the reflection of Gideon’s

eyes. She then quickly picked up the cloth and wrapped her head up immediately.

“You’re all liars! You said that my face could be fixed but it’s totally irreparable! I’ll be stuck with this ugly, disgusting face and my whole life will be ruined because of this! It’s completely ruined!” Gemma cried hysterically as she ranted at Gideon.

Currently, Gideon’s brows were knitted together tightly as he didn’t know how Gemma suddenly realized the truth about the wounds on her face. However, judging by how things were right now, he knew that it would be detrimental for her to create a fuss in front of Tony. Disregarding the fact that she might not even get the chance to see him, it was quite likely that she wouldn’t even get past the receptionist of the Hart Group so clearly, there was no point for her to make a fool of herself.

“Gemma Walton, how old do you think you are? Is crying and making a fuss the only thing you can do when you’re in trouble?” Gideon was quite tempted to slap some sense into his sister; however, he didn’t bear to do so after recalling her disfigurement. And so, he commented disappointedly, “Tony will not bother to see you! Don’t you get it? He doesn’t have any feelings toward you so he doesn’t care whether you’re hurt, and neither does he care about how badly you’re wounded! Frankly, he probably wouldn’t even bat an eyelash if he received news that you died today! When on earth will you stop losing control regarding anything that concerns him? Do you realize how difficult things are for the company right now? If you keep this up, do you realize that this is just going to push the Hart Group into taking action against our family?”

“You’ve never contributed to the family at all—first, we arranged for you to work at the company but you complained about the workload. Our only request thereafter was for you to build up a good relationship with Tony, but you kept angering him all the time. Besides shopping, going to the hair salon and pampering yourself with spa treatments, what else are you good at?”

Gemma was shocked to hear Gideon’s incessant rant and she couldn’t control the tears from falling as she sobbed, “But what about my face... I can’t just pretend that nothing’s happened!” As soon as she recalled Tony and Myra’s love for each other, she couldn’t control the twisted flash of jealousy in her eyes.

“Put up with it! You must put up with it, alright?” Gideon’s eyes were as cold as icicles. “It will be just for a short while. Grandpa, Dad, and I have

something important going on right now and it's crucial to us, so you'd better not ruin things for us at this point! If everything goes according to plan, the dominant force of Bradford City will soon be replaced. By then, we will obviously seek justice for you. I promise your sufferings will definitely not be in vain!"

Gemma took some time to calm down and her sobs slowly turned to sniffles. However, she couldn't control the resentment she felt upon recalling her current looks and her current sorry state.

"Don't worry; even if Tony files criminal proceedings against you, as long as you follow my instructions, I definitely won't allow anything drastic to happen to you. Although you drove your car into Tony's, that could also be accidental on your part; it was just unfortunate that you had poor driving skills and it wasn't an intentional move. You must stand firm on this version of events. Besides, I'll take you to see a psychiatrist and arrange for an evaluation. Whatever it is, our family will not stand by and watch while you fall into trouble, Gemma. Grandpa's words earlier were just out of anger—there's no way we could abandon you!"

At this moment, Gideon gradually changed his tone of voice and he spoke in a milder tone. As for Gemma, she couldn't stop the tears from falling but she was no longer agitated. Gideon glanced at her and upon noticing that she had finally come round to his advice, he heaved a sigh of relief. However, that was only his assumption. In actual fact, Gemma's personality evidently indicated otherwise as she was not one who could be easily swayed.

In the end, she maintained her opinion that all her misfortune was brought on by Myra. I can put up with this for now but I'll definitely find a way to make her pay for this. By then, I'll make sure that she suffers more than me!

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Kris woke up from her sleep feeling content. This was the best sleep she had experienced over the past few days.

She woke up in the arms of a man. His embrace was not as cold and hard as Gideon's; on the contrary, it was warm and lovely. She opened her eyes gradually and saw Hayden smiling at her with a tender look on his face. He then kissed her on her forehead and asked lightly, "You're awake?"

Kris hummed in response and she shifted in bed. She had lost herself in the throes of passion with him last night and had been up the whole night. In all honesty, she expected to feel quite uncomfortable today after last night but unexpectedly, she felt fine. Furthermore, she could tell that he had cleaned her up intimately too.

“I was afraid you’d be uncomfortable so after you passed out from exhaustion last night, I gave you a body massage.” Hayden smiled at her and he sat up in bed. He then made a move to steer her out of bed too. “You must be hungry! I made breakfast for us and I prepared your favorite porridge and dumplings.”

Kris felt quite blessed to wake up to such a blissful life; suddenly, she had the thought to just continue enjoying this life with Hayden from now on. He’s the most tender, loving partner I have ever had and I know how much he loves me. But...

Kris lowered her eyelashes and looked downward. Shortly after that, she raised her head and smiled at him. “Oh—that’s perfect because I just started to feel hungry! Hayden... can you carry me over?” She stretched out both of her arms toward him and spoke in a flirtatious voice.

Last night, she had explained to him that she would be getting engaged to Gideon soon. All of these were her father’s suggestion and everything was for the sake of the collaboration between their families. Once the deal was over, she would then call off the engagement. Hayden had accepted her explanation and he remained steadfastly in love with her.

Kris was perfectly aware that she would not remain in a relationship with Gideon once everything was settled in terms of their personal interests. He was a cruel and cunning man; despite being his bedmate, he always managed to instill a sense of fear in her even as she slept next to him. If by then Hayden was still by her side, she would consider giving him a chance.

Hayden’s eyes sparkled and he immediately swept her into his arms and carried her toward the dining area in the living room.

On the dining table, there was already a bowl of porridge served in a porcelain bowl, and it smelled divine from afar.

This was Kris’s favorite food and she usually liked the smell of it but today, as soon as she got near the dining table, she inexplicably felt her stomach churn and she couldn’t control the nauseous feeling that rose within her.

“Bleugh!” She felt quite uncomfortable and gagged. Suddenly, she struggled to get out of his arms and rushed into the bathroom.

Hayden froze for a moment before he immediately ran after her.

Inside the bathroom, Kris retched several times but she didn’t throw up.

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Hayden patted Kris on the back lightly. “What’s wrong? Are you feeling better now?”

Kris shook her head. Looking up, she caught sight of her own reflection in the mirror. Currently, there was a dazed look on her face as she realized that this had happened on and off recently. Initially, she had assumed that she was just slightly under the weather so she didn’t pay much attention to it. However, this time, it suddenly hit her that it had been more than two months since she had had her period.

Just then, she felt goosebumps all over and she pushed Hayden aside to make her way into the bedroom.

He ran after her frantically. “Kris, what’s wrong? Are you feeling uncomfortable? Let’s go to the hospital right away!”

Kris took a few steps forward in a hurry but as soon as she noticed that Hayden was right at her heels, she stopped in her tracks all of a sudden. And so, Hayden waited in front of her expectantly. She smiled forcefully at him as she muttered, “I’m fine. I think I must have eaten something bad. Why don’t you have breakfast first? I’ll freshen up in the bedroom and I won’t take too long.”

Hayden sighed in relief. “Alright; but I’ll wait for you to have breakfast together.”

At the moment, Kris didn’t have the energy to deal with Hayden despite his tenderness. She turned her back on him and walked toward the bedroom, not forgetting to shut the door behind her. At that instance when she shut the door, she missed the look of contemplation that flashed across the eyes of the man standing close by.

Kris shut the door and immediately rummaged in the drawer where she usually kept her contraceptive pill before she took one out of the packaging and immediately swallowed it. She would usually take preventative measures each time after having intercourse. Naturally, she never forgot to take it each time she was with Gideon because she didn't want to get pregnant with his child. As for Hayden, he was a considerate lover so he would always remind her every time. However, she bit on her lower lip and she couldn't quite control her uneasiness now.

After breakfast, Hayden sent Kris to work. Just before turning into the intersection to her office, she requested for him to stop the car at the pharmacy nearby. She told him that she wanted to get some gastric medication but instead, she discreetly bought a pregnancy test kit.

Hayden remained in the same spot after dropping her off at work. He then made his way back to the pharmacy that she had visited earlier and spoke to the woman who served her. "Excuse me, may I know what sort of medication did that pretty lady with waist-length hair, who visited ten minutes ago, bought?"

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Recently, Myra had completely stopped going to work. She had ongoing morning sickness and her baby was quite a fussy one. As such, her troubles with sleeping and eating were quite evident from her sunken, hollow cheeks.

Sebastian and Lisa both felt quite pained to see her suffer. Hence, both of them insisted that Myra stay at the Hart Residence for the time being so that they could take care of her.

As for Tony, he was quite busy recently and his left arm was almost fully recovered. In order to spend more time with Myra, he would usually leave for work late in the morning and come home early in the evening. However, he remained busy with work at home; there were files full of documents on the coffee table and the surrounding carpet on the ground. Leo was always going in and out of the place too. He had also jokingly mentioned to Myra that this current arrangement was too taxing for him and he had insisted on a pay raise.

Myra was mainly at home nowadays and she hardly left the house. Perhaps because of her morning sickness, she couldn't quite stand the smell inside the car. Every morning after waking up, she would take a walk in the garden with

Lisa. After having lunch, she would then take a short nap in the afternoon and after she woke up, she would normally be with Sebastian as they busied themselves with floral arrangements. All in all, her days were usually quite laid-back.

Occasionally, Myra would get phone calls from a couple of unlisted numbers on her cell phone. Normally, she would just ignore them and leave them ringing, or she would just turn her phone on silent. Whoever it was, she never answered the phone. As for her work at the Stark Group, Tilly would occasionally ring her for work-related issues. That happened quite rarely because Myra was on maternity leave right now so with Tilly being her personal assistant, the latter didn't have much work to do. All she had to do was to follow up on the projects on hand.

To Myra's surprise, the Walton Family seemed to be lying low lately or to be more specific, Gemma seemed to be keeping a low profile. However, word out there was that she seemed to have realized that she was permanently disfigured and there was a low chance for her to regain her old looks. Based on her personality from before, it was inevitable that she would create a huge scene but surprisingly, she was quite well-behaved recently and kept to herself.

Whenever Myra recalled the incident regarding the police investigation, it didn't come as a surprise for Gemma to be behaving herself. All of this was most probably because there was a thorough investigation made into the accident. Gemma had undergone a psychiatry assessment in order to avoid prosecution and she publicly announced that she was diagnosed with a mild split personality disorder. She had claimed that she was not in the right state of mind when she attempted to drive her car into Tony's.

In regard to that incident, the Hart Family had decided to let her off the hook.

It felt as if there was a storm brewing in Bradford City but at the same time, everything seemed quite normal to the eye.

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Myra was sunbathing in the garden when news broke regarding the fund embezzlement from the Stark Group's Green Palms Project. The autumn rays were not too strong so she enjoyed the warm feeling as the rays hit her body when she relaxed in the garden.

It was a rare occasion for Tony to be able to take half the day off, so he made himself comfortable on a chaise lounge next to her and they laid facing each other.

While they were enjoying this cozy moment together, Myra suddenly received a hasty phone call from Cameron on her cell phone. Recently, she had not been keeping track of her phone so as soon as her phone rang, Tony picked it up. He glanced at the phone and revealed a half-smile before swiping right to answer the call. Then, he handed the phone to Myra.

“Hi, who is this?” Although Myra knew who it was on the line, she purposely did that to annoy Cameron.

Tony wrapped his arms around the woman in front of him and he pulled her into a tight embrace. At the moment, he eyes were half-lidded and his thin lips were pursed into a thin line. The golden rays shone down and hit his handsome face; as a result, his originally well-sculpted face became even more attractive. All of a sudden, Myra seemed to have forgotten that she was on the line and she leaned forward to give him a peck on the lips.

He raised his brows upon realizing her action. Gradually, he opened his eyes that were dark as coals and squinted at her. “I would be much happier if you’d kept going for a few more seconds,” he murmured with a smile.

“Pfft!” Myra’s face flushed red and she was slightly embarrassed by her eagerness earlier. She then burrowed herself into his embrace once again before focusing on the person on the line. “What do you need from me?” she asked coldly.

Cameron had already repeated his words twice but then Myra hadn’t paid any attention to him at all while he was talking. Right now, as soon as he heard her words, he had no choice but to lower his voice and repeat the same thing. “Myra, the company needs your help right now.”

“Does it? But I’m currently on maternity leave and you’ve taken charge of mostly everything. I thought Kris was helping you run the company, so why would you need my help?”

At this point, Cameron clearly knew that she was being sarcastic; however, he had no choice but to tolerate it.



The Stark Group was currently in collaboration with the Walton Family to develop the Central Square project, and there was also a deep-sea oil drilling project in the making. All in all, the Stark Group had invested a huge sum of money into those two projects. As such, there was no capital available to replenish the budget deficit of the Green Palms Project. However, the current problem was that if this project flopped, there would be lawsuits for fraud awaiting them—from both their suppliers and clients. As such, Cameron had no other option. He suddenly realized that he could seek help from Myra after being reminded by Kris and Rachel. He knew that right now, Myra was loaded; even if one disregarded her assets, if she could somehow convince the Hart Group to lend a helping hand, then there would no longer be an issue with the project.

“Myra, you must be joking. Kris is just temporarily taking over your position but everything remains yours once you come back from maternity leave. You’re still the general manager and the biggest shareholder of the Stark Group. We’ve hit a snag right now so you can’t just sit by and watch us falter.” Cameron sounded quite sincere with his words.

Just then, Tony couldn’t control his laughter upon noticing Myra’s sudden drastic change in her expression and tone of voice. He pinched her lightly on the nose, which earned him a glare from Myra. At the same time, she casually replied to Cameron, “Tell me what’s going on first.”

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“So this is how things are right now—six months ago, we started work on the Green Palms Project and things had been going perfectly fine until this morning, when I was told that the budget for the project was embezzled. The police have launched an investigation into this incident.

The contractor appointed to complete the job was just a shell company and the director is no longer contactable; so far, the police haven’t apprehended anyone but news of this has already gone out to the public. The Green Palms Project is a major project and we have already pre-sold many units. Right now, our phones are ringing off the hook from all the phone calls made by these clients. If we can’t fill this deficit and continue with the construction works on the project, then we will be facing a huge lawsuit...”

Cameron broke out in cold sweat upon describing the situation to Myra. This had happened all of a sudden without prior warning, which was why they were caught by surprise and were completely unprepared.

As soon as Myra heard Cameron's words, she looked at Tony instinctively and she couldn't help but recall the words he had spoken to her the other day. She tried hard to calm her racing heartbeat and as she commented lightly, "President Stark, do you mean to say that you want me to come up with the money to fill the deficit?"

Cameron took a deep breath and forced a smile on his face. "Myra, I know that you're definitely not who you were before. Of course, if you were to come up with the money, then there will be incentives for you from the company. Half of the profit from the project is yours to keep and I'll leave the Stark Group in your hands too."

He's only going to offer me fifty percent of the profit from the project? Myra laughed out loud all of a sudden. "President Stark, according to your words earlier, this news is public knowledge. Obviously, even if you approach the bank for a loan right now, it would definitely be rejected, yes?"

Currently, it took a lot of effort for Cameron to keep a calm expression but his tone of voice remained quite warm. "Myra, this time, you're the only one who can help the company. Surely you wouldn't want the company to suffer any losses? After all, your mom put in a lot of effort into building up the company!"

"The losses are inevitable. Previously, you ignored my advice and insisted on using up all of our available cash flow to invest in those two projects with the Walton Group. Right now, you've got a problem with insufficient cash flow and a budget deficit issue. Soon, it won't be just the Green Palms Project that will face the issue of a budget deficit; this will become a problem for the whole company too. By then, a major company like ours will most likely flop from this tiny incident."

Cameron felt quite embarrassed and stung by Myra's strong words. However, he remained quite stubborn in his thought that the Walton Family's two projects were beneficial to them; one of them would result in a huge profit while the other one was beneficial in terms of building up their reputation. Every businessman would have taken that into good consideration. Besides, the Walton Family had granted them a bigger share of the profit. It was just unfortunate that the project had hit a snag halfway; as such, the money he had kept aside as an emergency cash reserve became totally insignificant.

“Myra...” Cameron gritted his teeth and there was a flash of annoyance in his eyes. However, his tone of voice was the same as he sounded frantic and quite anxious. “This will be a lesson for us and I promise there won’t be another incident like this anymore. This is a critical period right now so we need to first resolve the problem and stop all the rumors. Otherwise—”

“Tony—” All of a sudden, Myra interrupted Cameron’s words. She ignored Cameron and turned toward Tony. With a smile on her face, she looked at the man who was currently toying with her sleeve. “Would you be willing to help me come up with the money to fill the Stark Group’s deficit?”

Initially, Cameron felt quite upset at being cut off by Myra but upon hearing her words, he realized that she was seeking help from Tony, so that bit of unhappiness he felt faded immediately. He waited patiently on the line with bated breath as he listened to their conversation. Soon after that, he heard Tony say in a low and indifferent voice, “I’m not interested in helping fill that deficit.”

Immediately after Cameron heard that, he didn’t care whether they could hear him on the other end and he yelled out frantically, “Director Hart, Myra’s mother put in a lot of effort to build the Stark Group into how it is right now. If the company flops, I’m sure she wouldn’t be able to rest in peace. Besides, Myra will be quite unhappy too.”

Tony must have heard his words because right after that, Cameron heard him ask Myra, “If I don’t do this, will you be unhappy about it?”

Myra shook her head naïvely. “Why would I be unhappy about it?”

Right after that, Tony took Myra’s phone and replied to Cameron, “Did you hear that?”

Cameron clenched his teeth angrily as soon as he heard that. This vile couple is obviously taking me for a ride! Out of immense anger, he immediately hung up the call without saying another word.

Myra couldn’t control her laughter upon hearing the engaged tone blaring out from her phone. Just then, she pretended to put on an annoyed look and she raised her eyebrows at Tony before retorting fiercely, “My mother’s never going to rest in peace! I can’t believe you rejected my request to help fill the deficit for the Stark Group! I thought you said you love me? It must be a lie! You’re a big, fat liar and I’m not going to talk to you anymore!”

Tony chuckled deeply in response. He then tugged on Myra's hand but she made to fling his hand aside; her actions resulted in him laughing louder than before and he suddenly pinched her cheeks. "Naughty girl! Do you really mean it?"

Myra felt quite embarrassed by his action of pinching her chubby cheeks. Due to her pregnancy, she had gained a lot of weight both around the waist as well as on her cheeks. When he pinched her, his actions further emphasized her chubbiness, which felt quite ugly to her. She hastily buried her head into his chest. "Stop pinching my cheeks; I look ugly!" Soon after that, she raised her head to look at him.

The man in front of her maintained his perfect figure. As he laid there, his broad shoulders and tight bottom were quite prominent; paired with his flawless face, Myra couldn't help but feel a sense of melancholy. Out of annoyance, she pinched him hard on the waist but ended up feeling the pain in her hand herself. Last night, she had just seen his body and obviously knew how well-toned and powerful the abs she had just pinched were. She was gradually losing her pretty looks whereas he maintained his handsome appearance. This is so unfair!

As soon as she realized that, Myra buried herself deeper into Tony's arms but this time, she purposely turned around and showed him her back. There was a stark difference between their looks and she couldn't help herself from feeling upset about it.

Tony looked at her pouting lips and laughed out loud. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her into a tight hug. Then, he gave her a kiss on her forehead. "Fine, then. If you want me to come up with the money then I'll do it for you, and I'll even risk Grandpa's wrath to give you the Hart Group if that's what you want. You can have everything!"

This silly man! Myra pursed her lips and there was a hint of shyness that flashed across her eyes. Although he would occasionally sweet-talk her in the past, she felt herself drowning in his sweet and affectionate tone right now.

Gosh, I've become weirder and weirder even since I became pregnant. I can't believe he played along with me though it was just an intentional little outburst. Myra's lips curved into a sweet smile as she pondered over that.

Standing not too far from them, Sebastian was tending to his plants; he had seen the two of them being so lovey-dovey the whole afternoon. With a frown,

he muttered to himself, “They’re so indecent!” Then, he snorted before heading back into the house to look for Lisa.

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After Cameron hung up the phone, both Rachel and Kris, who were standing by his side, asked anxiously, “What did she say? Did Myra agree to come up with the money? How about asking her for a loan? Once we resolve this crisis, we can come up with the money to repay her. We shouldn’t have to be too courteous with her; we’re family, after all, but we shouldn’t take advantage of her too!”

Cameron’s expression turned darker as soon as he heard their words. Myra’s attitude clearly indicated that she wasn’t going to lend a hand this time. She’s no daughter of mine!

Just then, Rachel signaled to Kris. With a sigh, the latter said, “Dad, don’t worry too much. I’ve pleaded with Gideon to help us with this problem and he promised to consider it. If necessary, I’ll head over to the Walton Group’s new company to talk to him.”

Cameron’s face finally brightened slightly. Indeed, Kris is the only daughter who’s on my side when I need her. He clenched his teeth and promised, “Don’t worry, Krissy. I will take good care of you and your mother in the future. Once all this is over, I’ve decided that I’ll hand over ten percent of my shares in the Stark Group to you—it’s time for you to learn how to run the place.”

As soon as Kris heard that, there was a surprised look on her face. Perhaps it was because Cameron was a difficult person to please all this while, so this serious promise made by him right now was quite overwhelming for her. She glanced at Rachel and clearly saw the elatedness in her eyes as well. Soon after that, her mother shot her a look.

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Kris hurriedly replied, “Dad, I’ll go over to the Walton Group right away. Don’t worry; I’ll definitely be able to convince Gideon to help you!”

Cameron nodded in response and he waved her off tiredly. Meanwhile, Kris nodded at Rachel and headed out of the door.

This is such an unexpected surprise! I've managed to ask for help from the Walton Group and Gideon already, but I just purposely wanted Dad to see Myra's true colors. After he sought help from her and got rejected, it obviously further emphasized my willingness to help. This time, Gideon had agreed to Kris' request without any qualms and she felt quite pleased with his performance too. Turns out that Gideon's quite dependable during critical moments like these!

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Kris made her way to the Walton Group and headed straight toward Gideon's office under the guise of seeking help. However, just before she walked into his office, she was stopped in her tracks by his secretary who awkwardly said, "Miss Stark, Mr. Walton has a visitor in his office and it's inconvenient for you to go in right now." Kris noticed that she spoke in a nervous and careful tone; based on her experience in the corporate world all these years, she could tell from the secretary's eyes that there must be something else going on. Kris was just about to tell her to step aside when all of a sudden, someone from inside opened the door to Gideon's office.

It was a woman who made her way out of the room and Kris' face turned pale as soon as she saw that person—it was none other than Lyla.

Evidently, Lyla had seen Kris as well. Nevertheless, the former maintained a natural expression and walked out of the office with a cool and composed look as she headed toward the elevator where Kris was currently standing.

"Stop right there!" At the moment, Kris had an ashen look on her face. There is no way I will be taken for a fool! As soon as Lyla had walked out of the room, Kris had noticed that despite the former being dressed properly, she had instinctively shifted her collar, revealing a reddish mark on her collarbone. Moreover, there were too many creases on her dress, which was definitely unusual.

"Lyla Fisher, you're such a shameless woman! Not only did you go after Myra's man, you're now after mine too!" Kris yelled angrily at Lyla. Although the former didn't intend to spend the rest of her life with Gideon, she still couldn't accept the fact that he had publicly humiliated her by two-timing her; furthermore, it was with Lyla of all people. This amounted to him giving her a tight slap on the face.

“Miss Stark, please mind your words! I’ve just come around to discuss something with Mr. Walton, so please be respectful.” Lyla commented casually.

“Just a discussion?” Kris’s voice turned shriller in response and she wanted to rush up to grab hold of Lyla’s clothes and slap her in the face. However, she was held back tightly by Gideon’s secretary. “Miss Stark, please stop it! Director Walton has come out.”

As soon as Kris heard her words, she turned around immediately; indeed, Gideon was currently standing in front of the doorway to his office, and he was staring at them with a cryptic look on his face. Kris suddenly recalled that she needed his help with the problem with the Stark Group. As such, she didn’t dare to make a fuss. Hence, she unwillingly calmed down and forced herself to stop going after Lyla.

“You’d better watch out because I won’t let you off the hook!” Kris muttered under her breath. She then forcefully bumped into Lyla’s shoulder before walking toward Gideon.

Lyla, on the other hand, nonchalantly made her way toward the elevator and she acted as if nothing had happened. She then pressed on the button to go down to the basement parking and made her way downstairs.

Frankly, Kris’ words meant nothing to Lyla. She was already living in desperation so there was nothing else that could faze her. She no longer harbored any hopes to maintain her position as the Young Mistress of the Chase Family, but she would definitely keep a tight grasp on everything that belonged to her.

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As soon as Lyla left the place, Gideon’s secretary naturally tried to keep herself out of sight.

Meanwhile, Kris bit on her lower lip nervously before walking toward Gideon.

She knew it was fairly normal for a man like Gideon to have one or two casual flings; moreover, they were not married yet. However, being aware of it was different from actually experiencing it in person.

She couldn't quite control her disgust upon realizing that this man had hooked up with someone else behind her back. Nonetheless, she was unable to confront him about this right now.

Just then, her eyes turned red-rimmed and her tears started falling uncontrollably. She took another few steps forward to stand in front of him and she bit hard on her lower lip. "Gideon, you and Lyla..."

"What you're imagining did not happen between me and Miss Fisher. She was here as the representative of the Chase Group to discuss something with me, and we didn't even spend more than twenty minutes together before you arrived." Then, he glanced at his secretary standing by the side.

She immediately nodded her head earnestly in response. "That's right, Miss Stark! Miss Fisher arrived slightly more than ten minutes before you!"

Although Kris was fully aware that the two of them were in cahoots to deceive her—they didn't even bother to come up with a more plausible excuse and didn't even care whether she realized this—she had no choice but to endure this agony. She bit on her lip once again and raised her head to smile at Gideon. "Okay... I trust you, Gideon."

Just then, Gideon's expression was full of scorn and he revealed a half-smile at Kris. Almost instantaneously, he masked the contempt in his eyes and placed his arms around Kris' waist before steering her toward the office. "Why did you come all the way here? Don't worry; I promised you I'd help solve Stark Group's problem so I'll definitely keep my word. The Stark Group is your family business, so any problem faced by your family is mine too. How could I possibly stand by idly?"

At that moment, Kris felt quite relieved as soon as she heard his words. She tried hard to suppress her disgust and kissed him on his cheek. "When will you provide the funds to cover the budget deficit? I'm sure you're aware that my dad's quite anxious and he hasn't been sleeping or eating properly due to this. A few companies are lying in wait to take advantage of this situation and he's just worried that..."

"Don't worry." Gideon forcefully pulled Kris' body closer to his and he practically leaned on her. Kris was momentarily stunned by his move but soon after that, she looked at him coyly. "Gideon..."



“The Walton Group has organized a company dinner tonight; we’ve just relocated back to Bradford City so we need an event to rub shoulders with the top dogs of the city’s corporate circle. Can you accompany me tonight?” Gideon’s warm breath felt ticklish as it hit Kris’ neck.

Instantly, she felt her hair rise but she could only smile and nod her head in response. “Of course I will.”

In fact, Kris’ relationship with Gideon was a source of envy among her group of close friends. Therefore, she definitely wouldn’t miss this chance to turn up in public with Gideon.

Gideon continued to stare lovingly at her; all of a sudden, he swept her off her feet into his arms and made his way into the lounge.

Just then, Kris became conscious of her condition and her face turned as pale as a sheet upon that realization. She then said with a forced smile, “Gideon, I’m not feeling well today...”

“That’s fine; I’ll be gentle...” Gideon brushed off her concern.

Truth was, Gideon was not a gentle lover. Furthermore, he had some violent preferences but since he had said so, there was nothing that Kris could do to reject him. With a resigned sigh, she clenched her hands into fists.

...

Initially, Tony hadn’t actually planned to attend the Walton Group’s dinner party. He was well-aware of the outcome so he wasn’t interested in attending, but Myra was quite keen about it. She wasn’t worried that they would be thrown out of the place because Tony’s attendance tonight would only serve to garner a positive response to the Walton Family, and everyone else would definitely jump to the conclusion that the Walton and Hart families had cleared the air with each other. Therefore, it would be quite foolish for the Waltons to forsake this opportunity.

Tony could tell that Myra was quite keen on it so he didn’t want to disappoint her. As such, he mentioned his conditions—she was to stay by his side the whole time. After she gave her word, they bade farewell to Sebastian and Lisa and made their way to the Walton family’s dinner party.

Indeed, everything was within Myra's expectations. Gemma was absent from the dinner party, perhaps because she was still recuperating in the hospital. Besides Gemma, everyone else from the Walton Family was in full attendance. Of course, her 'sister', being Gideon's fiancée, was present too. As soon as the Walton Family saw Tony and Myra enter hand-in-hand, their faces turned slightly awkward but everyone maintained their smiles and greeted them as the couple made their way into the ballroom.

## Standing before Love Chapter 346

"Did you see Mrs. Walton's expression?" Myra felt that she had become quite mean but she couldn't help gloating upon recalling Shelly's expression earlier. "Did you know that she rang me a while ago and said she wanted to meet me? I didn't agree to meet her though, so I reckon she must be quite pissed off with me. Furthermore, seeing me walk in with her daughter's beloved man today must be quite upsetting for her!"

Perhaps it was because Myra was bored from staying home all the time so now that she was out in public, she behaved quite mischievously.

Tony looked into her sparkling eyes and his lips curved into a soft smile. However, he raised his eyebrows quizzically. "She called you?" Obviously, Myra had initially kept this a secret from him.

Just then, it hit her that she had spilled the beans. Blinking, she looked at Tony with an innocent look and placed her head on his shoulder. "Tony, you were quite busy with work previously, so I didn't bring it up as I didn't want to bother you," she murmured coyly. "Besides, she requested that I meet her alone. I'm not that stupid and I obviously wasn't going to meet her."

Upon hearing that, Tony hummed. "From now on, no matter who from the Walton Family asks to meet you alone, just say no, or you can let me know and I'll go with you." Tony caressed her head. Ever since Myra became pregnant, she seemed to be regaining her childish side. Occasionally, she would flirt with him and he enjoyed this side of her immensely.

Myra's face flushed in response to his actions and she glanced at him from the corner of her eye. In all honesty, she had noticed on the way that there were plenty of envious looks being shot at her from the young ladies in the room. As a woman, she felt an inflated sense of self-esteem from all the looks thrown at her.

The dinner party was about to start when they entered the venue. As such, Tony had barely spoken a few words to some of his acquaintances before the party started.

Myra noticed Kris was wearing a sweeping, floor-length gown and she had her arm hooked through Gideon's. Currently, she was standing alongside the Walton Family on the make-shift stage as they expressed their gratitude to all of the guests present.

Today, Tony had rejected Cameron's request for help. Obviously, Kris would jump at the chance to help settle the issue for Cameron and right now, the Walton Family was her only avenue. However, Tony was quite confident that the Walton Family would not help Cameron, and he reckoned the answer would be revealed tonight.

Myra tried to question him further out of curiosity but he only responded with a mysterious look and refused to say anything else. As such, she had insisted on attending the event; she was keen to know exactly why the Walton Family would renege on their promise to help the Stark Family.

Myra pinched him lightly on his arm. "Are you sure?"

Tony raised his eyebrows in response. "Are you doubting me?"

"Well, not exactly..." Myra was aware that Tony usually handled things quite well. She was just slightly curious about what would happen next.

She rubbed her belly and raised her head to look at the man standing next to her as she mumbled, "I'm a little hungry..." Myra hadn't eaten much for dinner. She just had some soup before heading out with Tony so naturally, she was feeling hungry by now.

Tony quickly guided her toward the buffet table close by. He saw that there was Myra's favorite matcha-flavored cake on display, so he immediately reached out and clumsily took a slice of cake for her.

Myra's eyes held traces of a smile as soon as she saw his actions. Meanwhile, Tony also chuckled upon noticing her half-lidded eyes as she waited for him to serve her. He held onto the piece of cake and brought it close to her mouth.

Myra wasn't sure whether he did that intentionally, but that piece of cake he took was gigantic so she had to open her mouth quite wide just to take a bite of it.

She glared at the man who was currently pretending to stay calm and thought to herself, Well, I guess I no longer need to maintain a perfect image! She opened her mouth and took a bite of the cake. After that, she childishly shot a look at Tony as if to say 'this is who I am, so what can you do about it?'

Currently, Tony's expression was full of indulgence. However, before he could say anything, a voice rang out from beside them. "Myra, I can't believe what I'm seeing! Did you just open your mouth wide to take a bite of the cake?" The voice was a familiar one and it belonged to Estelle.

Myra paused midchew and her expression became awkward. She then turned around gradually and saw Estelle. The latter had her arm hooked through Shawn's as they made their way toward Myra and Tony. Estelle winked at Myra as soon as she reached her. "Tsk! Is it necessary for the public display of affection? Honestly, you must have come here to flaunt on purpose! Everyone here knows that the daughter of the Walton Family, Gemma Walton, is in love with your beloved Director Hart, but look at you! You've given no regard to anyone and flaunted his affections for you in front of everyone. That's like a tight slap across the face for everyone in the Walton Family!"

Myra was generally quite used to Estelle's sharp tongue, but she felt quite mortified at this point. She then made a move to get out of Tony's embrace but he moved his hand and pulled her back into his arms. He turned his eyes on Estelle and glanced at her mildly, as if in warning.

Upon seeing that, Estelle pouted her lips in response. He really dotes on Myra as if she's a child. Gosh, I didn't even say anything rude but he's given me a warning look.

"Shawn, this isn't fun! I thought you said that there would be something interesting here tonight? If this is it, then don't even bother to come and see me for the following month!" Estelle turned around and vented her frustration on Shawn.

Shawn's face remained impassive. However, Myra could clearly tell that his eyes shone warmly as soon as his gaze met Estelle's. Upon seeing that, Myra lamented in her heart, Estelle really is clueless! She's so lucky to have him but when will she realize this?

“I came here tonight for that too,” Myra murmured to Estelle.

The latter raised her brows and glanced at Tony before turning to look at Shawn too. “I’m not too sure what these two cunning siblings are plotting but Myra, I’ve received the news regarding the Stark Group’s problem. Is everything alright?”

Myra shook her head as she recalled Tony’s words. “It’s fine. At the very least, things are fine for now.”

Estelle was relieved to see that Myra wasn’t too concerned about the situation.

Since the four of them had bumped into each other, Estelle was keen on catching up with Myra. As such, the two siblings could only watch on helplessly. However, in the background, Tony heard every single word that Estelle said, and the topics she brought up were significantly explicit. Tony narrowed his eyes upon hearing that and he vowed to keep Myra away from Estelle from then on.

As for Shawn, he was generally quite used to Estelle’s flamboyant style. However, he couldn’t help but grit his teeth in frustration too. He was fine with her behaving this way in front of him but not in public, and he had the sudden urge to lock her up.

...

On the other hand, Kris enjoyed herself as she flitted around the ballroom. Initially, due to the issues with the Stark Group, she couldn’t quite bring herself to attend this party jovially. However, in the afternoon, practically everyone present right now had received the news; the Walton Family would lend a helping hand and fill the deficit of the Stark Group’s troubled project. As for the actual deal that happened behind the scenes, that was obviously confidential. From Kris’ happy smiles, everyone deduced that perhaps she would tie the knot with Gideon quite soon and enter into the Walton Family. In reality, most of the young women attending were quite envious of her too.

Kris had released the news to the public as soon as Gideon had promised to help the Stark Group. Dad has promised to give me ten percent of his shares in the Stark Group once all this is settled. Although that’s not as much as what Myra owns, that’s a sign of his recognition. After all, he has never gifted her any portion of his shares as a reward.

All of a sudden, Kris felt her stomach churn and as a wave of nausea hit her, her expression immediately took a turn. After using the pregnancy test kit the other day, she found out that she was indeed pregnant. She had then discreetly went for a check-up at the hospital and the results indicated that she was eight weeks pregnant. Upon getting the news, she checked the calendar and realized that this child was not Gideon's. She was, in fact, pregnant with Hayden's child.

In truth, Kris couldn't fathom how she got pregnant despite religiously taking birth control pills. This child had stubbornly been conceived and she was currently quite torn, but there was no way she could keep this child right now because this would complicate everything for her. However, she was just too busy recently to arrange for a secret abortion.

She had intended to wait until everything regarding the Green Palms Project was settled before going for the abortion. Nevertheless, her child seemed to be kicking up a fuss today.

Presently, Shelly, who was standing next to her, was the first person to notice Kris' unusual pallor.

## Standing before Love Chapter 347

Shelly did not like Kris at all and she might even go so far as to say she detested her. She could tell that the woman was only dating Gideon to gain something from the rest of the Walton Family. The only reason why she had yet to confront Kris was because Gideon had told her not to, but that didn't stop Shelly from throwing pointed looks at the woman every now and then.

Presently, upon seeing that Kris was about to muck things up, Shelly shot her a stern look, as though silently telling her to pull it together. Catching the older woman's frosty gaze, Kris managed a nonchalant façade, though her fists clenched tightly at her sides. She gritted her teeth as she thought grimly, Once I get everything I want, I'm going to cut off all ties with the Walton Family and I won't have to take any crap from this old woman ever again!

The next moment, she was holding onto Gideon's arm as they made their rounds in the banquet hall to greet the guests. She looked pale despite the smile that was firmly plastered on her face, and she grew reluctant to clink glasses with the guests. Gideon was no gentleman, which meant she was forced to down all the drinks after the guests toasted to her and while she had

only taken sips at each turn, she had ended up downing what felt like glasses of wine after going around the hall.

Her stomach was beginning to cramp and the color was draining from her face. If it weren't for the fact that she had no desire to keep this child in the first place, she wouldn't have downed all those drinks.

Upon noticing that something was off with her, Gideon gave her a subtle squeeze on her arm. A displeased look flashed across his perfect features as he asked under his breath, "What's wrong?"

Kris didn't want to downplay her condition so she answered in a low voice, "My stomach isn't feeling too well today."

He frowned when he heard this and while he wasn't sure if she was telling the truth about her discomfort, he was still put off by it. After all, the banquet this evening was a very important occasion for the Walton Family—it played a pivotal role in deciding whether they could be integrated into Bradford City's elite business circle.

"I'm fine, though. Let's just carry on. I know how important this banquet is to you and I don't want to be a burden," she murmured after seeing how his face had grown sullen at her complaint. At the thought of how she still needed the Walton Family's help for the Green Palms Project, she straightened and forced a perfunctory smile.

It was only after this that Gideon perked up slightly and the both of them went around exchanging pleasantries with the guests once more. Finally, they ended up making their way over to where Tony stood with his friends.

Meanwhile, Tony and Myra had been standing with Shawn and Estelle before this but they were now joined by the likes of Philip, Lucas, Elliot and even Tilly. All in all, their group had a formidable presence. There were a few who had greeted them in an attempt to strengthen business relations, but it didn't take much time for them to move on to other guests.

Estelle was laughing at a dirty joke she had just told and Shawn looked grim as he eyed her balefully, as though already planning on the ways he could get back at her. Just as the rest of them were exchanging awkward looks, Gideon and Kris approached them.

"Sis," Kris greeted flatly, then turned to address the man next to Myra, "Tony."

The both of them looked at her impassively and neither of them returned her greeting.

Having expected this, Kris did not falter. Despite her pallor, she kept one hand on Gideon's arm as she flashed a dazzling smile at the group before her.

Gideon, on the other hand, raised his glass at Tony as he said, "I know we've been through a rough patch previously, Tony, but I'd like to take this chance to formally apologize to you. Let bygones be bygones—here's to a strong partnership and an even stronger friendship. Cheers!"

Tony returned the toast, humming indifferently in response.

Gideon shrugged off the man's cold demeanor and raised his glass at the rest of the group as he said cordially, "Thank you for taking the time to attend the Walton Family's banquet this evening. Kris and I would like to make this toast as a show of our appreciation."

With that, he glanced at Kris meaningfully, then downed his glass of red wine.

While he did so, Kris looked down hesitantly at her own glass of wine. She didn't think she could take another sip of it but she gritted her teeth and tipped her head back nonetheless as she gulped down her drink. She gagged slightly when the alcohol pooled at the back of her throat but she quickly regained her composure.

"We have a lot of guests today, so please excuse us for not being able to entertain all of you," Gideon said ruefully and nodded at the group as he tried to lead Kris away.

However, they had only just turned around when Kris let out a groan of pain. She hunched slightly as her hand flew to her stomach, her face sickeningly pale.

"What's wrong?" Gideon asked with a frown.

Kris had no idea what was wrong, either. All she knew was that her stomach felt like it was on fire after she had downed her last drink. She thought the pain might go away if she ignored it but as soon as she had turned away from the group, a sharp, stabbing sensation tore through her abdomen. The pain was so unbearable that she could barely get a word out.



Upon hearing her sudden cry, Philip assessed her thoughtfully and he raised his brow when he saw that she was clutching her stomach. He exchanged a meaningful look with Tony, then stepped away from the group as he offered pleasantly, "Director Walton, I happen to be a doctor. I could take a look at Miss Stark if you don't mind."

"Thank you, Young Master Philip. Kris has—"

"No; there's no need for me to be seen by a doctor. I'm perfectly fine!" Kris rasped, cutting Gideon off. She straightened up hastily and she had a panicked look in her eyes. Beads of perspiration broke out on her forehead as her face turned a ghastly shade of white.

She tugged on his arm as she added assuringly, "I'm fine now, Gideon. I had a mild stomach cramp but it's gone now."

"Are you sure, Miss Stark? I suspect you may be suffering from contractions. You ought to consult a doctor to make sure it's nothing chronic," Philip interjected calmly and he sounded unruffled.

Myra watched this exchange and she couldn't help but be taken aback by it. She had stayed with Philip once and she knew him as a mild and affable person. I didn't know he would be this way with strangers. Besides, why is he being so enthusiastic when the person he's talking to is Kris? Puzzled, she and the rest of the group turned to look at Kris curiously.

Kris, on the other hand, looked regal this evening and her makeup was flawless. However, the liberal amount of rouge she had applied could not conceal her pallor, and one could tell at first sight that she was unwell.

Nevertheless, she forced out a smile after hearing Philip's advice and answered nonchalantly, "No; I'm sure that won't be necessary. I'm feeling much better already."

Then, she turned to look at Gideon as she gestured toward a group of guests nearby. "Gideon, I think we haven't greeted those guests over there. Should we make our way over now?"

When she saw that he was gazing at her thoughtfully with narrowed eyes, she felt a chill run down her spine and her smile was tight this time as she urged, "Gideon?"

“Let’s go, then,” he responded curtly. Before he led her away, he turned and nodded politely at the curious group. “If you’ll excuse us.”

Myra watched as the both of them walked away before she glanced at Tony and asked, “I wonder what’s wrong with Kris.”

She had caught the knowing look that Philip had exchanged with him earlier, and this only further piqued her interest.

“Chances are she’s pregnant,” Estelle guessed, narrowing her eyes. An excited look lit up her face as she looked at Shawn with sparkling eyes. “Wait... is that it? She’s pregnant and the child she’s carrying isn’t Gideon’s, right?”

It had taken all of Estelle’s will to refrain from making snide remarks at Kris during the exchange just now but seeing as the latter had gone away, she didn’t mind insulting her at all. She had grown suspicious of the way Kris clutched her stomach, and Estelle prided herself for having excellent intuition. She looked as though she was hiding something more than just an average stomach ache and she even panicked when Philip offered to examine her. She has to be pregnant and that child definitely isn’t Gideon’s!

Seeing the endearing gleam in her eyes, Shawn pursed his lips and he found that he couldn’t resist dipping his head to kiss her on the cheek.

Everyone else shuffled awkwardly around them and Myra averted her gaze to afford them some privacy. She then tugged on Tony’s arm, intending to ask if Estelle had been right about Kris’ situation.

What she hadn’t expected was for him to raise a brow at her as he asked, “Do you want a kiss too?”

Do you want a kiss too?

A kiss...

Upon hearing this, the rest of the group cringed and they wondered for a moment if their ears had fallen off.

They couldn’t help but notice that ever since Tony had gotten together with Myra, he had shed his usual impassive front and assumed the role of a roguish man in love.

## Standing before Love Chapter 348

They drew a collective sigh of sympathy for the two Hart brothers. They've fallen far too deep.

Presently, Tony had a lazy grace about him after he had teased Myra. He had shed the cold and curt demeanor with which he had addressed Gideon previously. Myra, on the other hand, was blushing furiously all the way down to her neck. She stomped her foot in frustration and she looked as though she was about to say something, but decided against it when she remembered that they were not alone. Feeling resigned, she glared at him mutely instead.

Elliot interjected with a chuckle as he joked, "We could always turn a blind eye if you want to beat him up, Mrs. Hart."

Myra was at a loss for words and she flushed at the teasing remark. Tony was pleased to see the effect he had on her and he chuckled in a low tone. He eyed the others insouciantly as he pulled her into his arms, holding her head against his chest as he said, "Alright, alright; stop teasing her." He knew that she would die of embarrassment if the teasing went on.

The others gave him looks of disbelief. You were the one who started it, they thought in unison. They shrugged this off and before long, they resumed their cheerful banter.

While this was happening, Kris and Gideon were lingering within earshot after they had walked away from the group earlier, which meant they had overheard the loving exchange between Tony and Myra.

Tony and the rest of the Hart Family had been devoting their time and spirit into taking care of Myra since finding out about her pregnancy. They were protective of her and indulged in her comfort, as though broadcasting to the entire Bradford City that she was the apple of their eyes.

On the contrary, Kris' own pregnancy was kept secret and she had to be extremely careful not to break cover. In fact, she needed to get rid of the child as quickly as possible. She couldn't help the bitter resentment that surged through her as she thought about the vast difference between her condition and Myra's. However, there was no outlet for her to vent her frustration.

Hence, she took a deep breath and braced through the pain that felt like it was tearing her apart from the inside out. Outwardly, she smiled at the guests in

front of her. As she did so, she was unaware of the tall, handsome and affable-looking gentleman who was presently walking into the banquet hall.

Myra, on the other hand, had noticed the man's presence from where she stood. Her eyes widened at the sight of him and she hastily tugged on Tony's sleeve.

"What is it?" he asked and when he lowered his head to look at her, she could see the glint of amusement in his eyes.

Still tugging on his sleeve, she pointed toward a nearby corner of the hall. "Look over there—isn't that Hayden?"

It wasn't too long ago when she told Tony about Kris and Hayden. Myra was aware that they were lovers and she knew Kris was having an affair with him despite her relationship with Gideon. However, she didn't expect Hayden to show up at the Walton Family's banquet this evening.

A knowing look flashed in Tony's eyes and he swiftly clasped Myra's hand in his as he said, "So it is. It's not surprising that Hayden's here, though. The Fuller Family are a renowned family in Bradford City, after all."

"Mr. Hart!" She stepped on his foot and said accusingly, "Don't act dumb; you know what I'm talking about!"

She blinked when she saw the wicked amusement in his gaze, then glanced over at Elliot, Philip and Lucas, all of whom seemed to be buzzing in anticipation. Tony hadn't wanted to attend the banquet until she forced him to, but what about the rest of the men? The three of them had practically grown up with Tony and surely they disliked the Walton Family just as much as he did. So are they here at the banquet because of... Her thoughts trailed off as she looked at Hayden, who was tucked away in the corner with a baleful look in his eyes as he surveyed the festivities around him. She drew in a deep breath and demanded, "Can someone tell me what in the world is going on here?" She sensed that something was off but she couldn't quite put her finger on it.

Estelle, however, was slightly more insightful than her bewildered friend. "These men are a bunch of scoundrels!" she declared with an exasperated huff as she rolled her eyes. She darted away from Shawn and skittered over to Myra, her gaze following the latter's to where Hayden was standing not too far away.

“You know how you told me that Kris is still secretly seeing Hayden?” she began earnestly, narrowing her fox-like eyes as a clever gleam flashed in them. “How interesting, indeed! Could it be that Kris is actually pregnant with his child? I don’t know how she convinced him, but it can’t be easy for him to see the love of his life with another man. He’s probably here because he can’t stand the secrecy anymore.”

Upon hearing this, Myra grew thoughtful. She remembered Tony saying that the Walton Family would never invest in the Stark Group, which meant that this evening could see an interesting turn of events later. Now, Myra was wondering just what might happen.

Meanwhile, it was just like Estelle had said—Hayden could no longer stand seeing the love of his life being paraded around as someone else’s fiancée. He loved her with an all-consuming passion, and it had already taken a toll on his patience when Kris had refused to meet him on all those previous occasions. He knew that she was with Gideon now and everyone knew her as the latter’s fiancée. Hayden had his suspicions, but he would have no answer until such time that he heard the truth from Kris herself. He was well aware of her ego and her ambitious plans to own Stark Group. As such, he believed her when she had told him that she was only putting on a show with Gideon, but that didn’t stop him from getting wildly jealous when he saw her with another man.

In particular, he had noticed her erratic behavior recently. Not only had she bought a pregnancy test kit, she had also gone to the hospital for a check-up. At the thought of what the doctor had said, he grew ecstatic. Kris is pregnant with my child! My child!

He had decided that he was going to make her give up on her plans to use the Walton Family as a stepping stone. After all, he was the younger son of the Fuller Family and though he could not truly become head of the family, he could still promise her a carefree and indulgent married life. Besides, he didn’t necessarily have to rely on his family now that he had someone else to help him. If Kris wanted to have a company of her own, then he would set it up for her. Once I have his help, everything will work out for me.

However, he caught a glimpse of Gideon and Kris as soon as he arrived at the banquet. While he wanted to believe that the couple was only putting on a show like Kris said, he couldn’t help the anguish that tore through him when he saw them. His heart twisted even more as he watched her walk around in

seven-inch heels, greeting guests and downing glass after glass of wine. His face grew grim at the sight of this.

While Hayden was staring at Kris darkly, she was completely oblivious to his presence. She was numb from the pain that was wreaking havoc in her lower abdomen and she was feeling drowsy from all the red wine she had drunk.

She forced down another round of drinks, and the guests cheered her on merrily as they praised, "Director Walton, your fiancée drinks with much gusto! You're a lucky man, indeed!"

She could only smile at their compliments. But the smile on her face was growing more dazed as she downed several more drinks, and her head felt like lead. It was as though someone had stuffed her brains with cotton and the noise around her sounded faraway at times.

Gideon appeared to be saying something in her ear but she couldn't make out the words. Kris' vision suddenly went dark and she thought she saw somebody run toward her before she blacked out. The same person pushed Gideon aside and caught her before she collapsed onto the floor.

Presently, Gideon was thunderous as he eyed the man who had rushed out of nowhere. "Who are you? Kris is my fiancée; don't you think you're overstepping your boundaries here?"

It was bad enough that Kris had fainted so disgracefully during such an event, but it was even more humiliating for Gideon when a random stranger had pushed him aside to catch her as she fell.

When Hayden heard Gideon's accusatory tone, his face darkened instantly. How could he make her drink so much when she's already looking pale and sick?

"Who I am is none of your business. All you need to know is that your relationship with Kris is over as of right now," Hayden barked icily, then pursed his lips as he looked at Kris, who was unconscious. Just as he was about to carry her up in his arms, a fist suddenly came flying toward him, punching him on the right side of his face.

The punch came hard and fast as it cracked across Hayden's face, and he toppled onto the floor with Kris in his arms.

## Standing before Love Chapter 349

The women who were closest to the scuffle began to shriek in alarm and the whole room descended into chaos.

Myra and Estelle were about to make their way over when Tony and Shawn held them back. While there was no harm for Estelle to scope out the melee, Myra was in a far more precarious situation. After all, she was pregnant and it wasn't ideal for her to risk getting bumped into by someone else.

At the thought that she was now a pregnant woman, Myra sighed in frustration and stood in place obediently.

Meanwhile, Elliot, Philip and the others had sauntered over to the scene of the ruckus. They appeared to be mitigating the fight but from what Myra heard, they sounded as though they were spurring them on backhandedly.

"Come on; aren't we all friends here? You might even end up as business partners in the future. I'm sure you could talk things out. Besides, Mr. Fuller might just be a good friend of Miss Stark's and he was probably acting out of instinct when he caught her as she fainted. Don't read too much into it, Director Walton," Lucas said, smiling pleasantly as he looked at Hayden and Gideon. He spoke mildly and there was no telling whether he had deliberately emphasized 'a good friend' when he spoke up on Hayden's behalf.

"Exactly! Miss Stark has grown up in Bradford City, so it's no surprise that she has a lot of friends in the business circle. I'm sure no one is crossing any lines here, Director Walton," Elliot chimed in earnestly as he nodded in agreement.

"A good friend of hers?" Gideon repeated this incredulously, his fists clenching tightly at his sides as he glowered at the man who was currently being held back. "Well, then. I'm afraid I'll have to ask her 'good friend' to leave the party. The Walton Family does not welcome you."

The vein in Hayden's forehead pulsated and after he heard the conversation between Gideon and the other man, the rage he had been repressing finally exploded. He was the younger son of the Fuller Family and on paper, that meant he could live the rest of his life carefree. However, he knew deep down that he could never have any authority over Fuller Corporation because he was not Madam Fuller's biological son and instead belonged to his father's secret lover. The latter had only given birth to him so she could dethrone Madam Fuller but having failed to do so, she ended up losing Hayden as well

and eventually her depression rendered her into a shell of a person. He gritted his teeth as he thought bitterly, I can give up Fuller Corporation but why should I have to hide my relationship with Kris like it's some dirty secret?

Hatred burned in his eyes when he heard that he was being described as 'a good friend of Kris' while Gideon could call himself her fiancé. Suddenly, Hayden tore away from the two men who held him back and hurled his fist at Gideon, cracking his knuckles against the latter's face.

"I'm not just a friend of hers! I'm her boyfriend and her fiancée!" he roared and the guests around them caught every word.

A hush descended upon the crowd as his words lingered in the air, but it wasn't long before frenzied whispering began among the guests.

"So Hayden has been Kris' boyfriend all along! Isn't he the younger son of the Fuller Family? Oh, my! I thought she's engaged to Director Walton. I even heard her say that she was the reason why the Walton Family are willing to make up the losses for the Green Palms Project! My goodness; this is—"

"There's nothing surprising about this. She's been with Hayden since before Director Walton showed up. It wasn't that long ago when I saw them together, so who knows if they ever truly broke up?"

"But what about the Walton Family? How could Kris do something like this?"

Everyone around them might be muttering under their breaths, but Gideon heard them despite having just been punched. Shelly, too, had heard the whispers as she ran toward the scene of the scuffle.

As soon as she heard what the others were saying, a loud ringing sounded in her ears and she felt as if her mind had imploded.

She stared in disbelief at the scene before her.

Her son's lip had been split where he was punched and instead of lying on the floor, Kris was currently in the arms of another man whom Shelly did not know.

She was starting to piece everything together—as it turned out, Kris was having an affair with another man while dating Gideon. And that man punched



my son in front of everybody at our banquet! How dare he humiliate us like this?

“I’d like to see just what tricks this wretched girl has up her sleeve!” Shelly’s rage was at its peak as she disregarded all decorum and bent down to wrap her hand around the unconscious girl’s neck.

As she did so, she slapped Kris across the face. Soon, two red handprints marked the latter’s cheeks.

Hayden’s face twisted angrily and he lunged forward to kick Shelly away.

The guests in the hall burst into an uproar at the violent display before them.

Meanwhile, when Gideon saw that his mother had been kicked, his face grew thunderous at Hayden’s audacity. Infuriated, he barreled into the man and began to wrestle with him, landing several kicks and punches in the process. This left Hayden with no choice but to lay Kris on the ground once more so that he could fight back.

Having been kicked away, Shelly saw that her son was fighting the other man. She staggered over to where Kris was and started to beat the girl up.

The chaotic sounds in the room swelled into a crescendo and while some guests were crying out in alarm, others were shouting to dissuade the parties from going on with the fight.

Suddenly, a clear and high-pitched female voice rang out from somewhere in the crowd and it cut above the rest of the noise, “Look—there’s b-blood on Kris’ dress! S-She’s bleeding!”

Everyone’s gaze fell on the woman who lay motionless on the floor like a discarded doll. Blood had indeed stained the long evening dress she wore and it ominously blossomed over the fabric like a bright, red flower.

“Oh, my God! Kris has suffered a miscarriage!” a woman with experience cried out in shock.

Upon hearing that, Gideon and Hayden stopped fighting. Even Shelly had stopped attacking the girl as the air in the hall grew thick with panic.

Presently, all the color had drained out of Kris' face and she looked lifeless as she lay on the floor.

Frowning, Philip stepped out from among the crowd that had gathered around. He then squatted down to check on Kris. Needless to say, he knew about the woman's condition and her pregnancy. In fact, he had known about it not long after she had found out. However, he put up a serious front and examined her, then glanced at Shelly—who was astounded—as he informed plainly, “Miss Stark is pregnant. Someone has to get her to the hospital immediately. There hasn't been a miscarriage, but there will be if we keep dawdling.”

He did not miss the way Kris' hand had trembled slightly as he said all this. Narrowing his eyes, he straightened up and walked away from the woman, looking as though he wanted nothing to do with her.

Gideon and Hayden did not continue their brawl now that they knew Kris was pregnant and had nearly suffered a miscarriage. The former watched as the other man carefully carried Kris in his arms before running out of the hall. A cold smirk tugged on Gideon's lips as he thought, I see what's going on here...

As he stood there gritting his teeth, Philip approached him and said awkwardly, “Director Walton, Miss Stark appears to be two months pregnant. She's still in her first trimester, so she needs to be extra careful. Thankfully, she hasn't miscarried the baby despite the blood loss, and the child should be fine. It's your first child, isn't it? Just make sure to take good care of Miss Stark during these three crucial months and once she has passed the first trimester, you'll find that the risk of a miscarriage is far lower.”

He saw the way Gideon's gaze had darkened when he mentioned ‘it's your first child, isn't it?’.

According to their sources, while Kris had known Gideon for some time now, both of them had been together for less than two months. As such, Gideon knew immediately that the child she was carrying could not be his.

He was outraged at the thought of this. She cheated on me and I was humiliated in front of everyone! I've been ripped off!

However, he knew there was no way he could say this aloud, so he was left with no choice but to swallow the bitter pill.

Shelly, on the other hand, was not one to bear the brunt in silence. After hearing what Philip had said, she shrieked, “What? Did you just say she’s two months pregnant?”

Feigning innocence, Philip nodded and answered, “Yes, Mrs. Walton. I can tell that she’s just slightly over two months pregnant.” As if! I’ve only taken a brief look and I didn’t even ask her any questions, so how in the world would I know that she’s two months pregnant at first sight? In reality, the only reason why Philip knew how far along she was in her pregnancy was because he had found out about it in advance. Sure enough, the doctor at the hospital came to the same conclusion after carrying out a thorough examination of Kris.

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Shelly’s eyes widened visibly, but before she could say anything else, Gideon stopped her from speaking as his countenance shifted. “Mom, this is not the time to talk about this.”

Upon hearing that, Shelly could feel herself trembling while she took in the sight of the crowd who seemed eager for a show. She was already feeling dizzy because of the overwhelming situation. Kris Stark, that b\*tch! She lied to us! The two-month-old child doesn’t even belong to Gideon, but another scoundrel!

She wished she could abort the baby right then and there. Fortunately, we got to know this early on! That b\*tch has been hiding the truth from us. Is she waiting for us to take on the baby as our own? If that really happened, then the Walton Family would be raising someone else’s child!

The mere thought of it was enough to rile Shelly up. “Gideon, the Waltons will not invest in the Green Palms Project that the Starks are working on! You have to listen to me this time!” Shelly yelled. How dare Kris do this to us when we tried to help her?

“Mom, I know what to do even if you don’t tell me.” Gideon wore a grim look on his face. Luckily, we didn’t invite the press, or else the scandal would have exploded! So many things had happened when the Waltons had literally just returned to Bradford City!

Even though they didn’t say it out loud, the crowd had surmised what was going on. Judging from Shelly’s morose look and how Mr. Walton had cut her

short, they deduced that the baby Kris carried didn't belong to the Waltons. Such a scandal would be the talk of the town for some time.

By that point, the atmosphere at the banquet had reached a low. After a while, the guests dispersed. Elliot and the rest also left the scene. Before that, he made it a point to signal Tony with a look. Tony seemed rather unfazed, as if everything that happened just now had nothing to do with him.

On the other hand, Shawn and Estelle stayed back. He was planning to bring Estelle back to Hart Residence that night. Since Myra was with them, he figured he should take the opportunity to have Myra help soothe Estelle's relationship with his grandfather.

For some reason, both Estelle and Sebastian would fight to the bitter end as soon as they saw each other. No matter what they did, it was as if they were constantly competing against each other, which gave Shawn a headache. To make things even more complicated, Estelle didn't only have a wild streak, but she was also extremely independent, so she would never agree to marry Shawn if he couldn't get his grandfather to agree on their marriage.

"Are you two the ones behind what happened just now?" Because they were headed to the same destination, Estelle dragged Shawn into the car that Tony and Myra were in. She even forcefully dragged Myra to the back seat while kicking Shawn to the passenger seat.

Initially, Tony wore a sour look upon noticing what Estelle did. Although he tried to object to it, Myra effortlessly appeased him by giving him a kiss. Nonetheless, he still couldn't help but stare at Shawn, who was seated beside him in Myra's stead, with disdain.

As soon as they settled into their seats in the car, Estelle began questioning the two men sitting at the front. Tony was driving, so he could only glance at Myra while arching his brow in silence. In contrast, Shawn spoke up. "Do you think we can actually impregnate Kris?"

Both Myra and Estelle were rendered speechless by his response. Myra suddenly had the urge to laugh, whereas Estelle was slightly annoyed by Shawn's words. "Who knows? Someone might just feel like f\*cking Miss Kris Stark, considering how beautiful she is! Doesn't she have a lot of suitors in Bradford City? If someone had his eyes on her, he would of course bring her back so that he could take his time f\*cking—"

Estelle deliberately drawled when she said that last word, but before she could finish her sentence, Shawn reached out to hold her hand while still seated in the front. With a look of resignation, he stated, "I don't think Tony will allow you to remain in his car if you keep this up."

Upon hearing that, Estelle turned to check on Tony, who was still driving. Sure enough, his expression was so dark that Estelle could only mumble sheepishly, "We're all adults, so what's wrong with saying f\*ck? With your age, are you still going to pretend to be innocent teenagers?"

"Estelle..." In resignation, Myra turned to look at Tony. "Have you known since the beginning that Kris is pregnant?"

"Yeah. We found out about it as soon as she went to the hospital." Even when Tony was driving, he didn't forget to glance at Myra lovingly.

All the while, Estelle watched on in perplexion as she thought, Is that guy who is driving really Tony Hart?

Meanwhile, Myra had another question. "So have you also predicted that Hayden Fuller will join the banquet?"

After exchanging a glance with Tony, Shawn smiled. "It's not that hard to predict. Ever since Hayden knew his woman was pregnant with his baby, he tailed her wherever she went in order to protect his child."

"You had someone tail Hayden?" Myra was surprised by the revelation.

While arching his brow, Shawn replied, "We didn't need to do that. Hayden had made a pact with Tony."

"What kind of pact?" Estelle asked.

As Tony drove, he gave a nonchalant reply. "Hayden was looking for investors in order to set up a company for Kris. I agreed to help him out."

Myra didn't know what to say to that. She had to acknowledge that Hayden had such pure love toward Kris, but unfortunately, Kris was overly ambitious. It was now obvious that she had been enjoying and utilizing Hayden's love for her own selfish goals.

“Other than that, Hayden also gave her a lot of presents. From what I gathered, Tony was the one who actually bought them.” Shawn was wearing a half smirk while commenting on the subject casually. “I suppose you had indirectly given Miss Kris Stark quite a lot of expensive gifts.”

In order to help Hayden stand out among all the suitors who were after Kris, Tony did spend quite a fortune buying gifts. “But they were all counterfeits,” Tony said indifferently, which rendered the rest of them speechless. Shawn nearly choked on his own spit.

Some time ago, he knew Tony had given away some priceless diamond jewelry. Shawn was feeling bad for all the money that was spent on a relatively inconsequential part of the plan, which he didn’t think was worth it. However, he overlooked how cunning Tony could be, which meant he couldn’t have possibly given such priceless items to Kris as presents.

Also, Hayden never suspected that the items were counterfeits because it was given to him by Tony. At the same time, he was only giving the items to Kris in order to court her. Kris knew next to nothing about jewelry, so she was easily deceived. Therefore, the plan went on without a hitch, as nobody discovered that the gifts were counterfeit items.

“By the way, Myra had given Director Hart a ring, but he hasn’t given her anything back, has he? On the contrary, he had given Kris so many presents even though they were counterfeits.” Estelle was deliberately fanning the flames of dispute.

Tony narrowed his eyes, but he said nothing to refute her. After some hesitation, Myra leaned in closer to Estelle to whisper into her ear. Right away, Estelle cried in astonishment, “What? Is that true?”

Myra glanced at Tony before confirming what she said smilingly. “It’s true.”

“Holy sh\*t! Myra, you’re also a rich girl now! You might even be richer than Tony Hart himself! Is it too late for me to dump Shawn to be your woman?” Shocked by the revelation, Estelle yelled so loudly that her high-pitched voice reverberated in the car.

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Upon hearing what Estelle said, Shawn instantly lost his cool and his face darkened. After giving Tony a look, the latter soon stopped the car by the

road. Shawn got out of the car immediately to open the door on Myra's side. With a gentle tone, he made a request. "Miss Stark, I would like to speak to Estelle for a bit, so can you perhaps sit beside Tony for a while?"

Stifling a laugh, Myra got out of the car while ignoring Estelle's glare. After that, Estelle remained obedient throughout the rest of their journey home without giving them trouble. The peaceful time was short-lived though, for it ended as soon as they arrived at Hart Residence.

Sebastian sulked when he saw Estelle coming home alongside Myra. In a deliberately snarky tone, he questioned pointedly, "Why are you here? Didn't you say that you hate this place?"

"I didn't come here of my own volition! I wouldn't have come here if it weren't to make sure that you aren't bullying Myra!" Estelle retorted.

Sebastian's face flushed as he was fuming. He was worried that Myra would be hungry because she didn't get enough to eat during dinner, so he already had the maid prepare some supper for her. As soon as he heard the sounds of the car, he hurried toward the door, only to witness Estelle—the ill-tempered girl in his eyes—getting out of the car.

"Me, bullying Myra? Haha, I will never do that!" Sebastian yelled with all his might.

In resignation, Shawn looked toward Myra for help. They sure blew up as soon as they saw each other. Myra, you're the only one who can help me.

After getting his signal, Myra let out a chuckle before reaching out to hold Estelle's hand. "Old Master Hart, Estelle is my best friend. Can she spend the night here in my room, please?"

"No!" Two people made that exclamation simultaneously, with Sebastian being the first and Tony being the second one to oppose the idea.

In fact, Tony had a morose look on his face after hearing what Myra suggested. Pulling his lips into a thin line, he looped an arm around her waist. "Myra, you're pregnant, so you need to be more careful. What if Miss Langley presses her weight on you at night because of her bad posture?"

"Yeah, with her wild streak, she can't possibly find our beds comfortable!" Sebastian chimed in.

“Grandpa.” Shawn sighed. “Estelle will be staying with me. She will get used to it, so don’t worry.”

Sebastian choked on his own words upon being cut short by Shawn. After grunting in anger, he growled, “Although I brought you kids up, you don’t even listen to me! Just when I thought I will have an obedient granddaughter-in-law, it turns out that she isn’t going to listen to me either! I don’t care anymore. You can do whatever you like!”

Sebastian whipped around before leaving the scene. Although he was angry, Myra noticed that he had essentially made a compromise. On the other hand, Estelle stared at Sebastian’s retreating figure without a word. “He was the one who picked a fight with me! I didn’t want to bicker with him.”

“I know. You’ve already sacrificed enough for my sake as things are.” Shawn kissed Estelle on the forehead.

Upon hearing his comment, Estelle was feeling embarrassed instead. She fidgeted for a bit before mumbling in a soft voice, “I shouldn’t have lashed out at him like that. Despite his fierce appearance, he is actually a softie on the inside. I should have shown some restraint and let his words roll off my back.”

With a smile, Shawn praised her by saying, “Yeah. My girl has grown up now.”

His praise only made her even more embarrassed. However, she couldn’t bring herself to accept the compliment. Thus, she simply let out a snort too before stepping into the house. “Since I have come, don’t expect me to leave tonight.”

With a faint smile, Shawn followed her into the house. Meanwhile, Myra shook her head before turning to check on Tony, who was standing beside her. Upon noticing that Myra had turned her attention to him, he quickly explained, “I only said that because I was concerned about our baby.”

Not believing a word he said, Myra glared at him as soon as she heard that. He would have stopped harassing me at night if he was worried about the baby! Besides, my baby isn’t so fragile!

After a while, Tony arched his brow before planting a kiss on Myra’s lips. “If you’re going to stare, I don’t mind continuing to kiss you here.”



“Tony Hart, you rascal!” Myra was blushing due to embarrassment. After giving him a shove, she entered the house too.

Because the four of them only had some cake during the banquet, they were soon gathered around the dining table to have dinner. Despite Sebastian’s general dislike toward Estelle, he insisted on staying in the living room to throw her snide comments from time to time.

This time though, something seemed to have gotten into Estelle, as she remained silent no matter what Sebastian said. After some time, Sebastian got bored himself, so he returned to his wife upstairs.

“Estelle, what have you actually done? Old Master Hart seems to be holding some sort of grudge against you.” Myra couldn’t help but ask the woman opposite her that question.

Nonchalantly, Estelle replied, “God knows what I have done. Perhaps anything I do will just be in conflict with his traditional values.” She was already used to his treatment of her anyway. Then, she reached out to take the poached egg on Shawn’s plate before putting it into her own plate. “You have nothing to worry about. Old Master Hart just likes to nag. If it turns out that I won’t marry Shawn, he might be the first to start panicking. Isn’t that right?”

Her final question was directed at Shawn, to which he responded by nodding his head in resignation. “Yeah, yeah, Miss Langley.”

“Of course I am right! You told me I will be your one and only woman, so breaking that promise means that you won’t be getting an heir. Putting that into consideration, of course he would panic.” Estelle sounded nonchalant as she said so, which rendered both Shawn and Myra speechless.

They spent some time talking about the incident with Kris. As the night gradually passed, both Myra and Estelle came to know about everything that led up to the incident just now, as well as what happened to Kris afterward.

Kris’ plans to secure the Walton Family’s assistance to help the Starks overcome their problems had virtually failed. Myra had a feeling that it wasn’t the only thing that Tony and the rest had in mind. However, the group of men were all quite secretive about their objectives, so she didn’t bother asking; she would get to know the full story later on anyway.

After dinner, they spent some time strolling in the garden before each couple returned to their respective rooms. That night, Tony was especially rough when they had sex.

Word about what happened during the banquet spread like wildfire. After Cameron and Rachel heard about it, they nearly fainted on the spot. Not too long ago, they were waiting at home for Kris to deliver them news of her success, but none of them expected Kris to bring about such a scandal for the Waltons instead.

With everything that had transpired, Cameron didn't think the Waltons would want to help the Starks anymore. When they finally arrived at the hospital, they found out that except for Hayden's lone figure by the bed, Kris' ward was basically empty. Meanwhile, Kris seemed to be in a rather poor condition.

"Kris! My dear daughter!" When Rachel saw Kris lying in bed as still as a corpse, she ran toward the bed before collapsing on it as she wailed out loud. She knew Kris no longer had a chance to earn Cameron's goodwill.

After all, Kris ruined the only chance for the Starks to ascend their ranks in society. Cameron was surely feeling extremely disappointed in her, so Rachel figured the only way to placate his anger was to emphasize on Kris' miserable condition. By now, Kris was already awake, or rather, she already regained consciousness during the banquet.