

Standing before Love Chapter 372

In the beginning, Gemma was strongly against it because Tony was the one she liked. Even if she couldn't stand in front of him in her current state, she didn't want to accept another man just like that. Subconsciously, she hadn't lost her arrogance, and she didn't think that any other man was good enough for her except Tony.

However, Edward, Samuel, and Gideon kept assuring her and promised that this was only temporary so that their family could benefit from it. Once their family had gained a foothold in Bradford, she could do whatever she pleased. After going through a series of events previously, Gemma had matured a lot, and when she heard about how a situation could benefit her family, she gritted her teeth and agreed to it.

Her face had already been through surgery once, and the two most terrifying scars had been restored the best it could. Initially, Edward wanted the heir to the Lincoln Family, Ernie, to visit Gemma directly in the hospital, but she was bored to tears in the hospital and had never imagined nor wanted her blind date to be at an icy cold place like the hospital. This time, Edward didn't object to it and allowed her to leave the hospital together with a nurse.

In order to hide the scars without using gauze as bandage, Gemma had asked the nurse to remove her gauze bandage, replacing it with an opaque scarf to cover her face and wearing a sunhat before leaving the hospital.

When they reached the meeting spot with Ernie, Gemma took out her pocket mirror she always brought with her and opened it, but when she suddenly remembered how she looked, her expression fell a little. Still, she gathered her emotions very quickly and walked into the coffee house.

Even when the nurse was seated far away from her and it was a rare opportunity for her to step out of the hospital, she wasn't as happy as she thought she would be. On the way from the hospital to the coffee house, many people stared fixedly at her face. It was now autumn, and the weather was a little cloudy today. Not only was it weird enough that she was wearing a sunhat, but she even used a scarf to cover her face tightly and revealed only her eyes.

Many of those who had a discerning eye could tell in a glance that there was a problem with her face, and they shot her looks of pity and sympathy, which Gemma hated the most, and it made her mood even more terrible.

When she reached the coffee house, Ernie had yet to arrive, so she sat at a table which was reserved for them and ordered water. As instructed by the doctor, it was best for her not to drink anything else, and after waiting for a while, Ernie arrived.

Gemma was a little aloof toward him because she didn't really like him, and she thought that he was a hypocrite for agreeing to this blind date despite already knowing the situation with her face now.

Although it was true that Ernie knew about her face, he didn't care much about it, as a man like him was simply marrying a woman because it was a business marriage. The power of the Waltons was burning as bright as the midday sun in Bradfort now, and even though it wasn't comparable to the Harts, he believed that every dog would have its day. He saw the opportunity with the ongoing development by the Waltons, and when Samuel brought this up in a cocktail party a couple of days ago, he subtly agreed to this blind date with Gemma.

However, when he saw Gemma, he had a mixed feeling of sympathy and disdain for her. Everyone knew that she was unsuccessful in her pursuit of Tony and ended up disfiguring herself in the process. Despite that, it didn't matter to him because he merely wanted a connection with her and not really to spend his life with her.

Taking a seat across her, Ernie looked at her with clear eyes and didn't display anything he was thinking about. Instead, he looked at her in concern and said, "I heard that you're not fully recovered yet, and I wanted to visit you at the hospital, but Mr. Walton said that you wanted to meet me outside. This is our first meeting, and we're unfamiliar with each other, so I hope you won't find me a bore, Miss Walton."

Observing the man in front of her carefully, Gemma saw that he didn't express any dislike for herself, and she softened her face a little, saying casually, "The air in the hospital is filled with the smell of disinfectant, and since this is a blind date, it's better suited in a more comfortable place."

“You’re right, Miss Walton. I wonder what’s your hobby, usually. Once you’ve recovered, I could maybe have the chance to show off my skills as well,” he said with a chuckle.

Gemma thought that this person wasn’t so bad, after all. At least, she could bear with anything he had come up with until now, and she felt that it wouldn’t be a problem for her to tolerate him until the Waltons didn’t need the Lincolns anymore. With that thought in mind, the conversation between them took a lighter, more positive turn after that.

Halfway, Ernie excused himself to pick up a call, and she leaned back into the couch lazily as she waited for him. Suddenly, her eyes darted toward a couple who were standing at the entrance nearby—Tony walking in with his arm around Myra’s waist.

Her smitten eyes lingered on Tony as she hadn’t seen him for a very long time. In fact, she hadn’t seen him ever since her face was disfigured. Without anyone to point it out, she could tell just how blissful he was with Myra. Seeing how they leaned on each other, she almost pierced through her own palms with her nails as she gripped her fists tightly.

Returning from his phone call, Ernie happened to see her staring fondly at Tony, who wasn’t far away. The look in his eyes grew solemn in an instant, and he asked curtly, “Who are you staring at, Miss Walton?”

Startled, she turned her head around, and her eyes fell on Ernie’s face. He can’t even be compared to Tony, she thought. Be it his family background, looks, abilities, or resorts... Nothing at all is comparable.

A pang of pain washed over her heart, and Gemma suddenly felt that she could no longer stay here with him, but she knew that she was not in the position to act rashly.

“I saw someone I know, but I’m not sure if I should go and say hi,” she replied calmly instead.

Sniggering, Ernie said, “This is our first meeting today. Why don’t you greet your friend the next time?”

Gemma smirked. “Whatever.”

The look in Ernie's eyes darkened because it was clear to him that Gemma didn't understand the rules. No matter whom she was in love with before this, she had to forget the past if she had decided to be with him. Otherwise, this would be akin to a slap on his face.

The air between the both of them turned unpleasant after that, but Gemma didn't notice it because her mind was somewhere else. When the blind date ended and they both decided to leave, she even spaced out for a while. Ernie wanted to escort her out, but when he saw the dazed look on her face, he retracted his outstretched hand.

Meanwhile, Gemma thought that he wanted to help her out of her seat, so she leaned herself toward him when she stood up. However, she didn't expect him to retract his hand so suddenly, and she almost fell because she lost her balance. Luckily, she quickly held on to the little round table next to her and broke the fall.

Jerking her head up, she shot him an annoyed look. "What are you doing?!"

"What are you trying to do?" he asked in reply nonchalantly, as though he hadn't seen the annoyed look in her eyes.

Pursing her lips, Gemma got up, picked up her handbag, and left the place in a huff.

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In the meantime, Tony entered a private room with his arm around Myra, and there was already a man sitting in the room. He looked like he was in his forties, but with a matured and dashing face which was very attractive. Somehow, Myra had the feeling that she had seen him somewhere before.

"Let me introduce. She's my fiancée, Myra Stark," Tony said to the man with a friendly smile when he walked in. Turning to Myra, he said, "This is Mr. Jean-Jacques Blanc from France, a renowned jewelry designer."

No wonder he looks so familiar! I've seen him on magazines and television before! Myra realized. Extending her hand, she shook hands with Jean-Jacques and released it, saying, "So you're Mr. Blanc. I'm sorry for not recognizing you because Tony didn't tell me who you were before coming here. My apologies."

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“It’s alright. I can understand that Tony didn’t tell you beforehand because he wants to surprise you,” Jean-Jacques said in his prominent French accent as he smiled graciously. “Please take a seat. By the way, I know that you’re pregnant, so I ordered a glass of milk for you, and a cup of coffee for Tony.”

Right after he said that, the waiter came in and placed the milk and coffee in front of Myra and Tony respectively.

Smirking, Tony said, “You’re rather attentive toward my fiancée. So how are things going with what I asked of you?”

Looking at the both of them in confusion, Myra then saw Jean-Jacques giving herself a friendly smile as he said, “Of course I’ll make it a priority to finish your request first. Look, this is the diamond bracelet I personally crafted for Miss Stark.”

From a bag next to him, Jean-Jacques took out a red velvet box as Tony raised his brows. With a grin, he passed the box to Myra and explained, “Well, this is my personal gift for you, Miss Stark. I’m aware that you like silver jewelry. This bracelet is made out of silver and I personally cut the small diamonds that decorated it. I wonder if you’ll like it, Miss Stark.”

After opening the box, Myra saw a bracelet lying in it, and she had to admit that his design was ingenious. Despite the fact that it was such an ordinary silver bracelet, he was able to make it really exquisite. The chain itself was very fine, and the tiny diamonds sitting firmly on it didn’t appear either too cumbersome nor extravagant.

“Wow, thank you, Mr. Blanc! I like it very much!” Myra exclaimed as she took the box from him and flashed him a brilliant smile.

Raising his brows, Jean-Jacques said, “You’re a very beautiful woman, Miss Stark. Even I feel a little attracted when you smile at me like that. It’s no wonder that Tony is so in love with you.”

Everything he said was purely a compliment for Myra stemming from his deep-rooted romanticism as a French, and it didn’t feel repulsive in any way.

However, Tony pulled her into his arms possessively and cast her a look. "You know full well that I'm so in love with her, so you'd better stop staring at her."

"Oh, you're jealous. How rare to see you like this!" Jean-Jacques said jokingly.

Blushing, Myra lowered her head and punched Tony's chest lightly, but he merely smiled gently and caught her fist in his hand.

The three of them continued chatting for a while, and it was revealed that Jean-Jacques made a trip to Bradford this time because he wanted to have a chat with Myra personally as Tony had requested him to design a few pieces of jewelry for her. As an artist who was also a perfectionist, he wanted to learn about her habits and hobbies so that he could incorporate it perfectly into his designs for her.

When it was about time, Jean-Jacques said to the both of them in a sad tone, "You're the most interesting and sickly-sweet couple I've ever met!"

Then, he burst into a chuckle. Throughout the whole time, he saw that Tony's eyes never left Myra, as though he simply couldn't get enough of her. This was very different from the aloof and indifferent man that he knew from before.

While Myra was embarrassed, what Tony said next left the both of them speechless. Calmly, he said with raised brows, "That's because you haven't met a lot of people, Mr. Blanc."

At the entrance of the coffee house, after they said goodbye to Jean-Jacques, Tony went to drive the car over while Myra waited at the entrance for him.

The lights in the streets had just lit up, but the evening sky wasn't completely dark yet. Waiting patiently at the entrance, Myra smiled gently as she felt her belly. Then, she said something that was only audible to herself, and the smile on her face became even more gentle.

However, this gentle smile pierced Gemma's heart deeply.

Once Tony fell in love with a woman, he would spoil her in every way. Just looking at how happy Myra was right now was proof to that, but all these once belonged to her! A wave of painful emotions washed over her, and she held her palms into tight fists in agony.

Suddenly, a voice came from behind her, saying, "Miss Stark is so beautiful and gentle. It's no wonder Director Hart likes her." It was Ernie who had come from behind her.

The next second, Gemma's face darkened. "Didn't you say that you'll be sending me back? Quickly drive the car over. It's already so late now."

With a vague smirk on his face, Ernie simply went toward the parking lot without starting an argument with her. When he had left the spot, Gemma's face turned stone cold and she marched toward Myra, who saw her when she was close to the coffee house entrance.

Seeing her head which was wrapped in a scarf, Myra froze for a moment, but she could immediately guess who the woman walking toward herself was. Reflexively, she took a couple of steps to the side, but Gemma was obviously coming for her. Myra squinted her eyes, for she was unable to see the expression on Gemma; all she could see were eyes filled with hatred and envy. Somewhat worried, she pursed her lips.

"What a coincidence, Miss Stark. I can even bump into you on the one day when I get out of the hospital. You really follow me wherever I go!" Gemma started speaking in a snide tone.

Furrowing her brows tightly, Myra said curtly, "Hi, Gemma."

"Why are you here? Are you here to have coffee with Director Hart? I remember that you're pregnant though. Do you still dare to drink coffee? Aren't you afraid of losing your child, the bargaining chip to marry into the Hart Family?" Her voice was a little high-pitched, and it immediately drew the attention of passersby around the coffee house.

Subconsciously, Myra placed a hand over her baby in her belly, protecting it as she wanted to walk away.

All of a sudden, Gemma grabbed her by her arm and said in a cold voice, "Don't go. This is a rare chance for us to meet up, so let's have a good chat."

Jerking her hand away, Myra said, "I have nothing to talk about with you."

Myra knew that Gemma was a paranoid lunatic, so she didn't want to have an argument with her right now.

“Are you looking down on me because you’re about to become Mrs. Hart?” Gemma’s voice had turned colder and it carried sarcasm as she suddenly came close to her ears and whispered in a cold-blooded manner, “Have you seen what I’ve become now, Myra? Thanks to you, my face is disfigured, but don’t you get happy too soon. One fine day, I’ll have my revenge on you for everything I’m going through now!”

“You must be crazy!” Myra exclaimed, her brows knitted together fiercely. With a sullen look, she said, “You’re only reaping what you sowed for the fact that your face is disfigured. You wanted to run over Tony, but God is fair and you got your just desserts! You should count your blessings that the Harts decided not to pursue this matter to the end, Gemma Walton!”

“The reason the Harts didn’t pursue this matter to the end is because my family is strong,” Gemma spat, her eyes filled with hatred. “Just you wait. Your happy days won’t remain for long!”

With that, she glared viciously at Myra and suddenly reached out her hand to give the latter a strong push. As they were standing on a step, Myra couldn’t dodge in time and she was shoved off the step by her hard push. As a result, she fell to the ground. She panicked, and subconsciously reached out to protect her baby, but the fall she was expecting didn’t happen.

A familiar yet foreign smell drifted into Myra’s nose, and she jerked her head up in surprise to see Sean looking at Gemma with icy cold eyes. “Miss Walton, are you harming another person on the streets publicly because you’re worried that the people of Bradford hadn’t seen enough of your viciousness? Are you simply begging to be sent to a mental institution?”

Everyone knew that the Harts were unable to pursue the case where Gemma tried to run over Tony deliberately because of a psychiatric assessment, which stated that she was suffering from schizophrenia. Now, the way Sean was directly pointing out her schizophrenia could have her sent to a mental institution!

Clearly, Gemma knew about this point as well, because her family had all warned her about it before. However, she simply couldn’t take it anymore when she saw Myra earlier, and she could feel her blood boil all over.

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When Gemma heard Sean's words, she was a little worried and afraid, but it fueled her hatred and envy even more. She couldn't understand what was so amazing about Myra that made the guys so smitten with her; even Ernie, who had just seen her, also complimented her! Just what is so amazing about Myra to these men?

"You're so devoted, Director Chase. Miss Stark is about to get married, but you still can't get her off your mind," Gemma said with a sarcastic smirk. Turning to Myra, she continued, "You've planned everything so well, Miss Stark. While you're dating one man, you also keep another hooked on the line. Are you keeping a spare man for yourself this way so that you'll have a good place to turn to in case Tony dumps you one day?"

"Stop attacking others like a mad dog, Gemma," Myra snapped. When she recovered her composure, she quickly stood up and got out of Sean's embrace, then she kept a distance from him, leaving him to stare gloomily at his empty arms for a second.

"A mad dog? Being a mad dog is better than being a b*tch!" Peering at the both of them, Gemma waved her cell phone gleefully at them, saying, "What do you think of this picture?" Earlier when Sean held Myra to break her fall, Gemma had quickly snapped a picture of that moment. "Should I send it to Tony?"

"Do whatever you want," Myra answered nonchalantly while smirking mockingly. "There's a surveillance camera outside of the coffee house, and everything that happened earlier was captured on camera. What do you think you can achieve by sending this picture? Besides showing other people how despicable you are, do you really think you can drive a wedge between me and Tony with that?"

"Oh Myra, did you overestimate your relationship with Tony? Don't you think you're being a bit too optimistic? Are you really so sure that he can't do without you? Aren't you flattering yourself a little too much?" Gemma said, clutching her fists tightly. In fact, Myra was right, and Gemma still remembered her lesson from the scandal incident the last time. Therefore, she didn't dare to act rashly this time, but she merely said those things earlier to spite Myra because she just couldn't take it lying down.

Just as the words left her lips, a low voice belonging to a man echoed beside them. The man was speaking in an indifferent and emotionless tone, and he even sounded a little frosty. "Speaking of flattering oneself, it's clear that you're above everyone else, Miss Walton."

Without any of them realizing it, Tony had driven his car over, stopped it at the roadside and walked toward them. Seeing him, Myra called out to him.

Tony paced over and walked past Sean calmly to stand next to Myra before pulling her into his arms. With a solemn look at Gemma, he said, "Judging from what happened today, it seems like you're quite unwell, Miss Walton. I wonder if the procedures will be troublesome if I mention it to the higher ups to have a dangerous patient sent to a psychiatric institution."

He was merciless with his words, showing no respect for Gemma at all. On the other hand, all blood drained from Gemma's face as she bit her lip hard, and she wanted to pull off the scarf which was in the way. However, she knew that she would be outmatched even more if she did that. Hence, she clenched her fists tightly and wanted to say something else, but Tony had already started to walk away toward his car with his arm around Myra's shoulders.

The words were stuck in her throat, and she trembled in anger at the sight of how loving the both of them were. Seeing how glum Sean was when he stared at Tony and Myra, she chuckled mockingly and said, "Take a good look at what a two-faced woman she is, and if she's worth all of you treating her so nicely, Director Chase!"

Keeping his gaze away from them, Sean turned to look at Gemma frostily and said, "Whether she's worth it or not is up to us to decide. It's none of your business, Miss Walton." Without waiting for a reply from her, he left the spot directly.

By now, Gemma was shaking all over in anger from the way these men treated her. Suddenly, she heard the loud noise of a car engine, and she turned to see a black Mercedes-Benz driving past. She seemed to have caught a glimpse of Ernie's side profile. In just a few seconds, the car had driven away from the entrance of the coffee house.

She chased after it for a few steps, but the car turned into a corner and disappeared from sight. Stomping her feet furiously, she was about to call Ernie to ask him why he had left before picking her up when he called her first.

Glaring at the caller ID, she deliberately waited until the very last moment to pick up the call before the line could be disconnected. However, when she picked up the call, Ernie immediately said, "Gemma, I have to attend to some urgent business in my company, so I won't be able to drop you off. Grab a cab back to the hospital by yourself and take care."

Without waiting for her to say anything, he hung up the call, and when she tried calling again, his phone was already switched off. With an incredibly sombre face, Gemma tried to calm herself down deeply from within before she gradually regained her composure.

"You won't be smug for long, Myra Stark! And you'll regret the day you gave up on me, Tony Hart!" she vowed under her breath viciously.

After getting into the car, Tony didn't look too pleased, so Myra leaned toward him to grab his arm. "I didn't see that Sean was there earlier, and he merely helped me out when Gemma shoved me," she explained, thinking that he was unhappy to see herself with Sean.

Kissing her cheek, he said, "I know that he saved our baby earlier, but Gemma..."

His voice turned stone-cold at the mention of Gemma's name. Again and again, she came seeking trouble with them, and he naturally wouldn't let her have it easy in the future.

Tugging at his arm, Myra said, "I didn't even imagine that she would show up. She really gave me a scare."

"Yeah. It's fine now that both you and the baby are safe," he said, trying to console her.

"The Waltons are doing really well recently. Are you not feeling any pressure from it?" From how arrogant Gemma was acting earlier, Myra could imagine how well her family must be doing now.

"Well, I'm actually worried that they aren't doing well enough," Tony replied with a lopsided smirk. A dark look flashed across his eyes as he started the engine and drove away from the place.

On the way, Myra looked at the bracelet on her wrist and said to the man who was driving next to her, “You got Mr. Blanc to design jewelry for me?” Earlier, she didn’t notice it, but she could see it clearly now.

She could see his intense seriousness from his side profile while he was driving. The night lights poured over the side of his face, casting bright lights on it for one second and plunging his features into shadows the next, but his face still appeared incredibly gentle.

“Yes. I thought that you’ll like his designs,” he answered truthfully.

“I do like it very much,” she replied, gazing at the bracelet as a sense of happiness filled her heart.

After dinner at home, Myra received a text from Cameron, telling her how badly their company did on this day. Maybe he was worried that Tony might pick up the call if he called, which was why he had sent a text instead.

When she finished reading the text, she deleted it right away.

Then, she heard a husky voice from the bathroom. “Myra, I forgot the towel. Please pass me one.”

Without thinking too much about it, Myra grabbed a clean towel from the closet and went to the bathroom. The bathroom door then opened partially with a click, and Tony stood with his back straight at the door. Despite the heat and mist, she could see his figure clearly.

He had the golden ratio of a man’s body—wide shoulders and narrow hips—which gave his torso an inverted triangle look. The muscles around his abdomen were chiseled and looked very powerful. In an instant, Myra blushed at the sight and tossed the towel to the man in front of her without hesitation.

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“Can’t you cover that up, Tony?!”

His eyes were dark and brooding when he stepped outside; they looked clouded and dull from being enclosed in the shower for an extended period of time. Along with that, a complicated smile tugged at the corner of his lips...

“Didn’t I give you the towel? Do you expect me to cover up with my dirty clothes?” The man smirked lazily at Myra.

Myra’s face turned a deeper red and she was about to turn around; she didn’t notice the hint of slyness that flashed across the man’s eyes when he removed the towel from his face. Immediately after that, he swiftly extended his hand and grabbed the woman, shoving her back into the shower with him. He then slammed the door shut behind them in the process and pressed Myra’s back against the closed door.

The air was hot and humid with residual steam in the bathroom. Meanwhile, the temperature seemed to be rising rapidly—it was getting hotter and hotter with every passing second.

She bit down on her lip as she raised her head, and the man’s eyes were unbelievably ominous when they met hers. A hint of tenderness surfaced in his eyes as he noticed her gesture.

“Myra?” Tony’s low and magnetic voice played in her ears. Then, he dipped all of a sudden and kissed her.

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By the time it was over, Myra had long since fallen asleep. The man carried her to the bed before leaving the bedroom. As he picked up his ringing phone, he noticed that he had already missed a few calls. “Hello?”

Elliot’s voice rang excitedly from the other end. “You’re finally picking up, Tony.”

“Yeah, how’s it going over there?” Tony’s voice was quite draggy and hoarse as he spoke—he sounded like a leopard enjoying the sun after a scrumptious meal. Elliot seemed to have picked it up right away, so he clicked his tongue disapprovingly before he said, “How inconsiderate of you, Tony—you’re being lovey-dovey with Myra all the time. Have you thought about our feelings?”

“Are you saying that you don’t like Tilly anymore?” Tony was a little sarcastic with his tone. “I guess I should give Myra a heads up—Tilly is her closest employee in the company, after all.”

“Stop, Tony. I was just kidding. You and Myra should do what you want every single day—lovey-dovey or not! Whatever you do, please don’t take it out on

your buddy here; I spent a great deal of effort to finally have a chance with a woman, so if she leaves me, I'd really need a shoulder to cry on!" Elliot wailed in a panic as soon as he heard Tony's words.

Tony smiled slightly at his flustered reaction. He then responded with a nonchalant hum as he subconsciously retrieved his packet of cigarettes and lit one up. Ever since he found out that Myra was pregnant, he only smoked a cigarette when he had an intense craving; when he did, he would make sure that she wasn't around.

Wisps of smoke which floated heavenward from the tip of the cigarette looked like smooth, premium silk; it fogged up Tony's vision a little as he stared ahead.

During such times, Elliot would usually suffer another round of evil teasing from Tony. This time, however, he was surprised to find that his buddy had let him off just like that! Elliot thought to himself that Tony was probably in a very good mood after having a great time!

Elliot pursed his lips; it was a pity that his hopes were still far from reality. How nice it'd be if Tilly has just a fraction of Myra's gentle personality!

Even though Elliot's thoughts were full of complaints, a smile played on his lips. Nonetheless, there was nothing he liked more than Tilly's flustered and angered demeanor whenever she defended her own stance. It'd make her look like a spiked up cat who was about to launch her attack—Elliot couldn't help but tease her at the sight of it!

"I actually called to talk to you about the Waltons, Tony." However, Elliot suddenly realized that they'd gone off topic in the heat of the moment! He then continued, "The Waltons are getting much bolder. We have intel regarding the smaller companies that the Waltons have started again—they're planning to collaborate with the Lincoln Family's successor. Sadly, Ernie has no clue about the Waltons' true intentions. In fact, he even went on a blind date with Gemma. From the looks of it, the two families will probably tie the knot in an arranged marriage."

"That sure sounds like the Waltons." Tony exhaled slowly as smoke escaped from his mouth. He narrowed his eyes slightly, for he was none other than the first person the Waltons had come to in hopes of setting up an arranged marriage. Then, Tony let out a sudden scoff and said, "Here's our final move—we'll start with the Lincolns. Since the Waltons have proposed a

marriage, they're definitely going to please the Lincolns in order to earn their agreement. Remember this—I want concrete evidence to ruin them once and for all.”

“Got it!” Indeed, the corporate world was a battlefield; no gunpowder and grenades were involved, but it was much more brutal and intense than an actual war. Tony only had one chance to do it right—if the Waltons were able to get away with their crimes this time, he wouldn't be able to come this close to exposing them again!

Elliot responded to Tony's instructions with enthusiasm. As he did so, he felt his body burning up with excitement—it had been such a long time since he was able to go all out on a job. This was nothing like their ordinary businesses in the past, for this could directly affect the rise and fall of an entire family business. If Elliot were to mess up, he could trigger huge economical changes in Bradford City!

“There's also the Stark Group...” After one problem was resolved, Elliot moved onto the next topic of discussion. In particular, Cameron and the mother-daughter duo were truly difficult to deal with. Elliot hesitated before he said, “Should we continue to pressure the shareholders?”

“Yeah, let Hansen handle it. He doesn't have a lot of the company's stocks, but he's quite well-respected nevertheless. He's one of us now—he's already told Myra on the phone. Things will be a lot smoother with him on our side.”

“All right! These smart guys are the best,” Elliot said with a laugh.

Tony seemed to have more to say after that, but the bedroom door opened in front of him suddenly.

He was on the phone outside just by the door, and when he heard it open, he instinctively cast his eyes toward the room. Myra was wearing a set of cotton pajamas which was suitable for the fall weather. She stood by the door, looking drowsy from her sleep. Then, she rubbed her eyes lazily with one hand and leaned against the door frame with the other. She stared at Tony with half-opened eyes and asked croakily, “Are you on the phone? It's late, so why aren't you sleeping yet...”

Tony's heart instantly softened at the sight of Myra's sluggish state. He returned to his call and told Elliot hastily, “I'll leave the rest to you.” Then, he hung up without another word and walked over to Myra. After just a few steps,

he was suddenly reminded of the cigarette in his hand. He quickly discarded it into a nearby trashcan before he walked past her at the door and headed into the bedroom.

“Aren’t you tired? Why are you up?” Tony’s voice was soft, and it sounded like he was putting a child to sleep.

Myra mumbled, “You’re not here, so... I can’t sleep...”

Tony jolted for a moment before a tender warmth filled his eyes. Then, he got into bed with Myra and kissed her forehead before he pulled her close into his arms. “Go to sleep. I’m here.”

“Okay.” Myra snuggled up to the man. A wave of sleepiness quickly washed over her, and she was sound asleep in no time.

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Ever since Kris was hospitalized after breaking ties with the Waltons, she had become a lot more meek and reserved. Rachel hadn’t visited her at all since she was still unhappy with her, whereas Cameron obviously didn’t have the time to do so. Apart from that, people from the Walton Family were naturally reluctant to see her. If Hayden hadn’t dropped by almost every day, she would’ve felt like she had disappeared from the face of the earth.

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Kris knew that her only choice right now was to keep Hayden by her side. Although Hayden wasn’t the successor of the Fuller Family, she could tell that he was pretty well-off from all the gifts that he had given her in the past. Even if he only owned a tiny portion of his family’s assets, he was already living a much more comfortable life compared to her at the moment. After what happened with the Walton Family, she knew that her reputation had hit rock bottom—she didn’t even need to ask!

At the thought of that, Kris let out a silent curse as she blamed it all on Gideon. Did he think that Kris wasn’t aware of his side chicks during their relationship?! Yet, he was so heartless when she got into trouble!

“The doctor says that you’ll be discharged today, Kris.” Hayden had just returned to the ward; as usual, he was carrying multiple bags of fresh fruits and flowers.

Kris bit her lip instinctively at the sight of him. Truthfully, Hayden was a very good man to her; he was extremely caring and he loved her alone. While Kris stroked her belly, a complicated look clouded her eyes as she sunk into deep thought. That night, she didn't lose the baby—was this a sign from the heavens?

Whatever it was, she decided the only way for her to survive was to be with Hayden for now.

“Uh, Hayden... You're the only one who's been visiting me in the hospital lately. You've been taking care of me so well, and I...” Kris trailed off as tears flooded her eyes. Soon, she lowered her head slightly.

Hayden went up to her and put down the items he brought before wrapping the woman in his arms. “You're our baby's mother, silly. Who am I supposed to take care of if not you?” His voice softened after that as he said leisurely, “As long as you don't blame me for ruining your career.”

Kris smiled at his words. “Why would I blame you? You only said it in a moment of desperation. Besides, you know that Gideon and I were only acting—there was nothing between us to begin with.”

“Was there really nothing going on between the two of you, Kris?” Hayden questioned her casually all of a sudden.

Her heart skipped a beat; she looked up at Hayden and asked, “You don't believe me?”

Just then, Hayden broke into a chuckle. “How could I not believe you? You told me that you'll never lie to me.”

Even though he was laughing out loud, Kris couldn't seem to make out the genuinity in his gesture while she continued to stare at him.

“All right, let's pack up and leave. Since it's your first day out of the hospital, we're going to eat something fancy!”

With that, Hayden left the hospital with Kris. In the car, he picked up a call and calmly replied with a grunt before he searched up a Western restaurant. When they arrived, he carefully helped her through the doors.

Throughout their meal, Hayden was incredibly caring toward Kris. Whatever she wanted, he delivered; he had the waiter bring out each and every food that she was craving. Nevertheless, Kris couldn't eat much since she had just been discharged, so the two of them finished up pretty quickly.

As Kris rose from her seat and was prepared to leave, Hayden stopped her and cast her a slight smile. "What's the rush? Since you've just recovered, I asked someone to get you a bowl of bird's nest essence. At the very least, you should have some of it; it's good for your health."

Even though Kris thought that it was extremely odd to eat something like that in a Western restaurant, she sat down and waited quietly—Hayden was just concerned for her, after all. Just then, Hayden got up and went over to Kris before he sat down next to her on the sofa. He then leaned in close to her, raised his phone in front of their faces, and took a selfie.

"What are you doing?" Kris jolted in surprise.

In return, Hayden smiled at her mischievously. "You'll know in a while."

Immediately after that, he logged onto social media and posted the selfie on his Stories with the caption, 'First family dinner of three. Feeling blessed.'

Kris could see everything as he tapped away on his screen by her side. When she realized what he was up to, her pupils shrunk a little—he was blatantly exposing her state of humiliation to the whole world. However, she could only keep her anxiety hidden; she couldn't do anything against him at a time like this, so she forced a smile at him and said, "You don't have to post it—we're just having a meal. Besides, I remember that you don't like going on social media."

"I used to hate it." Hayden nodded before he fixed his gaze on her and gave her a warm, sincere smile. "But from now on, I'll post photos of us; there are many other couples on my Stories who love showing off, so we have to up our game as well."

Kris felt a little uncomfortable at his sentiment; perhaps she was imagining things, but she had the impression that Hayden's words had a deeper meaning to them. With that in mind, time seemed to drag on as they waited for the bowl of bird's nest essence in the restaurant.

Just then, Kris' eyes locked onto a nearby corner; she had caught sight of a couple walking out of the Western restaurant, and her expression hardened as soon as she recognized them.

The pair of lovers weren't strangers to her—it was even safe to say that she was more than familiar with the man!

It was Gideon!

He was engaged in an affectionate, light-hearted conversation with the woman next to him; Kris even noticed that his arm was wrapped tightly around the woman's waist. As soon as they stepped into the lobby of the restaurant, they started kissing in public without a care in the world.

Kris watched the scene in front of her angrily, and her hands balled into fists.

Gideon hadn't even officially broken up with her, yet he already found another woman in such a short period of time. He was obviously giving her a punch on the face!

"See, Kris? Gideon was playing with you the entire time; he doesn't appreciate you at all. It hasn't even been that long, and he already has a new chick!" Hayden said in her ear, his voice low and eerie.

Kris' head snapped toward Hayden in an instant; she stared into his eyes in disbelief as she exclaimed, "Did you bring me here on purpose? Did you try to stall me because you wanted me to see Gideon together with his new girlfriend?!"

It all made sense now—Kris finally knew why things felt so odd today. Hayden wasn't worried about her out of concern; he hadn't asked anyone to buy her a bowl of bird's nest at all. Instead, he simply wanted her to wait in place so that she could see Gideon sharing a kiss with his new woman!

For a moment, Hayden couldn't hide the cunning look in his eyes; Kris caught it and she suddenly felt like Hayden was a whole new person she never understood.

"Of course not; I had no choice but to do it because I was worried for you. I was afraid that you were missing someone you shouldn't be thinking about." As he smiled at her, the underlying foreboding beneath his smile didn't go unnoticed.

Kris took a few deep breaths; she stood up abruptly and turned to leave the restaurant.

“Where are you going, Kris? Wait for me!”

Since Hayden was a little loud, several neighboring diners turned to look toward the commotion.

Kris felt inexplicably bothered by the sudden spotlight. Naturally, Hayden’s voice attracted Gideon’s attention as the latter turned toward their direction as well—he wasn’t that far away from them.

As soon as Gideon’s eyes fell upon her, the mocking look he threw at Kris gave her the urge to walk up to him and land a few slaps on his face. What is there to smirk about? As a result, she changed her mind in an instant and walked toward Gideon instead.

Meanwhile, Gideon reacted by calmly stepping in front of the woman who was in his arms.

Kris went up to him, raised her hand to his face and slapped him without a moment of hesitation.

It happened all too quickly that the onlookers couldn’t even comprehend what had just happened. After suffering a smack to his face, Gideon’s expression darkened. He immediately caught Kris’ hand which was about to land another stinging hit. He then bellowed, “What are you doing, Kris?! Are you crazy?!”

“Am I crazy, you say?! Yes, I want the woman behind you to see how rotten you are!” Kris’ attitude was unyielding. “Are you having fun playing around with women, Gideon?! How dare you get with another woman before even ending things with me?!”

“Kris, you can’t be thinking that you’re still my fiancée, right?” Gideon said deridingly as he sized her up sarcastically. “Look at you—how can you even compare to Miss Brie? More importantly, when it comes to playing around... aren’t you more of an expert than me? You were with another man when we were together!”

Then, Gideon’s eyes shifted to Hayden who was standing next to Kris. “Young Master Fuller, when this woman was around you, she couldn’t have told you

that her relationship with me was fake, and that it was all pretend, right? Or did she? If that's the case, how is it possible to pretend in bed?!"

Kris' face fell at once. "Enough of your nonsense, Gideon!"

She looked toward Hayden instinctively, but to her surprise, the man was unfazed and his expression was indifferent.

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"I guess it's true, then! How capable of you to be greedy for someone else whilst in bed with another, Kris! It's not all bad, though—Young Master Fuller can finally put his back-up plan to good use now," Hayden sneered as he laughed wickedly. Along with that, the look in his eyes became audacious and belittling as he stared at Hayden. "Are you sure you want to be with a woman as filthy as her?! Isn't it disgusting to you?"

"You've crossed the line, Young Master Walton," said Hayden emotionlessly. The next moment, he took Kris' hand and turned to leave the restaurant.

His strides were long and swift and Kris struggled to keep up to him. When she finally did, though, she almost slipped and fell down.

"Let me go, Hayden! You're hurting my wrist!" Kris was a little pale as she tried to follow close behind.

However, Hayden didn't seem to have heard her cries. When they finally arrived at the car, he opened the door and practically shoved her onto the seat carelessly before shutting the door in front of her.

Kris' expression darkened a little; naturally, she knew that something was off from the look on Hayden's face. Indeed, Gideon's words earlier were truly brutal...

When Hayden got into the car on the other side, Kris quickly tried to explain herself, "Don't listen to Gideon, Hayden. He doesn't want to see us happy! He humiliated me only because I made him look bad! T-There's really nothing between us!"

"Oh, really? Considering you were his fiancée, was there really nothing between you and him?" Hayden turned to her abruptly, his eyes cold and unfriendly.

Kris jolted momentarily, but Hayden had already averted his gaze and started the engine.

“You don’t believe me?” Hayden simply stepped on the gas and made his way toward the freeway without giving a reply. Kris nibbled on her lower lip as her eyes reddened; they looked sad and pitiful.

After that, she reached out a hand to open the car door. Unexpectedly, Hayden stepped on the breaks and pulled her back. His expression was extremely complicated and unreadable, and a certain sadness lingered within his eyes. After a long while, he finally regained his composure and a slight resignation passed over his face. He said bluntly, “Of course... I believe you.”

Tears escaped Kris’ eyes in an instant and she crashed into Hayden’s arms. “I knew it... You’re the only one who treats me well, Hayden...”

Hayden stared down at the feeble woman in his arms, and the sense of maliciousness in his eyes finally disappeared.

...

The next morning, Tony headed to the office after dropping Myra off at the florist shop.

Meanwhile, Myra spent the morning cleaning the shop with the florist before she picked up a parenting book and went upstairs to read.

The shop was quiet and serene; their clients were all rather low-profile and reserved, so Myra didn’t really need to serve them personally. An hour later, she put down the book to move around a little; she opened the windows and rearranged a few house plants on the windowsill which changed the entire look of the space, making it look cute and lovely. With that, the ambiance of the room was like a different world compared to the outside—Myra couldn’t help but smile at the sight.

Back then, she never thought that she’d be able to live a peaceful and wholesome life like this.

After glancing at the time, she decided to give Leo a call. Myra put off her plan of calling Tony when she heard that he was currently in a meeting, for she didn’t want to be a bother when he was busy with work.

However, Leo sounded quite eager instead when he said, “Miss Myra, I’ll give Director Hart the phone right away if you want to talk to him.” Director Hart will be very happy to hear that she’s calling! If he answers the call, the atmosphere and overall mood of our working environment will certainly lighten up!

“Ah, it’s fine. I was just asking.” After a brief pause, Myra asked again in a gentle tone, “I’ll be sending him lunch later, so you don’t have to make arrangements for his meal today.”

“All right.” Leo nodded.

“Okay, there’s nothing else. I’m hanging up.” With that, Myra ended the call.

At the same time, Sharon rushed upstairs to her; she told Myra that there was a man downstairs who was looking for her.

“How old is he? Is he around 50?” asked Myra; Tony had brought her here on his own, so there shouldn’t be anyone who would visit her at the shop without giving her a call beforehand.

“No, he’s quite young; he’s around 30 or so.” Sharon was smiling dreamily as she described, “He’s tall and handsome. Not only that, his looks are almost comparable to Director Hart.”

Myra frowned slightly at the sound of that—a man around 30 years old who was tall and handsome looking for her...

“Just tell him I’m not around,” Myra replied calmly.

“Okay.” Sharon nodded as her heart filled with admiration for the fact that her boss was constantly surrounded by rich and wealthy men who were interested in her. Nevertheless, her boss’ words were the law; besides, Sharon genuinely loved her job here as well. Thus, she only nodded and said, “I’ll tell him that you left.”

“Okay.”

Myra nodded to that. As Sharon was approaching the stairs, Myra stopped the woman again. “Tell him the same thing if he visits again.”

Sharon nodded in understanding and went downstairs.

Myra gave it a thought before she peered down from the top of the stairwell, and she heard Sharon recite the reason to the man with a smile. Soon after that, the familiar voice of a man replied, “In that case, when will she be back?”

Sharon said, “I don’t know, but Director Hart gifted this shop to Miss Stark for her to manage it as a pastime activity, so she comes and goes whenever she pleases.”

Following that was a moment of silence before the man finally left the shop.

As he turned to go, he raised his head and glanced upstairs; Myra immediately moved away from the stairwell.

In fact, the look on her face was complicated as she watched Sean’s leaving figure.

She wasn’t sure whether Sean had actually fallen in love with her or if he had other hidden intentions, but one thing was for sure—her time together with Sean had long since come to an end. Now, she was living a happy and fulfilled life with Tony. Although she used to be in love with Sean in the past, the man she loved right now was Tony.

...

After the minor intrusion, Myra got back to reading her book. When she looked at the time again, she realized that it was getting late; she went downstairs and walked toward the Hart Group.

When Tony brought Myra to the florist shop yesterday, she took note of several restaurants they had passed by on the way. She found that one of them was quite suited to their tastes, so she packed a meal for Tony from the restaurant before heading toward the Hart Group.

However, just as she approached the office building, she saw that man standing nearby—she thought that he had left earlier.

Naturally, Sean noticed her as well; more accurately, he was intentionally hanging around near the Hart Group, waiting for her to appear.

Myra frowned a little and headed straight toward the entrance of the building. At that moment, Sean quickly walked toward her and stopped her from going

in. He was holding a leather bag with some documents in it, and he handed it over to Myra.

“I know about the dispute between you and Cameron, Myra. I don’t know how to help, so this is all I can do for you. Please accept these.”

From the looks of it, he didn’t seem to be in a good state; he looked quite bummed-out, but there was a different charm to his dejected state of appearance. As he stared at her, there was a profound look in his eyes which was filled with deep emotion.

Myra didn’t know how to respond; she tried her best to avoid Sean, all for the sake of completely cutting ties with him. After all, Tony was quite prone to be jealous of such things, and she didn’t want him to be unhappy because of something like this. Moreover, Bradford City wasn’t exactly huge, but it wasn’t a small city either; it wouldn’t be odd to be spotted by someone she knew. Hence, she didn’t want to raise any unnecessary misunderstandings.

Myra rejected the man’s offer without a second thought as he tried to give her the bag of documents. “Considering our relationship, I’m afraid that I’m not in a place to accept anything from you, Director Chase. I thought I’ve already made it clear—I like Tony now. Whatever it was between us, it ended a long time ago.”

Sean was quite pale and his face was emotionless when he said, “I know what you’re thinking, but I’m only doing this out of my own will; it has nothing to do with you. You just have to accept these documents.”

Then, he stepped forward to shove the bag into Myra’s hands, but she quickly retracted her empty hand and hid it behind her back. Just then, her eyes locked onto a security guard nearby. “If you don’t stop, I’ll have to call for security, Director Chase.”

Sean’s expression hardened slightly. “Do you have to do this to me, Myra?! I’m trying to help you as a friend, so can’t you just accept it?! What are you so scared of? Are you afraid that Tony would get mad at you because of this?!”

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Sean knitted his good-looking brows with a frosty look in his eyes. “Tony doesn’t deserve to be together with you if he gets angry at you over this!”

Myra was so angered by his reply that she almost laughed. Not wanting to waste her breath talking to the man before her anymore, she beckoned to the security guard who kept craning his neck and looking in their direction. Then, she turned to look at Sean and said, "Whether or not he deserves to be together with me is my call to make. Besides, there's one thing that I'm very clear about—you don't deserve to be together with me!"

By the time she finished her sentence, the security guard had come to her side. He then asked respectfully, "What can I do for you, Miss Stark?"

Myra's eyes swept coldly past the man before her, and his expression turned ghastly. "Nothing. This gentleman might harass me, so please help me to keep an eye on him," she said. Then, as the security guard eyed Sean with hostility, she walked toward the Hart Group's building.

"I have learned my mistakes, Myra! Are you not going to give me a chance just because of a mistake that I made?!" Sean suddenly shouted at Myra from behind just as she was about to leave. As the security guard watched in surprise, Sean pursed his lips and forced a smile. "You loved me so much in the past. If we can go back to the past where we loved each other, nothing will separate us anymore..."

Sean's voice could still be heard continuously from behind, but Myra was very calm deep down inside. Once she entered the elevator casually, she pressed the button to Tony's floor and waited quietly before she could meet her man in a while. To her, no one was more important than Tony and the baby in her womb right now!

When she exited the elevator, Tony was already leaning against the wall near the elevator while wearing a white shirt and a pair of black suit trousers. His polished leather shoes were spotless, whereas his tall, upstanding figure and effortlessly good-looking facial features made him look as perfect as Apollo, the Greek god. He wore a meaningful smile on his lips at this moment, and he looked tenderly at the woman before him who had just come out of the elevator. "Did Sean stop you just now?" he asked with a raised brow.

Myra walked up to him and took his hand on her own initiative before she cast him a sidelong glance. "You were aware of it?" she asked. Myra then continued, "Why didn't you go down and save me from that predicament if you knew about it?"

“Why should I go down when Sean is giving you individual shares of the Stark Group with the best of intentions?” Tony replied leisurely. “You should know that you can have the Stark Group firmly in your hands with the shares he holds right now.”

“The Stark Group’s shares?” Myra was startled.

When he saw her expression, Tony was displeased at once. He pinched her waist and asked, “What is it? Are you regretting it now? Do you want to go down and take back his part of the shares?”

Myra immediately felt helpless. “I wouldn’t want it even if he gives me the entire Stark Group,” she said before pausing for a moment. Then, she tilted her head to one side and looked at the man before her. “I thought that you were a magnanimous person. As it turns out, you’re jealous, hehe.”

Tony pursed his thin lips before taking the stuff Myra was carrying in her hands, helplessness and affection written all over his face. The couple then snuggled against each other while walking to Tony’s office.

Myra had no regrets about the shares Sean held. Sean’s shares were his, and her shares were hers. Since she wouldn’t accept Sean, she wouldn’t accept whatever he gave to her. She didn’t care if the Stark Group ended in her hands, for she simply felt that Tony’s help was sufficient to her.

Earlier on, Myra had bought those lunches according to Tony’s preferences. After they enjoyed a comforting meal in the lounge of Tony’s office, Tony held Myra in his arms and took a lunchtime nap. Then, he got up and went out for a meeting while Myra was still soundly asleep.

Myra still had a faint smile on her face when she woke up; she had a dream where she saw her mother again. In contrast to her previous dreams, her mother looked at her with great gratification this time and told her to lead a happy life.

Myra was too lazy to go to the florist’s again in the afternoon, so she called the florists there and told them that they could get off work early. As it happened, Leo came to her when she came out of the office and informed her that Cameron would like to meet downstairs.

Myra frowned. She didn’t want to see Cameron, but if he had changed his mind now... “Tell him to come up,” she said to Leo.

Leo nodded before asking her, "Do you need me to ask Director Hart to come out and be together with you?" He feared that anything unexpected might happen. After all, he was quite mistrustful of Cameron.

Myra shook her head. "It's not necessary to call him since he's busy with a meeting. I'll deal with Cameron myself."

Leo thought about it for a moment. "All right then, you two may talk in the small conference room. I'll be outside, so I can hear you if you call me."

Myra nodded in response.

Cameron soon came up, and he was in a worse state compared to the last time. He looked ghastly with bloodshot eyes and dark circles under his eyes, and even his back seemed to have hunched a lot. His eyes flashed for an instant when he saw Myra, but before Myra could notice it, he quickly put on a wry smile and asked her, "Are you still unwilling to help me, Myra?"

The Stark Group was on the verge of collapsing. If Cameron did not continue working hard to sustain the company after operating it for so many years, the Stark Group would've probably been declared insolvent that morning.

Myra's face was devoid of expression, though. "Tony has talked to you, hasn't he, President Stark? We can help the Stark Group, but we must get the company's shares in return. Giving ten percent of the Stark Group's shares shouldn't be a difficult thing to you compared to declaring the Stark Group insolvent right away, right, President Stark?"

Cameron's face contorted somewhat as he clenched his fists. "Are you driving your father into a dead end, Myra?"

Myra didn't change her countenance. "I don't think this is a dead end, President Stark. Even if you give me ten percent of the Stark Group's shares, you'd still hold a majority of the company's shares, so you can still live your present life!"

Cameron clenched his teeth. "We all know very well what you're up to, Myra. You want to take control of the Stark Group; the Stark Group will no longer belong to me once I give you ten percent of its shares!"

There was a hint of irony in Myra's eyes. "The Stark Group never belonged to a single person in the first place. Instead, it's jointly owned by everyone who

holds shares in it. President Stark, even though you can no longer be the company's chairman in the future, you'll still be the company's major shareholder. You still have the right to decide whether to pass a resolution or not in the Stark Group, so how could you say that the Stark Group no longer belongs to you?"

Cameron was so choked by Myra's reply that he gnashed his teeth hard. "Does that mean you're deciding not to help the Stark Group?" He took a deep breath.

Myra laughed. "The decision isn't mine, but yours, President Stark."

Myra kept calling Cameron 'President Stark', and the latter found it incomparably sarcastic. His daughter—whom he'd raised single-handedly—wanted to seize the power in his hands and trample him on the mud right now! Veins stood out on his temples as a violent feeling surged through him.

His life had been unprecedentedly miserable these days, and he couldn't find the two people he was looking for. Frankly, if someone else discovered that secret right now, Tony wouldn't have to take away ten percent of the Stark Group's shares; instead, his current position would be taken by someone else right away!

He clenched his fists while letting out an insincere chuckle. "The decision is indeed mine, Myra. Since you won't help me, I'll be the one who decides the Stark Group's fate. I hope you won't regret it by then!"

His expression turned sinister in an instant, but he didn't dare to raise his fist at Myra since they were at the Hart Group. He thought to himself, I've seen through it all; the two daughters I've raised are both ingrates who bit the hand that fed them, and they're viciously coveting my wealth. Compared to them, only Olivia knows how to love her father.

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When he thought of Olivia, his daughter, Cameron couldn't help but think of that woman. That woman and his daughter were his real family; the two of them were the only ones who stayed with him and gave him happiness without any complaints regardless of his financial situation!

Cameron clenched his fists tightly before he turned around. Just as he was about to leave, Myra—who could no longer hold back the anger within her—

questioned the man before her and asked, “Did you ever love my Mom when you were together with her?”

Myra couldn't believe that the man in front of her—this selfish, treacherous, deceitful, and narrow-minded man—was actually the person her mother used to love. Not only did he have an extramarital affair with Rachel, he had also been keeping a mistress behind everyone's back and even fathered a daughter! Neither Rachel nor her mother was the woman he loved the most, for he dealt with these two women while secretly building another home of his own. Just how filthy has his heart become?! she thought to herself.

“What do you think?” Cameron laughed mockingly. He then turned around, fixed his eyes on Myra, and said disdainfully in the most merciless voice, “Do you think I would marry your mother and even father you with her if it weren't for the bit of business acumen and means that she had?” Upon seeing the sudden change in Myra's countenance, he laughed heartily with a touch of cruelty on his lips. “That's why you're not strong enough, Myra. Everything can be exploited in the business world—that includes family connections, friendships, and even love and marriage! Your mother loved me back then, and it just so happened that I needed her to help me expand the Stark Group. Since she presented herself to me, why couldn't I take advantage of it?! To be frank, aren't you taking advantage of Tony as well? You're using him to get rid of your failed marriage and your reputation as a loose woman! Not only are you using him to help you snatch the Stark Group away from me, you're also using him to join the Hart Family and join the upper classes of Bradford City! It's just that you're doing so under the pretense of love. At the end of the day, you're my daughter—haven't you inherited my genes?”

Myra's expression turned as black as thunder. “Shut up!”

“Are you telling me to shut up? Fine, I'll shut up since you're asking me to. However, can you erase what you've done even if I do so?” Cameron laughed maliciously. “I have been absolutely clear about what kind of person you are for the longest time! I just fear that Director Hart might be seeing through you slowly!”

“Don't just assume that everyone in this world is as despicable as you are, Cameron Stark!” Myra forced a sneer while looking at the hideous-looking man before her. She sincerely thought that her mother didn't deserve what had been done to her. Her mother devoted the most wonderful time of her life to this man, yet he only thought of her as an exploitable tool! Well, that's understandable, she thought to herself. What else could be better than

interests in the heart of someone like him?! “Since you’ve made the decision, you’re at liberty to do whatever you please. I’m telling you, though—I won’t let the Stark Group continue to stay in your hands even if it vanishes from Bradford City!”

“In that case, we shall see if the Stark Group stays in my hands!” Cameron sneered. Then, he pushed the door open and left right away without saying another word to Myra.

Cameron ran into Leo when he left the room, and the latter said to him with a half-smile, “Allow me to give you a reminder, President Stark. Don’t misjudge anyone, or the outcome won’t be as simple as an awful blunder. You may even be finished for the rest of your life...”

“You’re right, Mr. Clark. Nonetheless, I have seen through somebody clearly now. Thanks for your advice,” Cameron retorted icily before leaving the Hart Group right away.

He stormed all the way out of the Hart Group furiously. After getting into his car, he dialed a number with a surly expression.

Gideon quickly answered the phone on the other end. “How did it go?” His voice was full of joy and meaning as though he was certain about something.

As he had expected, Cameron gritted his teeth. “I’ll give you ten percent of the Stark Group’s shares if you make the investment.”

“We would have entered into collaboration long ago had you done this sooner, President Stark. This would have saved you so much trouble, wouldn’t it?” Gideon replied. Nonetheless, he accepted Cameron’s offer and said, “I’ll be waiting for you to deliver the written agreement, President Stark. Once the signed agreement comes into effect, the Walton Group will invest in the Stark Group.”

Cameron’s face was glum. “I know that, but we’ve agreed in advance that we must sign an agreement even if the Walton Group takes away ten percent of the shares. This ten percent of the shares can only be managed by me in the next five years; of course, the profit will be yours.”

“Okay,” Gideon agreed readily, but a hint of sinisteress flashed across the depths of his eyes. Of course, he had his own plans—he was only playing along with Cameron for the time being.

Only then did Cameron breathe a sigh of relief. Soon, he hung up the cell phone and stared intently at the road ahead of him with a sneer on his lips. Since Myra has turned down my plea, I won't have any regard for her self-respect anymore. When this matter is settled, it'll be time for me to clear the company of those old ignoramuses who always like to stir up trouble!

At the thought of this, he took another deep breath and dialed a number. However, a female announcer's voice was heard on the other end. "Sorry, but the number you dialed is not in service. Please try again later..."

Cameron's face darkened instantly.

Indeed, that woman wasn't together with him for money and power. After she learned of his identity, she didn't pester him repeatedly to make her his legal wife as other women did, nor did she ask him for large sums of money. Instead, her intentions could be told from the way she left him quietly. However, she and their daughter left him quietly without telling Cameron any news about their whereabouts. How was he going to look for them in the vast sea of people?

Suddenly, Cameron's cell phone rang. At the sight of the caller ID, his pupils contracted before he immediately picked up the phone. "How did it go?" he asked grimly while lowering his voice.

There was a pause on the other end of the line before the person answered apologetically, "I'm sorry, President Stark—we haven't found them yet. However, we've gotten a tiny clue lately, and we're following up on it. If the clue is correct, we should be able to find them within a week."

Cameron's face was as miserable as sin when he heard the first part of the man's speech; it wasn't until later that his expression softened slightly. He took a deep breath and urged, "All right, locate them as soon as possible. I'm willing to pay twice the price once you find them!"

"You're such a nice person, President Stark. We'll certainly do our best!"

Both sides then hung up without saying another word. After tossing his cell phone away, Cameron leaned back in his seat with weariness written all over his face.

...

Meanwhile, Olivia was sitting next to a woman in the ambulance of a hospital. She had comforted the woman many times, but the woman was still somewhat anxious. “Can’t we have surgery in the county? Isn’t it just a minor surgery to remove a blood clot? Why can’t we do it in the county? Besides, doesn’t it cost a lot of money to seek treatment at a big hospital in Bradford City? Let’s not go there, shall we—”

“Trust me, Mom. The hospital told me that it has a place for patients who need assistance, and we don’t have to spend too much money. Besides, the medical technology there is way more advanced, so you’ll make a better recovery in the future; it won’t take long before you’re up and healthy again!”

“But—” The woman couldn’t help feeling that something was wrong. Olivia left for a day on the excuse of a part-time job, but she had been somewhat downcast ever since coming back. She asked Olivia twice about this, but Olivia merely responded by saying that she had come across some problems in her job. However, she knew Olivia well enough to know that Olivia wouldn’t be upset by her odd jobs!

“That’s enough, Mom. Trust me, okay?” Olivia replied softly while holding the woman’s hand.

The woman bit her lip. “I’m afraid that you would go to your father... Olivia, you mustn’t go to him in the future no matter if I’m dying or not. We can be penniless, but we mustn’t abandon the most basic principles of being a decent person. Now that I have done your sister and her mother a disservice, I am ashamed to show my face. How can I do something more unreasonable...”

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Olivia held the woman’s hand firmly. “Don’t worry, Mom. I have sworn to you that I’ll never go to him. I know what kind of person he is, so please be rest assured that I’ll never go to him. Just put your mind at rest and have your illness treated, okay?”

The woman still wanted to say something, but she nodded at the sight of Olivia’s determined expression. I should trust my daughter, she thought to herself.

The ambulance wasn’t fast throughout the journey, but it soon arrived at the designated hospital in Bradford City.

Moments later, the woman looked at Olivia in disbelief when she was wheeled out of the ambulance. She knew this hospital, for it was the best hospital in the entire Bradford City. It cost a lot of money just to treat a minor illness here—perhaps all their savings wouldn't even be enough for an operation!

The woman began to grow suspicious. “No, Olivia—let us go back to the county. I'll have the surgery in the county, and I don't need any assistance. A minor surgery won't cost a lot of money.”

She tried to get off the wheeled stretcher, but the nurse immediately held her down. “Don't move, madam. Please cooperate and lie down; you're still on a drip!”

“Mom, don't do this!” Olivia hurriedly tried to stop the woman as well.

However, the woman refused to listen to them, for she had an intuition that she shouldn't be here. She and her daughter didn't have a lot of money, but there were so many people in the hospital who needed assistance, so why would the hospital choose to provide assistance to her? She didn't want to be a burden to her daughter!

Suddenly, a man's voice spoke from the side. “May I ask if you're Mrs. Parks?”

The struggling woman paused for a moment before she looked at the man doubtfully. “You are?”

“I am an employee of the Hart Group. You may call me Mr. Clark; I'm here today to make sure that you go through the admission procedures.” Leo then held out a business card to the woman. Seeing that she was stunned, he proceeded to explain gently, “Our company has given financial assistance to many patients. You aren't the first patient to receive it, nor will you be the last one. Perhaps your daughter hasn't explained it clearly to you, but I'm here today to assist your daughter and help you go through the admission procedures before preparing you for your surgery.”

Alicia Parks was a little dumbfounded. She looked at the business card in her hand which read, ‘Special Assistant to the Director of the Hart Group...’ Only then did she recall her daughter saying that she was a patient receiving financial aid. Does my daughter really not have to bear any costs for me?

However, she was still somewhat suspicious. “Mr. Clark, right? I’m a bit puzzled, but... why have I been chosen?”

Leo smiled before looking at the nurses around them. “You may ask these nurses; the Hart Group has provided assistance to many patients with financially difficult backgrounds, and we’re definitely not a group of swindlers. Of course, we have to look into your family’s condition and see if it’s true. Your daughter has submitted your information to the hospital, and it has been examined and verified, so you can have your illness treated here with a peace of mind.”

Upon hearing that, Olivia heaved a sigh of relief and immediately looked at her mother. “Do you believe me now, Mom?”

Alicia looked at the nurses beside her, and they smiled kindly in return. “Don’t worry, madam. The Hart Group has sent many patients here, so you may put your mind at rest and have your illness treated.”

Only then did Alicia believe their story. After breathing a sigh of relief, she immediately turned her gaze back to Leo. “I can’t thank you enough, Mr. Clark. Please say thank you to your boss on my behalf... When I get well in the future, I’ll make sure to thank him in person with my daughter... I don’t know what to say, for someone like me is actually receiving help from honorable people like you guys... I’m really...”

Alicia choked up a little as she spoke. She was an honest and decent woman in the first place. She thought she had a small family of her own after meeting Cameron, so she felt happy even though she was neither well-off nor comfortable. It wasn’t until later that she found out her happiness was built on someone else’s misfortune. This filled her heart with guilt, shame, and remorse, but she didn’t expect that God would still help her...

Leo shot a glance at Olivia and signaled her not to worry. Then, he smiled at Alicia. “Please have your illness treated with a peace of mind, Mrs. Parks. I’ll visit you again.”

“How can I have the cheek to bother you again, Mr. Clark...” Alicia immediately answered.

“It’s okay. I’m just doing my job.” Leo smiled.

Since she didn't dare to keep Leo for too long, Alicia had Olivia see him off as she was sent into the hospital's inpatient department by the nurses. On their way out of the hospital, Olivia thanked Leo sincerely and said, "Thank you for what you've done. Otherwise, my mother might have left stubbornly just now... Her illness... can't be cured at all in the county..."

Leo patted her on the head. "Indeed, it's not easy for a little girl like you to look after your mother. Take good care of yourself. You don't have to worry about the matter with the hospital. The hospital will call me, and I'll take care of that."

"Thank you..." Olivia felt somewhat ill at ease, for she had no idea what else she should say other than those two words.

Leo smiled. "If you want to thank someone, just thank your sister."

Olivia's eyes lit up at once. "Did Myra tell you to be here?"

Leo patted her shoulder without saying a word.

Olivia was a clever girl, so she figured everything out at once and was somewhat dejected. "Tony told you to be here, am I correct?"

"Well, are you going to thank him in the future?" Leo was quite fond of this little girl, so he treated her as a younger sister.

"In that case, Mr. Clark, can you help me ask him to put in a few good words for me as much as possible when he's with Myra?" Olivia asked with dead seriousness.

Leo was startled for a moment before he laughed. "I'll tell him that."

"Forget it..." Olivia's head drooped. "Myra probably... doesn't want to see me, so it's not necessary to trouble Tony."

"Your sister experiences very little love from her family," Leo replied implicitly.

"I know that... I'm so sorry..." Olivia's voice became hoarse in an instant. She knew that it was because of her and her mother that Myra and her mother became unhappy.

Upon hearing Olivia's reply, Leo knew that she had misunderstood what he said, though what she said was indeed a fact. He replied, "Everything will slowly get better."

Olivia took a deep breath. Upon thinking of her mother and Myra, she nodded heavily and responded innocently, "I know that everything will be fine. I'll apologize to Myra in person in the future." Then, she bowed to Leo. "Thank you, Mr. Clark. I'm going back to look after my mother."

"Just go." Leo nodded.

With that, Olivia parted ways with Leo. As she was on her way back, she took out her cell phone and keyed in a phone number, only to delete it after doing so. Then, she keyed in a long paragraph before deleting the entire thing once again. The only text that remained read, 'Thank you. From Olivia.'

She thought to herself, It's useless to say anything else. I'll meet my obligations as long as my sister needs me in the future!

...

Just then, Myra received a text message from an unfamiliar phone number. It was a text message sent by a girl named Olivia, and it was simply a message thanking her.

Myra's feelings were mixed when she thought of this girl. After learning the whole story, she knew that she shouldn't blame the mother and daughter, but she still rejected them somewhat deep down inside.

"What's the matter?" Tony came in from the outside just then. He just had a long meeting where there was a relatively heated debate, so he was quite worn out at this moment. He massaged his temple with his hand, but as soon as he sat down, Myra walked up to him, reached out her hands, and helped him massage his temples. "Are you tired? Let me massage your temples for you."

"Yeah." Tony closed his eyes slightly. Myra massaged his temples with just the right strength, making him feel very comfortable. After she massaged his temples for a while, he couldn't help but drag her from behind him to the front of him. As he held her in his arms, he sat her down on his lap to let her massage his temples face to face.

He kissed the woman before him on the cheeks, the forehead, and the lips from time to time before he let go of her. With his eyes still closed, he then asked impassively, "Was the talk with Cameron earlier today unpleasant?"

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“It wasn’t just unpleasant!” Myra curled her lips. “We even had a quarrel; he negated everything about the time he spent with my mother and expressed his stance. Also, he’ll never give us ten percent of the Stark Group’s shares.”

“It’s even better if he doesn’t give us the shares.” Tony curled his thin lips into a smile and opened his starry eyes—they were bright and dazzling as if they had sucked in all the stars in the world. Then, he kissed Myra on the lips and said, “He’ll still be a shareholder of the Stark Group if he gives us the shares. If he doesn’t…” He sneered, but as he stared at Myra’s face, he softened his expression and stroked her long hair with his hand. “The part of the Stark Group that belongs to him will belong to you.”

Somehow, Myra couldn’t help but feel embarrassed when she met Tony’s affectionate gaze while sitting on his lap. Deciding to simply let the chips fall where they may, she planted a kiss on the man’s thin lips and looked at his eyes. “Cameron said something else just now.”

“What did he say?” Tony’s gaze seemed to darken somewhat. Suddenly, he turned Myra over so that her back was facing him. Myra could only look back since she couldn’t see him, but the man behind her kissed her on the lips as soon as she did so.

As his kiss slowly grew in intensity, Myra pushed him away with great difficulty and glared at him in embarrassment and annoyance. “I’m still talking to you, Tony!”

However, Tony suddenly scooped her up in his arms and walked into the lounge, all the while staring at Myra’s eyes with his smiley eyes. “Just say what you want to say. I’m listening!”

Myra flushed crimson in an instant, for she couldn’t help overthinking things at the sight of the look in Tony’s eyes and what he was doing! “You’re not going to do it in broad daylight, are—”

Tony paused for a moment before his eyes darkened. “I’m dying for a smoke, Myra.”

“Go out and smoke then,” Myra replied quickly. Tony had almost completely quit smoking as of late; he was worried about the baby in her womb. Whenever he wanted to smoke, he would stay away from her.

Tony took the opportunity to put her onto the bed, but he threw himself on top of her instead of leaving. "I think there's a better way to quit smoking."

"You have a meeting a while later, Tony!" Myra's head was almost aflame as she put her hands on the man's chest. "Don't... Can't you wait until tonight..."

"You've been putting the baby above everything else every single time because of your pregnancy..." There seemed to be a trace of grievance in the man's voice.

Meanwhile, Myra was on the verge of speechlessness!

"Myra..." The man's chest had pressed down on Myra as he planted one kiss after another on her neck. He breathed warm air onto her face and neck, giving her an itchy and tingling sensation.

Myra put her arms around the neck of the man on top of her in resignation. "Be gentle. I'll be pregnant for three full months in another two days."

"Really?" Tony's eyes grew even darker as he kissed Myra on the lips again with joy in his voice. "It seems that you miss me too, Myra..." He chuckled.

Myra blushed all the way to her neck. "Who is missing you?! I'm getting up if you don't want to."

She pretended to get up, but the man held her down right away with all his might, for it was at this moment that he was most thick-skinned. "I'm the one who's missing you, of course. I can't wait to—"

"Tony!" Myra was so annoyed and amused that she simply silenced Tony by kissing him on the lips.

When the man finished making out with Myra to his heart's content, she was already too tired to move her fingers. However, a thought came into her mind at that moment. She tugged at the man's arm, snuggled up against him, and looked up at the man. "Earlier today, Cameron said that I'm exploiting you to get rid of my past failed marriage and get my hands on the Stark Group... I thought about it. Even though I don't have that idea, things are developing in that direction... What will you think of me?" Myra was somewhat nervous when she asked this question. After all, what Cameron said was indeed the outcome.

Tony frowned slightly before kissing her on the forehead. “Is Cameron someone who will make you feel good when you refuse to invest in his company?”

Myra shook her head. “Of course not.” At this moment, Cameron probably hated her guts and wished that he didn’t have a daughter like her!

“That settles it then. Now that he doesn’t want to make you feel good, are you really going to do as he wishes?” Tony felt a sense of satisfaction as he tightened his arms around Myra’s body. His thin lips curved in a smile as he thought to himself, As expected, it’s not bad to quit smoking in such a way. This method can be recommended for frequent use.

Myra shook her head. “No, I’m not,” she replied. However, she then looked at Tony again. “Let’s put his wishes aside. What do you think when both of us are concerned?”

Seeing the persistent look in Myra’s eyes, Tony felt somewhat helpless. Then, he kissed her on the forehead and replied, “If this is considered exploitation, I’ll only be too eager for you to take advantage of me and bleed me dry! Or...” He darted a look at her body with undisguised lust before planting a hickey on her neck. “You may also bleed me dry in another way.”

Myra was rendered speechless; she felt that she had grossly underestimated how thick-skinned the man in front of her could be. With that, she simply turned over and ignored him. When he noticed that she had gotten angry, Tony let out a chuckle and coaxed her, “You’re my woman, so I’m doing these things just to make you happy; this has nothing to do with someone else or your wishes. In fact, I’ll give you the Stark Group even if you don’t want it. As for your previous marriage, it doesn’t even require mentioning—how am I going to win your love without getting rid of your previous marriage?”

His words sent a warm current flowing through Myra’s heart, and she turned over again. “You like speaking honeyed words more and more now.”

Tony readily went along with her. “Well, do you like it?”

“What are you going to do if I say that I don’t like it?” Myra deliberately made things difficult for him.

Tony had a look of meaningful joy in his eyes. “In that case, I’ll take action directly instead of speaking.”

Myra glared at him as she was rendered speechless by his words. This b*stard! Then, after hesitating for a moment, she said to him, "Also... Olivia sent me a text message just now."

Tony was a good listener. "What did she say?"

"She just thanked me."

Tony nodded impassively. "That's pretty nice. She knows to be grateful."

"You know that this isn't what I mean!" Myra glared at him again.

Tony laughed in resignation. "I can arrange a meeting between you two if you're willing to see her, Myra. Of course, no one will force you if you can't get over this."

Myra twisted her fingers together, her feelings conflicted. "Doesn't her mother's surgery have a high probability of success? Isn't she only 12 or 13 years old? Is she enduring everything alone without help from anyone else?"

"Yeah." Tony was impressed by the little girl as well. "She's a precocious child. I don't think she would've bothered you if it weren't for her mother's illness."

"I know that." Myra took a deep breath. "Just give me more time; I'll make the decision when I finish organizing my thoughts."

"Okay."

...

The next meeting had been postponed to the afternoon. Since it so happened that Tony was going out to do something, Myra followed him out of the Hart Group's building and went to her small flower shop.

The two employees stayed dutifully in the shop while she was away, though they didn't sell many flowers that day.

Just then, the florist handed Myra a document in a brown paper bag. "The man who asked for you yesterday came again, Miss Stark. He left this thing behind and asked us to hand it to you when you're here."

Myra frowned slightly at the sight of the document. She had made everything clear to Sean the day before, but he didn't seem to listen to her at all!