

Standing before Love Chapter 442

Compared to Tony's immaculate preparations, Matthias could only soldier on. In order to ask Heather out during Valentine's Day, he had to prepare a special gift. While hanging around in a shop, he wondered what Heather might like.

Myra would know that best. Bored, Matthias scanned through the array of gifts in front of him. Even though the colorful items were pleasing to the eye, he wasn't sure if Heather would like them.

The shop owner was a middle-aged woman. Aware of Matthias' distress, she took it on herself to make an inquiry. "Sir, you must have come in search of a gift for your girlfriend!" The fact that she got it right at first glance was proof of her shrewdness.

Meanwhile, Matthias kept a straight face while nodding stiffly. It was his first time ever doing something like this, so he was uncomfortable with it. All the while, he was all tensed up as if he were dealing with a dire task.

"Here we have all kinds of gifts. What does your girlfriend like?" The lady pressed on, as she didn't want him to stay glued to the spot forever as time ticked away.

"She's kinda... special." Matthias couldn't come up with a better description. "I have no idea what I should pick." In fact, his hands were tied.

The lady smiled knowingly. Judging from Matthias's expression, she deduced he had just established a relationship with his girlfriend. Otherwise, he wouldn't have given such a vague description of her.

"Something custom-made would be better. Those who are so-called special would prefer unique gifts." The lady offered him her suggestion. After all, her shop specialized in providing custom-made gifts, which was also a more lucrative business.

"How should I do that when I don't even know what she wants?" He was on point. It was a bother, as his mind was a complete blank when it came to gifts that Heather would want.

"Can you perhaps describe your girlfriend? I should be able to provide you with some recommendations." The lady was careful in how she phrased her

question. In the face of such a prudent customer, she figured she shouldn't be bragging.

After some thought, Matthias replied, "She's a smart woman, having just completed her PhD program in Italy. Ever since she graduated high school, she has been living abroad." He assumed that Heather's experiences while living abroad would affect her preferences.

However, his descriptions were not detailed enough, and the aspects he had placed emphasis on were peculiar. It only served to confuse the shop owner. "What about her personality? What kind of person is she?" The shop owner was more keen to know about Heather's character, not her experience.

"She dislikes gaudy stuff and prefers objects with a light color tone. She's also someone with high standards." Having concluded with much difficulty, he was certain those would help in picking out a gift.

"What about a simpler question... Do you know if she needs anything?" The shop owner decided to try another approach. Since she still couldn't get a grasp on Heather's character, she decided she should try the simplest method, which might yield results.

Yet, it only led to Matthias gawking at the shop owner, visibly floored by the question. Who knows what she needs? Maybe she needs a corporation? How in the world should I get her one? Besides, she won't even want it even if I am willing to give it to her.

"Is this your first time buying your girlfriend a gift?" the shop owner questioned tentatively. Upon realizing that Matthias knew nothing whatsoever about said woman's preferences, she was doubting if he was indeed buying a gift for his girlfriend.

"Yeah." Matthias looked morose when he admitted that. For goodness' sake, he didn't find the question funny at all.

"If that's the case, I would suggest that you buy her a bunch of lipsticks. I'm sure no woman will be able to resist that." Bored and giving up on profiting off of Matthias, the shop owner gave a random suggestion.

Matthias, however, wore a frown when he detected a hint of mockery in the woman's tone. He glowered at her, as she was making him look bad.

Therefore, he was determined to buy something from her shop, all the while figuring that a lipstick might be a decent gift for Heather.

“What’s the most expensive item you have in your shop?” Matthias’ abrupt inquiry seemed to have reignited the shop owner’s passion. Therefore, she proceeded to introduce him to various items.

After a long and confusing session, he eventually decided on buying a delicate-looking wooden case. He thought it would be a good idea to fill the ornate case that seemed to be crafted in medieval fashion with lipsticks.

When it came to choosing lipsticks, he had to secure the help of his assistant, Lara Locke, thinking she should have a better idea. When she showed up with a bright smile on her face, he felt as if she was his salvation. He had been hanging around in front of the various shops, but he didn’t even know where to start. In his eyes, all of the lipsticks were a similar shade of red.

“Mr. Locke, why are you suddenly interested in lipsticks?” Lara regarded him with curiosity. After all, she never expected him to skip a day’s work for the sake of picking out lipsticks in a mall.

What happened was mind-blowing, as it sure seemed like Matthias was in love. Having worked under him for a few years, Lara deemed him as someone who was outright dumb when it came to love. No matter how she looked at it, the only person who he might have fallen for would be Heather, who had delicate features, as well as a domineering air about her.

She figured Matthias had good taste in women, and that they were a good match. All of a sudden, a mental image of their interaction popped into her mind, which somehow made her buzz with excitement.

Agitated, she began blabbering before Matthias could say another word. “I get it, Mr. Locke! You must be choosing a Valentine’s Day present for your girlfriend!” She was chuckling so hard that Matthias was gawking at her in puzzlement. Then, she threw him the most practical question. “Mr. Locke, what brand and what color does Miss Langston normally use?”

Matthias stared at her in confusion, obviously not understanding a word that she said. In fact, he had no clue about it. “I don’t know. I plan on buying three of each brand,” he declared proudly.

Thrilled by his declaration, Lara gazed at him with a bubbly look. All of a sudden, his figure appeared all the more sturdy and dependable. “Do you know what color Miss Langston normally uses?” After some thought, she went with the easiest question, as she figured he might have no idea about brands and color codes.

“Don’t lipsticks only come in red?” Matthias blinked in perplexity. It can’t be that they also come in rainbow colors? Although models apply lipsticks with dazzling colors during fashion shows from time to time, nobody uses them in their daily lives! Shouldn’t red be the default?

“Even the color red comes in different shades, such as crimson, fuchsia, rose, peach, cherry pink, and loads more!” Lara lamented. How can he be this dumb even though he has such good looks?

“I suppose every brand has a few best sellers, so let’s get one of each!” After a lightbulb moment, Matthias came up with an idea. He thought it would work, as products that sold well were generally appreciated.

“Mr. Locke, I think Miss Langston might prefer something less mainstream.” Lara arched her brows at him. She was quite certain that Heather wouldn’t actually like what the masses appreciated.

“Then pick out a few that you think might suit her.” Matthias guessed it would be better to let Lara do that, as he couldn’t possibly choose a suitable one. They spent the remainder of that afternoon in the mall, shopping for lipsticks. Lara went from one shop to another tirelessly, until Matthias was feeling a little impatient.

During work, Lara had always been a bit impatient. On the contrary, Nikolai had more patience, so they worked well together by balancing Lara’s gusto out with Nikolai’s attentiveness.

It wasn’t until Lara started meticulously picking out the lipsticks that Matthias finally got to witness her patience. The catch being, she was enjoying herself without her usual impatience.

Women really find lipsticks irresistible, huh. Seeing that Lara seemed to be enjoying herself, Matthias decided to get some rest in a corner. After patting on her shoulder, he encouraged, “Keep up with the hard work until you pick out eighty of them. You don’t need to worry about money. I’ll go get some rest.”

It was true that women never felt tired while shopping for stuff. If Lara were doing anything else, she would most probably have started complaining about it. As soon as Matthias left, the sales assistant said in admiration, "Miss Locke, your boyfriend is so nice to you. It's such a romantic gesture to allow you to choose eighty lipsticks."

When Lara glanced at Matthias, who was standing some distance away from her, she put on a wistful smile. "Haha, I have to work harder! I still have forty more to go!" She was obviously faking it. It's a good thing that the dumbass finally fell in love, but why can't I help but feel bitter about it?

Pouting, she was suddenly overwhelmed by the urge to cry. She assumed that Matthias would notice her if she continued to stay by his side. Alas, he only ever paid attention to someone else. Whenever he looks at me, he's in fact looking at someone else.

Although she wished for him to actually notice her, it seemed impossible. Lara laughed in a self-deprecating manner before carrying on with the task at hand. Since she couldn't have him, she decided she would end her unrequited love then and there.

Now that he found someone he loved, she would give him her blessing, as well as make minor contributions to his relationship. This is enough. She told herself repeatedly in an attempt to hypnotize herself. You won't be able to remain by Matthias' side if you get too greedy.

When evening came, she finally completed her mission brilliantly. Matthias gave her a satisfied smile. On the other hand, she was still wearing a careless smile while blinking at him. "How are you going to pack them?" She was curious about it. He wouldn't just offer them up in a pile, would he?

Matthias shook the wooden case at her, supposing he should be able to tuck all of the lipsticks into the case. "Let's give it a try," he suggested. He believed that actually trying it out would give him the answers.

Indeed, there was still some space after he put all of the lipsticks into the case. While he thought he would be able to gain Heather's approval, he didn't notice the anguished look on Lara's face when he turned to face the other way.

"I'm sorry that this dragged on for so long. It's already way past the usual time to clock off work." With that, he picked out three lipsticks from the case.

“Happy Valentine’s Day. These three are a gift for you. Since you were the one who picked them, I suppose you will like them.”

Matthias was smiling warmly as he spoke. I’m not a cruel boss who would exploit my employees. On the contrary, I’m rather compassionate toward them. Since it’s Valentine’s Day, it’s appropriate that I give Heather seventy-seven lipsticks. It’s such a meaningful present! This will be the perfect gift when coupled with a bouquet of flowers!

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Matthias chose and sent the flowers out during his break time, so he assumed that the flowers would have reached Heather’s office by then. I’m sure most women wouldn’t say no to flowers. It might be a rather traditional gift, but I believe it’s customary to gift flowers to one’s girlfriend during celebrations like this.

Heather had been kept busy the whole day. She was finishing up her work when a young man arrived at her office with a parcel in his arms. The young man broke into a smile when Heather held the door open for him. He was always polite to his customers, but he was especially friendly that day when he saw how pretty his female customer was. “Hello. This is a gift for you. I’ll need you to sign this,” he uttered politely.

She simply took a glance at the rectangular-shaped parcel that was still in his arms without showing any intention of taking it from him. He began to feel rather awkward under her scrutiny, and he couldn’t seem to tell what was going on in her mind. “Who sent this?” she asked. She had a feeling it was Matthias, but she wanted to make sure anyway.

“Mr. Locke,” the young man answered honestly.

Heather seemed to contemplate something for a moment before she gave the young man her orders. “Leave it on the couch.” She waved a dismissive hand toward the couch as if she couldn’t be bothered by the gift at all. Based on the packaging, she was pretty sure that he had gifted her fresh flowers. She wasn’t too fond of flowers—it was a common gift she received ever since she was young.

Isn’t Matthias a little too uninventive? Does he think I’m going to go out with him after he sends me these boring flowers? He must be daydreaming. Moreover, he didn’t even send these himself. How can he expect me to go out

with him when he doesn't even show any sincerity? He's probably busy with work at the Locke Group now. I knew that I shouldn't have held any hopes for a man like him.

This tiny disruption was soon ignored as Heather continued to bury herself in her work for a while. She only had to handle some final matters before she could get off work. Most of the other staff members had rushed out of the office since it was Valentine's Day, and she was the only one who didn't mind staying back to complete her work.

By the time Matthias arrived, Heather was still occupied with the tasks she was handling. He quietly pushed the glass door open before he slipped into a corner where he watched her doing her work. She had been too immersed to notice his presence, but he didn't mind as he found her even more charismatic right then.

Heather only realized his presence when she looked up after she finished her work. The first thing that caught her eye was the tiny, wooden box in his hands. She sent him a puzzled glance as she wondered, Did he just rush over after he finished his work? That little box looks interesting. I wonder where he got it from. It seems rather delicate and exquisite—it looks almost like a work of art.

"Everyone else is gone. When are you planning to let yourself off work?" Matthias said as he gave her a lopsided grin.

"Right now," Heather replied as she hastily tidied her desk. It was important that she kept her desk tidy.

As he walked toward her, he quickly realized the flowers that had been left by the couch. She didn't even open the packaging, so I guess she's not interested in it at all. She spread her lips into a smile when she realized that he had noticed the flowers. "I didn't open it because I don't like roses," she explained. Since it was Valentine's Day, she was certain that he had bought her roses—she didn't even bother to check what flowers they were.

"It's fine. You can throw it away if you don't like them." He put on a generous smile to show that he wasn't bothered by her words. He continued to explain himself when he realized that she was eyeing the wooden box in his arms. "This is for you as well. You can throw this away if you don't like this too." He was starting to sound rather grumpy, probably because he hadn't expected to

receive such treatment from a woman. It was the first time he had purchased any gifts for a woman in a long while, after all.

She took the box from him, feeling the firm structure against her palms. “This box seems really special. I like it,” she said after taking a glance at the box. Its exterior design was simple and elegant, which suited her taste perfectly.

“Aren’t you going to take a look at what’s inside?” he probed. His actual gift was the lipsticks that the box contained.

Heather gently shook the box, listening to the sound it made and contemplating for a moment before she opened it. The lid was lifted to reveal a bunch of lipsticks. She scrunched her nose as she looked at all the different lipsticks inside—she hadn’t expected such a gift. Matthias might be the only person who’d get the idea to keep lipsticks in a wooden box, she thought. Her expression remained calm as she shut the lid.

“I spent the whole afternoon picking these out for you, so I hope that you like it,” he uttered.

Her expression flickered the moment she heard his words. Does he have nothing better to do? How could he spend an entire afternoon choosing lipsticks? A faint smile appeared on her face as she pictured the sight of a man browsing lipstick collections at a beauty store—the image itself was amusing to her. “Would a man like you know anything about lipsticks?” She opened the box again to pick out a few that caught her eye. These look pretty decent, she thought.

“You don’t have to worry about that,” he mumbled awkwardly. He couldn’t possibly tell her that he had ordered his assistant to help him pick out the lipsticks, could he?

“Well, this was a thoughtful gift. Why don’t we grab a drink at your place?” she asked with a broad smile on her face. He couldn’t conceal the surprise in his gaze, as it was rare for her to take such an initiative. Does she have some sort of ulterior motive? Something doesn’t feel right here.

Heather’s smile remained on her face. She seemed like she was in a good mood. “We’ll have to drink until we’re drunk tonight, then!” he uttered in a serious tone. It was rare for him to encounter someone who enjoyed drinking as much as he did, and he was glad that he wouldn’t have to spend Valentine’s Day drinking on his own.

Matthias had ordered his housekeeper to decorate the place earlier that day. The housekeeper was a professional he had hired at a pricey rate, so he was certain that the Locke Residence would look completely different by the time he got home that night.

Indeed, both Matthias and Heather received a huge surprise when they first returned to his house. Heather quickly frowned and glared at Matthias as they were greeted with a shower of petals over their heads. Matthias had the urge to slap his palm against his forehead when he saw the proud grin on his mixed-blooded housekeeper's face.

"What are you doing, Evan?" Matthias asked annoyedly. He told the housekeeper to set the mood for a celebration at home, but he hadn't expected the decorations to turn out so embarrassingly cheap.

"Valentine's Day! Romance, petals," Evan announced in an exaggerated tone. He didn't have a good grasp of their language, so it was clear that he was a foreigner. Matthias tried his best to control his temper since Heather was right beside him.

Meanwhile, Evan proceeded to reach for Heather's hands before planting a kiss on her fingers. "Welcome, beautiful Miss Langston."

Heather decided to forgive the man when she saw how earnest he looked—it was acceptable for him to do such a thing only because of the innocent, warm demeanor he gave off right then. She therefore gave the housekeeper a forced smile before turning to Matthias. "Let's go to the balcony." The open-air balcony was Heather's favorite place in the Locke Residence. Since the Langston Residence was designed to look more like a traditional castle, it didn't have an open balcony, and she couldn't enjoy the breeze outside when she wanted to.

"Okay." Matthias reached for Heather's hand before he shot Evan a hostile glare to indicate that he was angry at Evan for having kissed Heather's fingers.

Heather found herself caught in an awkward situation. She wanted to brush Matthias off, but she decided that it would be better if she didn't shame him in front of his housekeeper. Once they were a distance away, and once Evan could no longer see them, she then pulled her hand away from Matthias. "You're making me feel uncomfortable. I don't like getting too intimate with others," she whispered in his ear as a reminder. She felt displeased as

Matthias seemed to have crossed the line as her fake boyfriend. He was a little dejected when he felt her soft touch slipping out of his fingers, but he knew not to insist on holding her hand.

The both of them got to the open, rooftop balcony while Evan hurried around to get the maids to prepare various dishes for them. Although Evan was a somewhat odd character at times, he still managed to tick most of the boxes that his job required.

Meanwhile, the two individuals were dumbstruck by the sight that greeted them at the balcony. Evan had arranged for Romeo and Juliet figurines to be set up on the balcony, and he even added colorful lights to enhance the Valentine's Day mood. Matthias pressed two fingers against his temples. How did Evan decide to go with such decorations?

Heather pressed a hand over her lips to conceal her smile. "It's pretty cute. It certainly sets the atmosphere, don't you think?" She tried her best to comfort Matthias when she saw how annoyed he looked.

He felt much better when he realized that she didn't seem to mind the decorations. He just didn't want to embarrass himself in front of her. There was a long table that had been set up near them, and it seemed like they were about to share a candlelight dinner.

Heather turned to flash Matthias a smile. "Don't you think the table is a little too long? It's going to be hard for us to talk," she uttered as she raised an eyebrow. She wasn't too interested in having a candlelight dinner then.

Similarly, Matthias didn't have any such intentions—all of it had clearly been arranged by Evan. I should have seen this coming—he's from a different culture, after all, Matthias thought as he rolled his eyes. "Should we ask to change the table, then?" he asked awkwardly.

"It's fine. That was just an offhand comment." Even Heather could sense the awkwardness in the air then. It felt peculiar to her since it was her first time interacting with someone of the opposite gender during Valentine's Day. At one point, she even wondered if it was the right decision to have agreed to visit Matthias's house. All those news articles came out after I last visited this place. We might be stuck together now, but I don't know if he has a hidden agenda for what he wants to do tonight. I can't let my guard down, she thought as she threw him a glance. I have to improvise as we progress.

Matthias felt rather nervous himself. He had spent most of his years focused on his job, and he was clueless when it came to romantic relationships. Both of them were kept a distance apart as the dishes were served at the table, and Heather found herself settling down a little as the distance made her feel safer. The more she thought about it, the more she decided that it would be better if they had kept a distance. It was a special day, and they were surrounded by such a romantic environment. Even Heather herself felt dazed by the setup—anyone who didn't know better would have probably assumed that Matthias was trying to go after her.

The tense atmosphere between them eased up after they drank a few glasses of wine. Alcohol didn't just warm their insides; it seemed to also heat up the atmosphere around them. Both of them began to discuss a few random topics, ranging from politics to market trends. They gradually got comfortable with one another when they realized that they had a few topics in common. It was then that Evan's voice sounded from a distance away. "You can't go there, Nikolai."

Matthias felt his heart sinking the moment he heard this, and Heather quickly raised her head to look in the direction of the voice. Soon enough, Nikolai appeared in front of them with a look of disbelief on his face. His gaze was filled with hurt as he looked at Heather before shifting his focus to Matthias.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you guys." His body was stiff and tense as he turned around and walked off without looking back.

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Matthias felt oddly ashamed of himself as he lowered his cutleries. He watched helplessly as Nikolai stormed off. It seems like Nikolai really treats Heather differently. I've always thought that he didn't know anything about romantic relationships, but I guess that was just because he hadn't met the right person at the right time. It worries me to see him so deeply infatuated with Heather though. Who would have thought that it would be love at first sight for Nikolai?

He reminds me of how I had felt when I first fell in love with Myra after seeing her gentle and warm smile. Love is such an unpredictable thing. Who knows if he'll spend the rest of his life longing for a girl, or if he'll be able to get over his feelings before that?

Heather lowered her cutlery when she saw how worried Matthias seemed. Any spark of romance that they shared a while ago was completely gone after Nikolai's sudden appearance. They both exchanged glances with one another, and neither of them looked like they had the appetite to continue their meals. "I'm sorry," Matthias finally said after a while.

He didn't understand why he felt the need to apologize, but his apology was precisely what Heather had been waiting for. In response, she curled her lips upward as she questioned the reason for his apology. "What's there to be sorry about?" she uttered in a casual and lighthearted tone. She wasn't about to get herself caught between Matthias and Nikolai.

"Nikolai has been under a lot of stress recently, so he might have acted out of line earlier. I hope you can forgive him." Matthias was attempting to justify Nikolai's acts, but it clearly wasn't much of a justification.

"It's fine. I wasn't too bothered by it. I'm full now." Heather gave him a hearty chuckle, but he had to force himself to look away, for he would have been too distracted by her angelic smile otherwise.

"I'm full too. Why don't we go to the living room and try something from my alcohol collection?" he suggested. He wanted to get rid of the awkward atmosphere between them, so he figured that they had to do something else.

On the other hand, she swirled the remaining liquid in her glass and finished it before she responded. "It's late now. Perhaps we can do it some other day!" Heather no longer wanted to stay around, and she made it clear with the look in her eyes; even her smile was starting to seem rather impatient.

"Let me send you off then." Matthias decided that he couldn't forcefully keep her around, so both of them then got out of their seats.

"It's fine. I'll see myself out." Heather felt oddly sober after rejecting his offer. She no longer wanted the ambiguously romantic relationship with Matthias; any mildly intimate acts they shared between them only reminded her of her past self that she despised. Now, she believed that liking someone was a sacred and unique experience, and what she had with Matthias was a compromise that was gradually growing into a romance. The slow transition from putting on a show as a couple to privately interacting with each other as a couple was frightening for Heather.

Yet, Matthias couldn't comprehend the fear that Heather was feeling. He wasn't even aware of how much he had fallen for her as he still believed that Myra was the only woman he fancied.

That was the thing about romantic relationships that weren't wholly established—neither party would know what would happen next if one of them genuinely fell for the other. Being the combination of a woman who refused to open herself up to love and a man who had another person that he fancied, they simply weren't suited to toy around with the idea of love between them.

We would only hurt each other in the process. Heather might have been testing the waters for a while, but she quickly came to this conclusion. Therefore, she rushed off soon after Nikolai interrupted their meal. All Matthias could do then was to watch as she made her way out.

Evan hurried over to send Heather off once Matthias sent him a look, and he returned to see that Matthias had flipped the entire table over. As Evan began to tidy up the mess that Matthias had just made, the latter was still fuming with anger, so he gave Matthias a long, thoughtful gaze.

Only a few individuals were aware of the fact that Evan and Matthias were friends. Heather knew that Matthias was her senior, but she didn't realize that Evan was, in fact, her senior as well. Halfway through their studies, Evan traveled to England to train as a housekeeper, and Matthias had specially hired Evan to work for him because of the relationship they had with one another. Regardless of where Matthias went, he would make sure to bring Evan along with him.

Matthias didn't necessarily need a housekeeper for himself, but what he longed for was a person that he could talk to. It was tough to suppress all his emotions without releasing them to someone, and Evan was his trusty outlet. He trusted Evan since he was a quiet person who knew not to gossip about others.

"Stop cleaning up," Matthias said to Evan. "Get someone else to do it. I want you to have a few drinks with me." Matthias walked over to Evan as he spoke, and Evan had no choice but to get to his feet. Although Evan wasn't the most outstanding housekeeper, for he often achieved only the bare minimum standards, he was still a decent listener. That was the main reason their friendship grew, even though they had only been classmates for a year.

“Did I make a mistake?” Evan was an observant man. For a moment, Matthias was tempted to ask Evan if he had ever not made a mistake.

Once they got to the living room, Evan dutifully opened a bottle of wine for them. All the alcohol that Evan had picked out for Matthias were top-tier drinks, and the both of them often had a few glasses with one another. Several issues might have been a cause for concern when they were sober, but there was little that they couldn't solve by having a few drinks. At the very least, alcohol allowed them to escape their problems for a while.

They quickly slipped into a conversation as they drank. “Why do you care about what's right or wrong?” Evan asked in a carefree tone that reflected his personality. In the past, Evan had been the child of a wealthy family, but things changed when his family went bankrupt. He lost everything overnight, and he had no hopes of getting back up on his feet as he didn't have many talents or skills to begin with.

He only studied economics in the same school as Matthias because his father had assumed that he would inherit the family business someday. However, when the business collapsed, everyone grieved and struggled over the loss except Evan. He was the only one who felt relieved as he hadn't wanted to inherit the company from the start.

He felt much more relaxed with his life after the bankruptcy, and his decision to transfer to England for a housekeeping course was made on a whim. In Evan's opinion, there was no clear distinction between right and wrong, as long as he didn't feel troubled by his decisions. Matthias, on the other hand, seemed to enjoy troubling himself, and that was probably one of the reasons Matthias kept Evan around as a listener.

Matthias longed for someone who could help alter his personality, be it a family member, friend, or lover. He might have portrayed himself as a powerful and manly individual, but deep down, all he longed for was someone to save him from the person he was.

“I never expected Nikolai to fall for her,” Matthias uttered in a pained voice. He had no idea how the issue could possibly be resolved at that point. What's going to happen in the future? Who knows how this might impact or hurt Nikolai? My heart's a mess. I feel like I'm watching as Nikolai is going through what I went through in the past. What makes it worse is that I'm the one who forced him upon this path.

“It’s up to an individual to decide if they like or dislike someone. What’s so hard to understand about that? The third person in a relationship doesn’t deserve to be too harshly criticized. Factors like a third party, a secret lover, or unagreeable family members don’t play a key role in one’s relationship. It’s never the main reason that two people don’t end up with one another.” Evan analyzed the situation in a logical manner. Although he had never agreed with Matthias’s view, he knew he couldn’t tell Matthias what to do.

“Fine! Yeah! I just wanted to blame everything on Heather because I’m a cowardly man who’s too selfish to do anything else!” Matthias howled in response.

Being the calm and carefree individual he was, Evan seemed unfazed by this outburst. Instead, he gave Matthias a rather exasperated stare. Both of them never seemed to agree with one another, yet Matthias insisted on keeping Evan by his side all the time. Matthias was worried that he would never be able to feel clear-headed again once Evan left him.

Ever since he found out about Myra’s upcoming marriage and her pregnancy, he felt like he was caught in a muddled, fuzzy state that didn’t allow him any coherent thoughts. I’ve lost my final opportunity to get Myra to return to me, and perhaps fate will never bring us together again. How am I supposed to be okay with that? How am I supposed to give up on our relationship? Our memories had once been a light at the end of a dark tunnel that guided and pushed me forward, but it now feels like I’ve lost that source of light. I simply can’t bring myself to accept the cruel truth.

“It feels like you haven’t grown up at all sometimes.” Evan shot Matthias a pitiful look. There was one important reason that Evan agreed to stay by Matthias’s side—Evan believed that they were the same type of person. Some people refuse to continue growing even before they’ve fully matured. These people only continue to age physically, but they remain the same mentally. I was like that—I refused to grow up because I didn’t want to bear any responsibilities.

Instead, I allowed myself to stray wild, to seek a life of freedom for myself. Matthias refused to grow up after encountering his struggles in love, and he has trapped himself within that immature, childlike relationship ever since. He might have grown his career and his abilities, but his love life has been stagnant ever since that experience. He’s stubbornly holding onto the good memories he had in the past, and he even thinks that Myra might long for him

the way he longs for her. He certainly wouldn't have expected Myra to have completely forgotten about him.

"You can pretend to be drunk when you're drinking, but how are you going to continue acting dazed when you're sober, Matthias?" Evan swirled the red wine in his glass. He preferred darker shades of wine.

"Have you ever loved someone?" This was the first time Matthias ever asked Evan about his love life. All along, Matthias had only focused on talking about his own relationships, but he had never heard Evan talk about his relationships.

Evan looked up and tugged his lips into a smile. "I'm sure everyone has fancied a person or two, right?" His smile broadened as he spoke, like flowers that blossomed in the middle of spring.

"How did you get over it, then?" Matthias wanted someone to tell him what to do. He couldn't afford to continue loving Myra, yet he couldn't bring himself to cut ties with her.

"Why do I have to get over it? I'm enjoying the relationship. Not all love stories are depressing, you know. The first person that I've ever fancied is still in contact with me right now, and we're still close friends. I'm thankful for how much I've grown with this person." Evan had always believed in maintaining relationships with his loved ones, and he didn't see the need to cut ties with anyone. To him, there was no need for tearful separations or drunken midnight calls.

However, that didn't mean that he was someone who gave up on a relationship easily. He insisted on giving his all in a relationship before he gave up on it. The most memorable parts of a relationship shouldn't be the part where one party desperately clings to another while the other person decides to walk away from the relationship, right?

I think that the best relationships are those that are kept simple. I believe that everything will work only when both parties love each other. I don't see the need for any other excuses. Why would two individuals get together if they had so many reasons not to be together from the start?

What's meant to be is meant to be. I don't think there's a need to lament over the person you were forced to let go because of some external reasons. If the both of you were really that in love with each other, you would have found

your way back already. If one party has lost feelings for the other, then the relationship can no longer be forced. Force two people to stay in love, and they'll only end up hating each other.

Standing before Love Chapter 445

While there were some who were sad, others were happy. On the night of Valentine's Day, Myra and Tony spent the entire night clinging together, whispering sweet nothings to each other. They had been through so many twists and turns, and it had been a long time since they last enjoyed such a peaceful moment. As they immersed themselves in this moment, they held each other, embracing the beauty of it.

"I want Heather to be my maid of honor," Myra suggested.

Taking in the smell of her, Tony appeared intoxicated, and he tightened his hand on her chest. He hugged her tightly, as though he had the whole world in his arms, and he began to smell the scent from her hair again.

"Mmh," he murmured softly. Right now, he would agree to anything she said.

"Knock it off." She moaned for a bit while his hands started to stray around her body. This guy is always fooling around! she thought, feeling somewhat annoyed.

"There's no rush about the wedding. Let's not speak about the details today. Let's speak about us." Rolling over, he then lay on top of her and gazed down at her.

With her brows knitted tightly together, she pushed him feebly while saying, "You don't know when to be content." She was grumbling at him, thinking that he had superhuman stamina.

"I can't control it when I just look at you," he muttered close to her ear as he began kissing her.

"No more, please," she begged before it even started. Unlike him, she was already tired. Plus, she was also pregnant.

A devilish smile spread across his face and he kissed her on the lips. Pressing himself against her ear, he whispered, "I can't sleep tonight. I love you so much, baby." Anything could be said when affections were at its strongest.

However, no one else could even imagine Tony to act like this in bed, because everyone remembered him clearly as a person who was incredibly difficult to approach. Sometimes, he wouldn't even give others the chance to discuss anything further.

After that, it took Tony all of his self control to get a grip on himself. Myra was carrying a baby after all, so he shouldn't overdo it. Then, he pulled Myra, who was limp from tiredness, into his arms and kissed her forehead while she snuggled into his chest.

"You're not letting me speak properly," she whined. Really, Tony didn't let her catch a break at all, and she could barely lift a finger now.

On the other hand, Tony found her to be very adorable in this state, and he couldn't help but peck her lightly on the lips. She gazed at him helplessly, thinking that he sometimes acted like a clingy big boy.

"Go to sleep, Myra," he instructed.

However, she didn't feel like sleeping for the moment. Hence, she mumbled in his arms shamelessly, "I can't sleep. I want you to put me to sleep."

Affectionately, he gazed at her, noting how cute she was, and he continued to kiss her cheeks. Just like a doll, he kissed her everywhere as though he wouldn't get tired of it.

Although annoyed, Myra was equally amused by him, and she suddenly felt that he was being a little adorable on this day as she snuggled deeper into his arms.

"Tell me a story," she requested, acting a little spoiled. A pregnant woman's temper was unpredictable, and her personality kept changing during her pregnancy.

Just when Tony's kiss was about to land on her again, she held up her hand and blocked it. "I can't sleep if you keep doing this." What's with him and his kisses today? she thought helplessly. My skin may start to peel if he keeps this up!

"Okay, okay. Bedtime story it is then," he replied. Then, he rubbed his nose against hers and pecked her eyelids gently.

“Tell me the story,” she said, looking forward to his storytelling skills. As she wondered what sort of story he might come up with, she had a bad premonition about it at the same time.

At the thought of this, she broke into a giggle instead. People in their country would often say that pregnancy would make one dumb for the next three years. Furthermore, she was now still in the passionate stage of a relationship with Tony, so for an instant, she felt like she had no intelligence left to spare.

“Two rabbits live in the forest. The white rabbit is named ‘I Love You’, and the black rabbit is called ‘I Don’t Love You’. Unfortunately, ‘I Don’t Love You’ died later. So what’s the one left called?” he said in a serious tone.

Did he actually tell such a lame story to humor me? she thought silently. I can already guess the ending by listening to the beginning! However, without hesitation, she answered, “I Love You!” She stared at him with her big, round eyes, and he felt tempted again.

“Wrong!” he said with a lopsided smirk. “The black rabbit is dead, so there’s only the white rabbit left.” A triumphant smile spread across his face as the sarcasm in his expression intensified. It didn’t strike Myra that he would trap her with wordplay.

Burying her head into his chest, she grumbled, “You’re just playing around with words.” So my bad premonition from earlier had come true.

Tony laughed out loudly. “You’re so cute.” Pinching her cheek, he still had the triumphant smile on his face, and he felt incredibly smug.

On the other hand, Myra decided to ignore him as she felt that he was being too crafty, and she kept quiet in his arms.

“Do you feel suffocated?” he asked in a teasing tone. The way they flirted as husband and wife was always a little childish.

“You don’t have to know,” she snapped. After being spoiled by Tony, she had become rather stubborn with refusing to admit her feelings, and she would only reserve her small tantrums for him.

But then, it didn’t bother him, and he merely continued to laugh. Instead, he seemed to find her really adorable this way.

There was nothing scary about a small tantrum as long as there was someone to indulge her in it. Besides, it could be fun for a couple if it didn't go overboard.

After a long while, she murmured, "You promised to tell me a story, but why did you end up telling a brain teaser instead?" From the way she complained about him, she appeared like a child who didn't get her sweets.

Pressing his forehead against hers gently, he forced her to look into his eyes, which were so passionate that she felt that her soul could drown in it.

"What story do you want to listen to, silly?" he asked.

He was so gorgeous that she blushed and her heart galloped. Even up close, she couldn't find a single flaw in his looks. In her eyes, he was close to perfect, and it was as though he carried a holy light around him. As she stared at him, she couldn't hold back and leaned in to kiss him lightly.

How could Tony let go of the little lamb that had given herself to him? As he returned her kiss, he kissed her deeper, and she felt dizzy from it, even feeling a little out of breath.

When she was about to pass out, he finally let her go. This time, she was really tired, and she stayed in his arms quietly.

As he watched her lay quietly in his arms, he started humming softly. It was a tune without lyrics that he used to coax her to sleep. This was the first time she witnessed him displaying his musical talents, and even his humming sounded so good. After she found a sweet spot in his arms, she gradually drifted off to sleep.

He only stopped when she had fallen asleep deeply, and he watched her sleep as though he couldn't look at her enough. Also, he loved the smell of her, which set him at ease.

"You'll be my wife soon, Myra," he whispered gently. For a long time, he had wanted to marry her, and he wanted to do it properly and formally.

When Myra was sleeping, she looked especially cute, just like a child without a care in the world, and he couldn't keep his eyes away from her. Previously, she would have nightmares sometimes in her sleep and would knit her brows tightly, but she was so peaceful now. At the thought that all the issues had

been resolved, Tony felt incredibly relaxed. We have to go for a honeymoon after the wedding, he thought. We have to travel the world!

Sometimes, the world wasn't so wonderful, but as there was someone he loved in this world, just a smile from her was enough to make up for all the unhappiness in this world.

Just like that, he gradually fell asleep as well. The next morning, it was Myra who woke up before he did, which was rather rare. Cautiously, she watched his sleeping face in appreciation as she was afraid of waking him up; she rarely had the chance to watch him sleep anyway. Tracing a finger down his cheek, she smiled in satisfaction and kissed his face secretly. Then, mimicking what he always did, she leaned in close to his head and sniffed, wondering what smelled so good about hair.

All this brought her tremendous joy. It seemed like he was in deep sleep this time, and she couldn't stop herself from poking his face with her forefinger. Much to her delight, he didn't wake up, and her smile brightened as she wrinkled her nose at him.

"It's time to wake up, Tony!" she muttered under her breath. Entertained by herself, she gazed at his chest, and an innocent smile spread across her face.

When there was no reaction from him, she was even more delighted, getting a kick out of not getting caught red-handed for doing something naughty. Feeling more confident this time, she rubbed her nose against his, and when she saw that he was still asleep, she moved her hands to his firm chest, which was just the way she liked it—lean and muscular. She liked men with some muscles, but not so obvious that it would appear that he has a bigger chest than herself. It was not a trait everyone liked.

Then, like a child who had gotten away with her pranks, she moved her hands further downward, where she could feel his abs next. He had eight-pack abs, and she really liked that on a man. Tony's figure was so good that it was irresistible to women, and it made men jealous.

This was all due to his commitment in workout. As a person who emphasized on working out, it was important to him to keep his body healthy so that he could protect those that mattered to him.

Going further down a little more would be his V-line abs, and she could imagine how water would flow over it. The more she thought about it, the more her heart raced, and she kept feeling as though she was up to no good.

After that, she didn't dare to venture any further downward, for her face had turned bright red at this point. How could I do something like this first thing in the morning? she asked herself, wondering if she had been possessed by some sort of perverted entity, but her hands still remained on his abdominal muscles.

"You can move your hands lower, Myra," Tony said. Then, he moved his body upward swiftly, and her hand slid downward unwittingly.

Suddenly, she felt something with her hand, and she quickly retracted it. Glaring at Tony, who was pretending to be asleep, she saw that he was grinning mischievously. Again, she was being pranked by him for no reason.

For the entire day, Myra didn't care much about Tony because he pulled a prank on her early in the morning. This time, Tony had pushed it a little too far though, for they almost ended up in a roleplay this morning, and Myra looked like an aggrieved little wife.

Still, Tony couldn't figure out why she was so mad. He merely pretended to be asleep and made her touch a spot which she thought to be very sensitive, but he didn't expect that she would jump out of bed in a huff. Even after he repented within himself, he still couldn't figure it out. Perhaps, he didn't understand that she was mad because she thought that she finally got the chance to sneak up on him, but everything was actually under his control.

Later in Stark Group's office, Myra was busy with work. The company was now on track, unaffected by the change of ownership. Cameron's whereabouts were unknown, and he might pose a danger in the future, but she wouldn't exterminate him since everything was on track now, and she was satisfied that she was able to get back what was rightfully hers.

As she flipped through the documents, she recalled what happened in the morning, and a smile spread across her face when she remembered Tony's face when he was at a loss. In fact, she wasn't really mad at him at all, but just playing around with him.

Most likely, he was only acting like this in front of her. Comparing him to herself, she thought that the contrast in him was even more bewildering. After some time, he sent her a sticker through Messenger.

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Using stickers to communicate the minute they got into a fight, they exhausted the stickers they'd saved up, and it was Myra who stopped in the end. Scrolling back to review their conversation, she felt that they were so childish because they only used stickers from the beginning until the end, but it amused her very much.

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Finally, Myra had sent him some text, and Tony breathed a sigh of relief. There were all sorts of bizarre reasons that could set a woman off, and he could only tolerate it no matter how ridiculous it was.

'What are you doing?' Tony sent her a proper text this time.

Myra took a glance at the piled up documents in front of her and rubbed her temples. There was still so much work left to do, and she replied simply, 'Working hard now. Let's stop here. I'm busy.' She wanted to stop texting him because she had to prioritize work when she was at work.

Just when they could finally chat a little, she decided to cut it short. However, he could only go along with her, and after thinking about it, he sent another sticker to her.

It was a sticker with the word 'OK' written in a huge font. She took a glance at it and placed down her phone in contempt, wondering where he got all his stickers from. The stickers she had on her Messenger were all saved up from the conversations she had with others, and when she thought about Tony doing the same thing, she found that situation a little hard to imagine.

After putting away the messy thoughts in her mind, she lectured herself in her head. I've always been a serious person at work, but I'm now being led astray by Tony. This is not good. I have to continue to work hard.

When it was evening, she stayed back at work. As she was taken out of office by Tony on the previous day, a lot of work was left unfinished because she missed a day at work. Hence, she had to work harder on this day by working overtime. While Tony was already done, she was still working.

When he arrived at her office, she was still in the midst of work, so he cleared his throat softly to catch her attention. Lifting her head, she saw him, and immediately, a smile appeared on her face unwittingly. There were some people who were simply able to put a smile on her face whenever she saw them.

Putting up a stern face, he asked, "Did you ask for my permission to work overtime while you're still carrying my child?"

The way he stared at her made her feel really guilty, and his question put her in the wrong. Before this, he had already told her that she could work, but with proper time management and not overloading herself.

In Tony's eyes, working overtime was an unforgivable act, and the look in his eyes turned stricter. However, Myra merely looked at him innocently; there was only a little left to her work, and she really didn't want to put it off until the next day.

"Can you show some leeway, Tony?" she begged in a cute tone. There's just a little left, she thought, still holding the pen tightly in her hand.

He walked closer to her and snatched the pen away from her hand, saying, "No."

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Hurriedly, Myra nodded in agreement; it was true that she had been working too hard as a pregnant woman, and this wouldn't do any good for her child's development.

She should combine work with rest, but she had been too concerned about Stark Group recently. With that thought in mind, she decided to visit the florist the next day. It had been a while since she was there the last time, and it was about time for her to relax with a visit there.

The next day, Myra specially asked Heather out to the florist. Coincidentally, Heather didn't have much to do on that day, and she freed up her morning to visit her at the florist.

Early in the morning, Heather dealt with her work at hand quickly and found an excuse to slip out of the office. As usual, she drove her small car, which she liked very much. It was a tiny two-seater car, and she felt very cozy being in the car, feeling as though she was wrapped in it.

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Looking around at the decorations of the store, Heather then said with a smile, "It's decorated very beautifully and in a very creative way." After all, Myra came from a design background. So, the place wouldn't turn out bad with her participation in the decoration.

"How have you been, working in the Langston Group recently?" Myra asked. It appeared to her that Heather was in a good mood, and she was the kind of person who could do well regardless of where she was.

However, Heather waved her hand and replied, "Things at the Langston Group are a headache. Blake is getting more and more unreasonable." The mention of this made her disgruntled because she didn't think that Blake would resort to that sort of tactic to deal with her.

"What happened?" Ever since they were young, Myra had often listened to Heather's complaints about Blake, and she would usually go along with her.

"I thought he wouldn't joke around with the company's interests, but he's now even more extreme and doesn't care about the company's interests simply because he wants to put me down in front of others," she explained helplessly. All in all, he shouldn't have disregarded the company's interests.

Surprised, Myra thought that even though Blake was a little annoying, Heather had always said that he had the thoughts of their family and company on his mind. However, looking at things now, it seemed that Blake's paranoia had worsened, and Myra always had a bad feeling about this guy, who was a rich brat and a womanizer. "So how do you plan to retaliate?" she asked. Based on her understanding of Heather, Myra knew that she wasn't a sitting duck, and would definitely retaliate.

Spreading her hands, Heather replied, "I really don't plan to fight with him this time." This answer caught Myra by surprise because she didn't expect that she had no plans of fighting back. Heather tilted her head and grabbed a bunch of baby's-breath flowers to her nose to take a whiff. "This soft scent is very refreshing." It seemed like she didn't want to continue with this topic any longer.

Myra was a tactful person as well, so she decided to end the topic with Langston Group. After some hesitation, she decided to get straight to the point with what she had in mind. "I have a favor to ask of you," she said with a mysterious grin on her lips.

Seeing how she appeared, Heather could immediately guess what was on her mind, and she smiled sheepishly as well. "Things are going well between you and Tony, right? So you're expecting an expensive gift from me because you're getting married, huh?" Judging from how brightly Myra was smiling, she could easily guess what her friend was thinking. Heather was an intelligent woman, and that sort of blissfulness Myra was emanating was clear for all to see, so it wasn't hard to make a guess.

"You have to be my maid of honor," Myra said determinedly. She was a little worried that Heather might not agree because she did mention that she didn't like to be a bridesmaid.

Previously, when someone in her family was getting married and asked her to be a bridesmaid, she would turn them down without a second thought. However, she merely paused for a second at Myra's request before giving her a firm response.

"Maid of honor? Then I have to dress prettily! And you better get a best man who's tall and handsome." She agreed so readily that Myra felt the weight was lifted off her shoulders instantly. The only suitable person to be her maid of honor was no one else but Heather.

After a few seconds, Heather added with a solemn expression, "I've dedicated my first time to you, so remember this—I should be the only bridesmaid because I don't want to be placed in a group of bridesmaids with other girls." Heather always liked to be the only one, and this request was within Myra's expectations.

Nodding, she agreed with a smile. Heather seems a little livelier and happier today, Myra thought. I wonder what's making her so happy. Looks like what's happening at Langston Group isn't affecting her mood at all. However, she still noticed something and felt that there were some small changes happening with Heather.

There were some changes that even Heather didn't notice; she didn't imagine that Matthias would bring about such a change in her. Ever since Valentine's Day, she had deliberately kept her distance from him to emphasize the

distance they should keep from each other so that they wouldn't take it too seriously.

Standing before Love Chapter 446

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However, Heather waved her hand and replied, “Things at the Langston Group are a headache. Blake is getting more and more unreasonable.” The mention of this made her disgruntled because she didn’t think that Blake would resort to that sort of tactic to deal with her.

“What happened?” Ever since they were young, Myra had often listened to Heather’s complaints about Blake, and she would usually go along with her.

“I thought he wouldn’t joke around with the company’s interests, but he’s now even more extreme and doesn’t care about the company’s interests simply because he wants to put me down in front of others,” she explained helplessly. All in all, he shouldn’t have disregarded the company’s interests.

Surprised, Myra thought that even though Blake was a little annoying, Heather had always said that he had the thoughts of their family and company on his mind. However, looking at things now, it seemed that Blake’s paranoia had worsened, and Myra always had a bad feeling about this guy, who was a rich brat and a womanizer. “So how do you plan to retaliate?” she asked. Based on her understanding of Heather, Myra knew that she wasn’t a sitting duck, and would definitely retaliate.

Spreading her hands, Heather replied, “I really don’t plan to fight with him this time.” This answer caught Myra by surprise because she didn’t expect that she had no plans of fighting back. Heather tilted her head and grabbed a bunch of baby’s-breath flowers to her nose to take a whiff. “This soft scent is very refreshing.” It seemed like she didn’t want to continue with this topic any longer.

Myra was a tactful person as well, so she decided to end the topic with Langston Group. After some hesitation, she decided to get straight to the point with what she had in mind. “I have a favor to ask of you,” she said with a mysterious grin on her lips.

Seeing how she appeared, Heather could immediately guess what was on her mind, and she smiled sheepishly as well. “Things are going well between you and Tony, right? So you’re expecting an expensive gift from me because you’re getting married, huh?” Judging from how brightly Myra was smiling, she could easily guess what her friend was thinking. Heather was an intelligent

woman, and that sort of blissfulness Myra was emanating was clear for all to see, so it wasn't hard to make a guess.

"You have to be my maid of honor," Myra said determinedly. She was a little worried that Heather might not agree because she did mention that she didn't like to be a bridesmaid.

Previously, when someone in her family was getting married and asked her to be a bridesmaid, she would turn them down without a second thought. However, she merely paused for a second at Myra's request before giving her a firm response.

"Maid of honor? Then I have to dress prettily! And you better get a best man who's tall and handsome." She agreed so readily that Myra felt the weight was lifted off her shoulders instantly. The only suitable person to be her maid of honor was no one else but Heather.

After a few seconds, Heather added with a solemn expression, "I've dedicated my first time to you, so remember this—I should be the only bridesmaid because I don't want to be placed in a group of bridesmaids with other girls." Heather always liked to be the only one, and this request was within Myra's expectations.

Nodding, she agreed with a smile. Heather seems a little livelier and happier today, Myra thought. I wonder what's making her so happy. Looks like what's happening at Langston Group isn't affecting her mood at all. However, she still noticed something and felt that there were some small changes happening with Heather.

There were some changes that even Heather didn't notice; she didn't imagine that Matthias would bring about such a change in her. Ever since Valentine's Day, she had deliberately kept her distance from him to emphasize the distance they should keep from each other so that they wouldn't take it too seriously.

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Noticing how quickly they were picking things up, Sharon decided to teach them another form of flower arrangement. Both of them were agreeable and paid full attention to her class with enthusiasm.

The two girls who were chatting away happily earlier were now quiet all of a sudden. Flower arrangement was something which could cultivate a person's temper and calm down a troubled heart.

Occasionally, both of them would exchange looks at each other, but they were mainly focused on the work in their hands as they followed the instructions diligently and appeared to be doing a very good job. Heather seemed to be more gifted, and even Myra was a little ashamed. Still, they both enjoyed the process very much and looked like they were in high spirits.

When they were finished with their work, a satisfied smile spread on their faces. Myra turned to look at Heather, and they both let out a small breath. One should focus fully in order to get something done well.

"That's all for today. Both of you pick things up very quickly," Sharon said politely. If all her students were as smart as them, then she would have less troubles.

After Sharon left, Heather moved in closer to Myra. Time seemed to be flying, and it was already lunchtime.

"Let's go out for lunch," she suggested, feeling a little hungry.

Myra nodded in reply. Both of them had very similar tastes in food, so it was not a problem to be eating together, and they both liked the food which the other had ordered.

While eating, they chatted away, and Myra had a gut feeling that Heather was hiding something from her. However, since Heather didn't open up, she didn't feel it was appropriate to ask about it. Perhaps if she paid a little more attention, she would be able to figure it out, and she casually asked her what was up with her recently.

"Did you meet up with the partners recently?" Myra asked in concern. She wasn't a nosy-parker, but she was unable to suppress her curiosity.

Maybe only matters which concerned Heather were able to trigger her curiosity. If it was somebody else, she wouldn't give two hoots about it.

"I'm thinking of meeting them in the afternoon." Looking at her plate, Heather noticed that Myra had picked quite a lot of food off her plate, and she also felt that something was amiss with Myra, wondering what was on her mind.

Chatting away happily, Heather had basically told Myra everything that happened to her recently, except the part regarding Matthias. On the other hand, it didn't sound like anything was out of the norm to Myra, and she thought that she must have been oversensitive.

An enjoyable afternoon passed by just like that, and even though Heather had to return to the office after lunch, she wasn't in that much of a rush.

Hence, as she glanced at her watch and calculated her timing, she said to Myra, "After dropping you off at the florist, I'll be just in time to return to the office."

After all the hassle, she drove back to the office, and many employees were still taking their afternoon nap when she returned. Sneaking back to her own office, she then saw that there was a pile of documents on her desk, and she felt a deep sense of lethargy.

Today was another busy day, and she was long used to this as she quickly switched into her working mode. It seemed that there were more issues after she returned to Bradford; there seemed no end to it as she went through them one by one.

Dragging her sluggish body, probably because she hadn't been sleeping well recently, Heather rubbed her temples. There was something amiss with the way Myra was looking at her today, but she had purposely acted as though she was in high spirits. Hopefully, she didn't realize anything unusual, she prayed.

Her head started to throb at the thought that Myra would eventually find out about her relationship with Matthias in the future, and she wondered how Myra would think about it at that time.

Keeping away her disarrayed thoughts, she sank back into work mode because there was still a bunch of work left for her to do. Blake was rather good at making good use of people; he was the one who asked Heather over to be in charge of a certain project. As it turned out, he dumped all other irrelevant chores on her as well.

She stared at the menial tasks on her right in annoyance, knowing that he was pushing irrelevant work on her to delay her time. What a chore, she thought.

This project was the biggest project for Langston Group at the moment, and she really couldn't spare any attention to deal with other work. Still, Blake had deliberately made things difficult for her in this manner.

Now, he was completely ignoring the interests of the company, and she had no idea what was on his mind that he just had to put her down in front of others before he would give up.

Meanwhile, Myra was still at the florist, attending to the plants and flowers to soothe her mind and body. Recently, she had sloughed her heart out for Stark Group and devoted herself to work. It had been a long while since she could relax so comfortably just as now.

Looking at the flowers in her hand, the arc on her lips blossomed into a contented smile. Relaxing occasionally helped to focus on work the next day.

Today, she had simply decided not to think about Stark Group but attend to the flowers in her florist. In the end, she was even smelling like flowers.

The scent of the flowers drifted into her nose, and she took a deep breath. Then, she suddenly thought of the big, comfortable bed at home. It must be comfortable to sleep in it, she thought. The whole day, she was taking things so slow that she felt a little lazy.

What's Tony up to now? she wondered as she continued attending to the flowers in her hands. He said that he'll pick me up in the evening to go home together.

Myra liked a life like this day by day, and she couldn't get used to days without Tony. As though stuck to each other, Tony would avoid business trips and stay by her side at all times.

The afternoon sun poured through the window, and she squinted her eyes, deciding to take a break in her private room. In this season with such weather, one could grow drowsy easily.

There was a small room above the florist. Besides some miscellaneous items, a small space was specially built to place a soft bed so that she could catch a break there.

Of course, this bed was only for her while the employees downstairs would catch their break on a couch, and they wouldn't touch this bed unless there was a special situation.

Not anyone should use her personal item, and she felt incredibly at ease when she was lying on the bed. Surrounded by the scent of flowers, it was as though she was sleeping in a garden full of flowers, and the decorations of the small space were very cozy.

All of this was designed by Tony; he would consider everything for her. Ever since she had him, she had almost turned into a useless person.

Tony took care of almost everything for her. With him around, she didn't have to worry about anything. More and more, she relied on him, and she sometimes wondered whether it was a good thing.

However, this was a good thing from the way Tony saw it because he liked to be someone she could rely on, and he liked to prepare everything for her appropriately.

Without realizing, she slipped into dreamland, and in her dream, she went back to being young. Back then, she and Heather were in their youthful selves, and Myra still looked innocent.

A boy appeared in her dream, and she wanted to take a good look at his face. But no matter how hard she tried, it appeared very blurry, so she couldn't see it. After that, she started chasing behind him with all her might. Still, she couldn't reach him.

She was only one step away from him, but she couldn't even grasp the edge of his shirt even when she reached out her hand, and a deep sense of sorrow washed over her.

The dream turned more suffocating, and the initial sounds of laughter became the desolation of being alone under the rain on a rainy day.

Struggling, Myra woke up. Why a sudden nightmare during daytime? she wondered, wiping away the sweat on her forehead. The boy in my dream... Was there really such a boy in my younger days?

Although she was suspicious about it, there was no one who could answer her. Not even Heather had mentioned that boy before. Maybe Heather was

hiding something from her, or maybe she was overthinking things. Regardless, she wanted to make this matter clear.

After waking up, she was unsettled and could no longer stay in the florist. If she went to the Langston Group now, she would definitely disturb Heather. After much contemplation, she decided to go to Hart Group in the end. Seeing Tony's face when she was feeling uneasy would make her feel much better.

Right now, Tony was hard at work as he had a lot of work waiting for him. Recently, the workload had been increasing, and even Tony felt a little overwhelmed. Ever since Matthias arrived in Bradford, the industry hadn't been stable at all.

Tony had to look at him in a new light, and his guts told him that he didn't come with kind intentions, or he was just coming at the Harts. While he didn't think that Matthias was working against the Harts, the reality was taking an incredibly surprising turn.

The industry in Bradford had always been a storm, and the peace before another storm hit always struck one with panic. Even though he had always been indifferent about it, he couldn't sit still without doing anything when faced with the unknown dangers.

Many things were waiting for him to get done, and he would never put the Hart Group at risk. Even if there was a slight possibility, he would take prevention measures ahead of time.

When Myra pushed the door open, Tony was reading the document in his hand with a frown, but when their eyes met, he immediately broke into a smile.

"Myra." At first, when he didn't know who it was, he was about to throw his temper, but it turned out that Myra was the visitor.

"I was bored at the florist, so I came to look for you," she said, quickly coming up with an excuse.

So she could get bored staying at the florist as well, he thought with a raised brow. Still, he was pleased to have her around here.

Meanwhile, Myra went straight to the couch. As she was already familiar with the place, she didn't see the need to be that formal with him.

“Have you been very busy recently?” Her heart calmed down the moment she saw him, and she felt at ease whenever she looked at him.

Even if they were just chatting casually, she would feel comfortable. No matter when it was, he was so stunning that it sparked jealousy, especially when he was concentrating at work. His charm was impossible to resist.

After all, men looked the most dashing when they were serious at work, and she instantly became smitten with him as she stared at him.

“No, there hasn’t been a free day in Hart Group,” he answered casually.

“Your overwork timing is a little longer,” she pointed out. This was something she’d noticed for a while now, and from many other small details, she could tell that he was more busy at work lately.

“There have been more menial issues recently. It will get better after this,” he replied, not planning to tell her about what was going on with the Hart Group.

It wasn’t easy for her to deal with the problems at Stark Group on a daily basis, so all the more reason he shouldn’t let her worry about his company. And besides, no matter what the problem and crisis was, Tony could take care of it all by himself.

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Realizing that Tony didn’t seem too interested to speak about his job, Myra decided to shut her mouth. He was busy right now anyway, so she didn’t want to disturb him. As she had her cell phone with her, there were many things she could do to entertain herself, and she didn’t feel bored at all. She would never be bored when Tony was with her.

In the end, she decided to play some games as it was a good choice to pass time. While she was fighting vigorously in her game, Tony was fighting hard in his work.

Without knowing how many rounds she had played, he finally lifted his head and smiled. “Let’s go home together when I’m done, Myra,” he said loudly, but she was so engrossed with the game that she didn’t hear him at all.

Therefore, he paced in front of her and repeated everything he just said. Only then did she look up, and she realized that her neck felt a little sore from

looking down at her cell phone the whole time. “Are we going home?” she asked.

“Well, we’re not in a rush to go home. I’m bringing you to a place,” he said mysteriously, and she mentally prepared herself for a surprise at his words.

When they were in the car, Myra wondered what kind of surprise he had prepared for her as she stole a peek at his handsome face from the side. After twenty minutes of driving, Tony brought her to an alley, and she followed him ignorantly, not even knowing what he would do next.

If she had to walk alone in this deep alley, she might be a little afraid. It was already late, and the alley was dark. When the car stopped in somebody’s courtyard, only then did she show some reaction. “You’re taking me here?” she asked in disbelief because everything before her eyes right now was a little unbelievable.

“Even a dark alley can’t deter one from the hunt for good food,” he said teasingly.

After getting out of the car, she saw that the place didn’t look like any regular restaurant, and when she walked in, it was as though she had walked into somebody’s house. Looking at Tony in confusion, she had no idea what he was doing now. This was the first time they went to someone’s house because of a food hunt.

Entering the house, she started observing the interior and was almost sure that this place emphasized on a homey environment instead of a restaurant because it had a strong homely atmosphere.

“I brought you here to try some home-cooked dishes, and it’s the authentic ones. There must be a dish which you liked when you were young,” he whispered into her ears. There were too many memories from when she was young, and she couldn’t recall most of it. Even Cameron wouldn’t pay any special attention to her tastes in food.

“What about Lisa and Sebastian?” she asked. Suddenly, they popped into her mind because they had to go home punctually for meals every day, especially for the healthy soups and stews Lisa would prepare. Even more so when it was dinner time as they would request them to be home for dinner almost every day, and Myra had always paid special attention to do this.

But this time, Tony actually brought her out to try home-cooked dishes in a regular home, and she looked at him in disbelief. I wonder what excuse he used with the old couple.

“They have their lives to live as well, and they’re going out on a date today. So we’re going to sort out dinner ourselves,” he replied simply.

“Okay. They make me so envious of them.” She was really envious of them from the bottom of her heart because they were possibly the most blissful couple she had ever met.

Together since they were young, Sebastian still spoiled Lisa as he always had even though they had lost their looks to time. I wonder if someone will spoil me like this one day, Myra thought as she looked at Tony next to her. He’s the best thing that ever happened to me. At that thought, her eyes turned gentle the next second as she stared at him.

“Is this place really good?” she asked cautiously. Since it was Tony who brought her here, this had to be a good place.

Speaking of food, it seemed as though Tony was an expert in it, but unbeknownst to her, he was doing it because of her. In order to let her eat well, he would pay special attention to places with good food.

Entering another person’s home, they scanned around at the interior, which looked like a regular home. Businesses nowadays were full of ideas, and according to Tony, this place only accepted one order a day in addition to a reservation ahead of time.

Tony had made a reservation here a long time ago because he heard that the food was amazing. Now that they finally had a day where they didn’t have to head home directly after work, he had to use this opportunity to relax. It’s inconvenient to live with the elderly, indeed, he thought.

In the meantime, Sebastian and Lisa, who were enjoying their romantic time together, suddenly sneezed in unison. Using a piece of napkin, Lisa wiped her nose. This time, Sebastian had arranged for a candlelit dinner like how the youngsters did.

With a long table between them, Sebastian gazed at Lisa nervously and asked, “Are you catching a cold from the air-conditioning?”

He had always spoiled her like a little girl despite having been together for such a long time. Just like a fairytale, Lisa would always be his princess in their marriage. Even at this age, they would still go out on a date sometimes to spruce up their relationship. In his lifetime, Sebastian had spent more effort on Lisa than on Hart Group, thinking of ways and means to brighten her up. For him, the biggest joy was to see Lisa living happily without worries forever.

“It’s about time Tony got off work,” Lisa said, bringing Tony up all of a sudden.

Sebastian cleared his throat as he thought, We agreed to spend time together by ourselves, yet she’s still worried about those youngsters.

A bright smile broke out on Lisa’s face; she knew that he was disgruntled and wanted to pacify him with her smile.

“They know how to get food for themselves, so you don’t have to worry about them. Tony is about to become a father, you know?” Sebastian said, disgruntled. It’s like Tony stayed as a child forever in her eyes!

And just like that, they chatted away happily. Although decades had passed, time still felt very short. The luckiest thing that happened to Lisa in her life was meeting Sebastian. When she was young, she doubted the vows he made in their wedding. But now, he had proved everything to be true through time, and spoiled her for the biggest part of her life.

Sitting in a regular living room, Myra sat across from Tony as they watched the food that was served from time to time. It seemed as though neither of them were hungry because it took them a while to dig in, especially Myra who had almost no appetite.

Skeptically, Myra delivered the food into her mouth. It didn’t look very appetizing, and she wondered how it tasted. Even though Tony said the food here was amazing, he was only saying it based on recommendations; he hadn’t even tried them himself.

However, after a few bites, Myra thought that it tasted rather good, and she suddenly felt a little hungry when she didn’t have any appetite in the beginning. The aroma of food filled her nostrils, and it did taste like home-cooked food. There were even children next to them, and they had switched on the TV to watch cartoons.

This was a novel experience; home cooking was not merely home-cooked dishes, for even the entire atmosphere was very homely. Families like Myra's and Tony's would definitely not watch TV during mealtimes, nor would there be any noises from children. This was the most common dining scene for regular people, but it was an impossible scene in their families, and Myra turned to look in curiosity at the cartoons the children were watching.

When she was a child, she wanted to watch TV while eating as well. Back then, she also had cartoons which she really liked, and she couldn't wait to skip eating just to watch cartoons.

This evoked her childhood memories, though she had never done something like this before, and neither did she have such an experience. Born into a businessman family, many things were beyond her control, and she really envied this sort of regular happiness.

Without a word, they gazed into each other's eyes and enjoyed the meal in silence. Myra even made an exception and had an extra portion. Before leaving, Tony gave them a generous tip because they were very satisfied with their dining experience this time.

Occasionally, Myra would chance upon rant posts about parents at home when she was browsing Twitter. Even though it appeared petty and calculating, it was a feeling she rarely experienced. For example, the brat that nobody liked. In her memory, she had never encountered any brats after she stepped into adulthood.

After she entered adulthood, there was only work, and her days were filled with problems from work. More and more, she wanted to travel and go to a place where nobody knew them. They could live there for some time and just be a regular couple.

All of a sudden, a plan popped up in her mind, and she couldn't wait for the wedding day to arrive because this plan could only be executed after the wedding. Using their honeymoon as the opportunity, she could realize her plan one by one. Just the thought of it was enough to send adrenaline pumping through her veins.

"You're especially quiet today," Tony said, breaking the silence between them as well as her daydream.

“I’m enjoying the moment because it’s very peaceful,” she replied, smiling. For the whole day, she was very relaxed, and even dinner was an extraordinary experience for them.

“The car’s not far off. I would like to take a walk with you,” he suggested. Taking a walk after a meal would do a pregnant woman some good.

Nodding in agreement, she said, “I haven’t taken a walk in a while, and the weather isn’t as hot as before. You can even feel a light autumn breeze in the evening.” It had already been autumn for a while, but it was still very warm during the daytime.

Bringing up Stark Group, Tony asked, “What other stuff is piling up in Stark Group?” After all, their wedding date was somewhat connected to the Stark Group. The time when Myra could be a hands-off boss would be the time when she could put on a wedding dress with peace of mind and marry him.

“Just some menial matters from a long time ago, which I couldn’t take care of in such a short time. Basically, the company is already on the right track.” Based on the current situation, she didn’t have much pressure from work because the emergencies had already been taken care of.

“If that’s the case, then our wedding should be on the agenda,” he said casually. For a long while, he had been looking forward to the wedding. In addition, it would be difficult for Myra to put on a wedding dress if they put this off until her belly grew bigger.

The sudden switch of conversation to the wedding caught Myra off guard, and she appeared hesitant. From the sound of it, it seemed like Tony wanted the wedding to be as soon as possible, and she didn’t know if she should give him a reply.

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Even after a while, Myra didn’t give him any reply, and it made him anxious. Hence, he urged her with a look, but she avoided it deliberately. Although she wanted to marry him, all kinds of thoughts bubbled in her heart when it hit her that the wedding was really happening soon.

She didn’t know what she was avoiding, but she suddenly felt bad about herself and didn’t want to see him disappointed.

Nodding her head strongly, she then said, "Any day which you think is the best is fine with me." She didn't mind letting him make the decision as she was worried that she might feel burdened before the wedding.

At this time, Heather came into her mind. Maybe I can tell Heather about it and she can give me some advice, she thought, knowing that Heather had a certain level of understanding when it came to matters of the heart. Right now, Myra didn't understand why she was having this mentality.

A genuine and innocent smile appeared on Tony's face. He always thought of marrying Myra, and this was about to come true soon. Thinking back about their past, which was filled with ups and downs, he thought that it hadn't been an easy ride for them to get to this point.

"Then I'll check the schedule when I get home," he said teasingly. "And I'll also need to discuss this with Grandpa and Grandma." Clearly, his emotions exploded because of her answer, and he was now in an inexplicable state of excitement.

In the car, he leaned close to her happily and kissed her cheek. He was simply in a very good mood, and when Myra saw his smiling face, she smiled as well. It made her feel incredibly at ease to see him this way.

Back home, they got ready for bed very quickly and jumped into bed impatiently. Still very much excited, Tony glued himself to Myra, acting in such a cute contrast to how he was usually.

"Stop it, Tony," Myra said, feeling ticklish from his breaths against her skin.

"Don't move around," he said instead, his hand stopping on a special spot, which was also her vital point.

The next second, Myra tensed up, and she didn't dare to move an inch. A mischievous smile dangled from Tony's face as they sank into a stalemate, or it could also be the amusement between husband and wife.

"What are you going to do, Tony?" she asked innocently.

Damn it, he cursed silently, because he simply couldn't resist her innocent look in bed.

Then, he pressed himself against her, and finally, she relaxed her rigid body. Squirming around, she really wished she had a strong tail that could just sweep him off the bed.

“Are you inviting me?” he asked, planting soft kisses on her face and rubbing his nose against hers. She was simply helpless against such sweet gestures from him.

“You’re... shameless,” she uttered, her sentence broken along with his aggressive moves.

“That’s right, I am.” With a lopsided grin, he knew that he could now have his way with her completely.

Tonight was another sleepless night. Myra laced her hands around his neck and kissed his eyes. He had really thick lashes, which made him look almost mystical. Every inch of contour on his face was so beautiful that God must have created him himself.

“Ahn!” Just when she was smitten with his stunning looks, he invaded her, and she gasped out loud.

It only came to an end when they had exhausted their energy, with Tony’s chest rising and falling as he caught his breath. This was the kind of workout which he liked, and he thought it to be better than any other supplements. When his breathing returned to normal, he reached out his arm and pulled Myra into his embrace.

“There’s a suitable date next week. Are you prepared?” Out of the blue, he mentioned their wedding, and even though it sounded a little random, she knew that this matter had been on his mind the whole time.

“Why are you asking me this suddenly?” Turning her body around, she buried her head into his strong chest.

“I’m afraid that you don’t want to marry me and will run away with my child,” he replied teasingly. Actually, judging from her series of actions, he knew that she was not ready for now.

“I’m not marrying anyone else but you,” she clarified her thoughts quickly. How could she do that, running away with his child when all she wanted was to drown in his affections?

Tony stretched out his right hand and pinched her cheeks, but she merely rolled her eyes at him. “Your face is so soft, and it feels good to touch it,” he explained as he stared at his naughty hand.

Rubbing her cheek, she grumbled with an annoyed look, “Do you think that I’ve gained weight and my cheeks are getting chubby now?”

Hurriedly, he explained, “How can I have any of those thoughts when I love everything that you are? Of course, you look really adorable when you’re chubbier, and I like it all the same.”

And just like that, they fell asleep after chatting and joking around, then waking up at almost the same time the next morning. Although the exact date of the wedding wasn’t decided last night, Tony wasn’t in a hurry because they still needed to ask Sebastian and Lisa’s opinion on the matter.

However, Sebastian would listen to everything Lisa said when it came to such issues, and after Tony gave it a thought, he decided to break the good news to them and ask for their opinion during breakfast later.

“I wanna stay in bed,” Myra mumbled in his chest lazily.

“You little lazy piglet,” he teased, loving how adorable she looked every time she acted spoiled with him. There was something irresistible about her when she was in that state.

“I’m so sleepy that I can sleep the whole morning,” she continued. Last night, she had exhausted too much energy, and she was still feeling limp.

Her mind was already awake, but her body was still lifeless, and she felt as though she was stuck to the bed, unable to be separated from it.

“Stay in bed, then,” Tony said, going along with her.

“It’s all your fault,” she groaned, looking at him in disgruntlement. How she felt today was a result of him going wild last night.

“Yes, it’s my fault. Sleep in a little longer, then. I’m going downstairs to bring the breakfast up for you,” he said immediately with raised brows at her, trying to please her.

“I don’t want that. Grandpa and Grandma will think that I’m a lazy person, for sure.” They were living with the elderly, after all, and she had to watch her behavior because they would think that she was being improper.

“No, they won’t. They’re on your side now because you’re carrying their important great-grandchild,” he answered, pretending to sound like an outcast. More and more, Sebastian and Lisa were siding with Myra so much that Tony was worried about his status in the family.

After spending a while being lovey-dovey, they finally washed up and went downstairs. It was the first time for them to see that both elders were not in the living room before them. Unexpectedly, Tony and Myra were out of bed earlier than them, and they gave each other a look, thinking that maybe the elders went to bed late last night.

Therefore, they instructed the kitchen staff to prepare their breakfast while they waited for the elders. After waiting for some time, the two elders still didn’t come down, so they ate as they continued to wait. Even until they were finished with breakfast, Sebastian and Lisa were nowhere to be seen. Tony’s initial plan was to discuss the wedding date with them, but it was spoiled now, and he couldn’t spare any more time to wait longer. He had to rush to work as there was still a lot of work awaiting him in the office. Knowing that he would be getting married in a few days, he had to quickly take care of the emergency issues recently so that he could prepare for the wedding without any worries.

Tony drove and dropped Myra off at Stark Group. Today, he had specially filled in as her chauffeur just so that he could spend more time with her.

“You’ll waste your time making an unnecessary trip like this,” Myra said, feeling bad to turn down his kind intentions.

“It’s not such a big trip and won’t delay anything,” he argued. He insisted on dropping her off to work personally because he hadn’t done it in a while. Usually, it was the family driver who dropped her off at work.

“Tony, if you keep spoiling me like this—” She stopped herself suddenly to wait until his eyes were fixed on her. Then, she continued with a sheepish smile, “I’m afraid I’ll become proud.” The break in her sentence gave him a scare as he didn’t think that she was just kidding with him.

“Spoiling you is my favorite thing to do,” he answered generously. All he wanted was to treat her well and present all the best things in the world to her.

Myra's heart skipped a beat, and she suddenly recalled a saying. "A woman needs a man who spoils her like her father would." Regardless that she didn't have a father to spoil herself, she had a good husband who would spoil her rotten.

In fact, she had already regarded him as her husband in her heart for a long time, but she still felt uneasy when the wedding was drawing near. After all, the last wedding left a very bad memory in her mind, or maybe it was something from the depths of her memory which caused her to overthink.

She thought that she had already laughed off many things and hurtful memories, but it had still left some imprints in the depths of her heart. There were many things which she was clear about, but she didn't want to think too deeply about it because she wanted to become stronger. It was a weird mentality, an inexplicable emotion.

Looking sideways at Tony, she saw a man she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. This time, there would be no more sadistic tragedy. Yes, she thought. It's time for me to entrust myself to him and build a happy family together with him.

Standing before Love Chapter 450

Another busy day, and another mountain of documents were waiting for Myra to go through. She went to her desk and started working quickly. Nothing's easy around here. Gotta work hard.

Heather was already immersed in work. She had been going to work early for the past few days. Most of the time, she would be the first to arrive. The office was always eerily quiet this early in the morning, but she had to come no matter what. Blake was assigning a lot of irrelevant work for her, but she couldn't refuse, so she went on with it, though work had been giving her a headache.

It wasn't until she was halfway done when the other employees started coming in, and Blake came the latest of them all. He was the CEO after all, so he could work whenever he wanted. On the other hand, Heather never abused her privileges, nor would she butt heads with Blake. However, Blake kept harassing her, much to her chagrin.

She wouldn't mind working in the company if everything was smooth sailing, but nay. She had to work through all the office politics every day, and that took

all the fun out of work. I thought Blake was a good guy, but no. He's evil. Blake wasn't as unscrupulous as he was before he took over the company, but after he became the CEO, he kept tripping up Heather. She thought it was childish of him.

The first thing Blake did when he came was to come to Heather's office. She was too busy to notice him, so she thought it was just another employee. "Talk." Heather didn't even look up.

Blake arched an eyebrow at her. "It's me, Heather. Your brother," he said sarcastically. Heather quickly looked up and frowned.

Blake was nothing but trouble for Heather, and he knew Heather disliked him too. But he would trip her up again and again, because he thrived on her misery. "What's the matter, Blake?" Heather forced a smile.

Blake whipped out a stack of files and put them on her desk. "There's a few errors here, Heather," he said solemnly.

Heather thought she had never seen those files before, so she skimmed through them quickly. There wasn't anything wrong in the first few pages, so she kept skimming, then she noticed all the errors were marked in red.

What's this? Elementary homework? The corner of her lips twitched. The documents were about the data on the European side of the business, so it wasn't important. Blake wanted her to finish it in a day out of a sudden, so she had to work overtime to finish it. Small mistakes were inevitable in such a short frame of time, and it wasn't a big deal anyway.

Heather wondered why Blake was blaming her for it as if she made a huge loss for the company. "I see. I'll rectify them right away. They should be done by today." Left with no choice, she took the loss. She didn't pay too much attention to it, so any mistake was her fault.

Blake wouldn't let her off the hook that easily though. He was just waiting for her to trip up. Even though it wasn't a big mistake, he could make a mountain out of a molehill, since he was the boss anyway. Blake cleared his throat and put on an angry look. "I had high hopes for you, Heather. You've never made any mistakes since you were a child. Any imperfection is unforgivable."

What the heck is this *sshole talking about? Heather looked at him in disbelief as he spouted nonsense. "You're giving me too much credit, Blake. Everyone

makes mistakes, especially me. I made a lot of unforgivable ones, and that's why everyone hates me," she insulted herself. Since Blake wanted to embarrass her, then she would play along with him.

Heather had a lot of stuff to handle, so she didn't have the time to argue with him over every little matter. Whatever he says.

It was effective enough, since it shut Blake up. He couldn't take it any further when Heather was already insulting herself. It took him a while before he answered, "Don't say that, Heather. Everyone loves you. They won't—" Blake didn't finish his sentence. He noticed that Heather was giving him a blatantly sarcastic smile.

Heather arched her eyebrow. She didn't want to keep the charade up anymore, since she didn't have as much free time as Blake did.

Blake noticed her underlying anger too, and he realized he had annoyed her. I'd probably get diced if I pushed my luck. Whatever. I got what I came here for anyway. And it's not that much of a problem. No point dwelling over it. Blake decided to stop pushing her around, since it wasn't the time to confront her just yet. "Get to it, and don't waste my time," he said seriously. Even though he was a douchebag, Blake could be intense when he wanted to.

Heather nodded. "Sure. My assistant will hand it over once I'm done." She wanted him to leave right away. If he stayed even for a moment longer, Heather thought she might kill him. Once he was gone, she massaged her temples, calming herself down. Crap. Dealing with him is exhausting. Time was a strange thing. It changed Blake for the worse, and he wasn't even good to begin with. She had always disliked him for being an unfaithful playboy, but ever since he took over the company, he started becoming scummier than ever.

She looked outside the door and wondered how long her suffering would go on. There was still her company to work on, so she couldn't waste her time in Langston Group. Not only did she have to wake up early and work overtime, but she also had to look out for Blake in case he tripped her up again. God, this is a pain. She massaged her temples.

She had never felt so frustrated before, but she had no choice. She wondered when the harassment from Blake would stop, but there was nothing she could do aside from pressing on no matter how hard it was. She had tried to stay out of his way, but he insisted on going out of his way to make life hard for her.

There were times when she just wanted to humiliate herself in public just so he would stop tripping her up. She wondered if he would let her off the hook if she did so, but she couldn't do it. That would mean she'd have to damage the company, and that was unacceptable, at least for her. She knew Blake didn't care, but the company was special for her. She worked hard to make the business a success in Europe.

Heather had decided to run a business herself, but that didn't mean she would abandon Langston Group. She wanted to get even more partners for them, since the company's success made her happy too. Langston Group held a special place in her heart. She loved the company more than Blake did. Ironic, considering that Blake controlled the company. It was probably her sentiments at work, but that was how women tended to act.

She read through the documents Blake left her. Before that, she was hard at work with something else, but Blake's childish tendencies forced her to stop. The frustration from the sudden pause filled her with rage and an urge to toss all the files into the shredder, but she held the urge down. There was no time for tantrums, for she had a lot of work to do. Heather rectified all the mistakes she made, and she realized they were genuine mistakes on her part. The little mistakes did affect the presentation.

Heather reflected on the mistakes she made. She hated shirking her responsibilities, and time wasn't an excuse for her to make any errors. She reflected on herself while correcting the mistakes she made. Once she was done, Heather felt much better about herself. Subsequently, she called her assistant, but nobody was in the office. Oh, it's lunchtime already?

Heather put down her work and stood up. Oh god, I'm sore. I need a spa treatment. She skipped out on a lot of meals lately, for she was working harder than a graduate writing her thesis.

She bumped into Matthias right after she came out of the company, much to her surprise. Now this is a huge coincidence. She stared at him.

Matthias was wearing a pair of sunglasses, and he smiled warmly at Heather. It caught her by surprise, melting her heart. "What brings you here?"

He had been waiting for her, but he wouldn't tell her that. Matthias came to her company before lunchtime just so he could "bump into her" right after she came out. He didn't expect her to come out late, though he realized she might be working overtime.

Matthias wanted to go into the company, but he decided against it. The whole point for the wait was to create the feeling of a chance encounter. Heather had been avoiding him lately, and he was out of excuses to ask her out. In the end, he decided to go with a stupid plan—waiting for her.

But the point was that this plan came down to luck. It wasn't the first time Matthias pulled this stunt, but he failed every time. Even so, seeing her was well worth it in the end. Sometimes, he would ask himself, Why am I doing this? But there was no answer for that.

For some reason, he would start missing Heather from time to time. He missed her smile, and he missed the way she talked; he wondered why he felt that way. Perhaps it was a rebound, since he thought the one he liked was Myra. He didn't know why he would start to yearn for Heather out of the blue.

Standing before Love Chapter 451

The atmosphere turned awkward for a moment. Matthias was coming up with an explanation, but seeing her in the flesh jumbled up his mind. Heather stayed silent too, so they stared at each other for a while. In the end, Matthias said, "I was just passing by. What a coincidence."

Heather knew it was just an excuse, though she played along with it. "It is." She gave him a polite smile.

Matthias knew the encounter would end soon if he stayed quiet, and he was not letting that happen. "Wanna grab a bite together?" he asked.

Heather gazed at him. It would be inappropriate to refuse, and their agreement still stood; she wasn't someone who'd break promises easily. It hadn't been rosy on her side either. The more she thought about her relationship with Matthias, the more confused she was. She wanted someone to tell her what to do.

She thought nothing good would come if she got herself entwined with a dangerous guy like Matthias, and her instincts were always spot on. She didn't want anything to do with him, since it wasn't her nature to risk herself.

"Sure," she answered politely, putting some distance between her and Matthias. They went ahead in silence, and they had lunch together without saying a word. Matthias wanted to break the ice, but no matter what he did, he couldn't say a word.

Heather, on the other hand, felt guilty when she saw Matthias at a loss. She was trying to come up with a way to approach him without risking herself. And they weren't teenagers anymore. Acting sheepish made them look like children, and the thought annoyed her. She then started eating faster because she needed to get back to work, and she couldn't stay in a room with Matthias like that.

Matthias noticed Heather's reluctance, so he went for it without reservations. They had a deal, after all, and he wanted Heather to uphold it. "You've been avoiding me," he said calmly, trying to hide his nerves.

"I was busy with work," Heather explained. She knew it was flimsy, but she was actually busy with work.

Matthias stared down, hiding the look on his face. The mystery weighed down on Heather, since she thought she was doing something wrong. She wasn't asinine enough to think that Matthias was just being shy with her. That's impossible. But she didn't know why he was staring down either. Heather could never understand men and their machinations, since she was a woman after all. Ultimately, she could never fully understand him, though she reflexively wanted to put some distance between them.

"We're straying from the agreement. I want to put us back on track," Matthias said. All he had left now was the agreement they had. He had no idea how to win her back otherwise.

"But there aren't a lot of people who know about us. No matter how much we try to act as a couple, nobody's going to see it. Honestly, is there a point to that?" Heather pointed out the crux of the problem. Since not even Blake told the Langstons anything, barely anyone knew Matthias was "dating" her. She didn't want to bond herself with Matthias either, since she thought she was working well with the status quo. Heather didn't think she needed to get serious with him.

Even if someone did know about them "dating," acting like they were madly in love when they were just starting out would look too suspicious. It's fine. I'll put some distance between us, and being scared of him just confirms his charisma.

Deep down, she was worried she might actually fall for him. That would be a tragedy if it ever happened. Mushy romance was something she eschewed,

so she didn't want to get into this mess. And Matthias wasn't what she had in mind whenever 'the one she liked' was mentioned.

Women were always sensitive to begin with, but Matthias didn't think of that. He instinctively wanted to be closer to Heather. He didn't care how much he had to do or how much he had to embarrass himself, as long as he could do what he really wanted.

It took Evan a long time to finally convince Matthias to be himself, but Heather wasn't making it easy for him. Her reluctance to talk was a blow to Matthias' confidence, but it wasn't enough to stop him. "We have an agreement. We'll have to follow it." He stared calmly at her, as if he was talking about business.

So he's not giving up, huh? She smiled sardonically. This is getting weird. She didn't hate Matthias, but she didn't like him either. Eventually, she stopped smiling and shot him a polite stare. "What do you want me to do, then? Elaborate." She wanted to know what he had in mind.

It's just an agreement, not like I sold myself off. She thought it was funny that Matthias took it so seriously. What on earth is he thinking? Complex relationships weren't her cup of tea. She had too much stuff on her plate, so she didn't want more to deal with.

"I want us to act like a proper couple," Matthias answered.

Heather nodded. "If that's what you want, then fine."

Matthias thought he had made a fool out of himself. She doesn't even care. Why'd I even ask her out in the first place?

"I'm done." She put her cutlery down. The conversation killed any appetite she had left. Just when she thought Matthias was a decent guy, he turned back to his old self. If that was the case, Heather didn't see why she should keep talking to him.

Everything he did earlier left a bad impression on her. They got off to a bad start, so she knew the relationship would only worsen down the road.

"We are partners, Heather. I expect you to work with me because I gave you everything you asked." Matthias looked at her coldly. Heather wanted to retort, but she couldn't, for everything he said was the truth.

“You’re forcing me to do something I don’t want?” Heather shot back. She hated it when anyone threatened her, but Matthias didn’t say a word. All he did was look at her. She was in a bad mood to begin with, and Matthias’ request only served to annoy her further.

“You saw the contract. You should know where you stand,” Matthias growled. Since he was going all out, he wouldn’t hold back.

“Thanks for the reminder. I will uphold my end of the deal, but not today.” Heather stood up, glaring at him. The negotiation ended in failure.

Matthias saw her off and smiled sadly. He wanted to talk it out with her, but it broke down. He noticed the change in Heather ever since Valentine’s Day, and he wondered why. Women are fascinating creatures. Getting to his feet, his face fell. Heather had crossed the line that day, but Matthias did the same thing to her too, so none of them could take a step back.

Heather came back to the company feeling down in the dumps. She knew she had a lot to do, but all she felt like doing then was to shred all the documents to pieces. Because of the rectification that morning, she couldn’t even get any of her work done, so technically, she was just starting work in the afternoon. The project manager was a fussy middle-aged man who could never be on the same page with her. Thanks to that, she made little to no progress. There were times she wondered if the project manager was working for Blake. She needed to deal with him, but she had no way of doing it at the moment.

If I can’t do it the right way, then I have to bend some rules. No businessman is innocent. She was trying to find a legitimate way to break through. If she bent the rules, Blake could use that as an excuse to make her life harder. She had a feeling it was a blatant trap just waiting for her to spring. Every step she made was done with careful consideration, for one false move could cost her everything.

She couldn’t bring herself to work through the mountain of documents, since all she could think of was the meeting with Matthias. She wondered how she should deal with him after the negotiation’s breakdown. I shouldn’t have signed the damn contract. But she had no way to turn back time and reconsider her decision.

She didn’t want to think about the talk with Matthias, nor did she want to stay in the office, since it was too suffocating. In the end, she decided to get some fresh air. I think I’ll call Myra. She hit Myra up and asked her where she was.

Myra wanted to talk to her about the marriage with Tony, so they agreed to meet up and vent.

It was already three when they met up. It was the perfect time for an afternoon tea, and that was what they did. Heather blew on the steaming hot tea before taking a sip, but the scalding tea made her stick her tongue out like a child. She could always be herself around Myra, sometimes to the point of being childlike. Myra was also amused by her antics, and she chuckled.

“Is something wrong, Heather?” She winked at her. They could forget about everything and be themselves around each other.

“You’re a lady. Are you sure you should laugh like that?” Heather beamed. She felt more at peace with Myra around, and she could even tease her friend.

“You never call me out in such a hurry. Spill it. It’s been half an hour, and I’m sure it’s important.” Myra wanted to get to the meat of the topic, but Heather was still hesitating, much to her vexation.

“It’s hard to talk about.” She bit her lip. Heather couldn’t talk about her agreement with Matthias, but she needed to vent to someone. For a moment, she didn’t know how to even begin the conversation.

It’s hard to talk about? Myra’s heart sank, because Heather never described anything that way. She shot Heather a look, telling her to keep talking.

“How does it feel to love someone?” Heather asked after much hesitation. She didn’t know how it felt to love someone, nor did she know how to fall for someone.

Myra shot her a look of surprise. “You have a crush?” That was the only reason for that question; at least, that was the only one she could think of.

Heather shook her head. “No. But I don’t dislike him either. It’s a weird feeling.” Heather looked confused, because even she couldn’t understand the relationship between her and Matthias.

Myra stared at her in disbelief. At that moment, she needed Heather to be completely honest with her, or she wouldn’t be able to give her any good advice. “Why’d you ask that question then?” Myra wasn’t about to be fooled. Obviously, she could see that Heather was going through something special

in her life, and she could think of nothing else but romance. Heck, I can practically smell it off her.

“Because I don’t know how it feels to love, so I want to understand it,” Heather answered.

“But if you don’t know how it feels to love, how are you so sure that you don’t love that man?” Myra tried to set up a trap for her, since it would take a bit of work for her friend to admit she had a crush.

“Because I have never thought about dating him. If I don’t want to date him, then how can that be love?” Heather was getting serious, and anyone would think she was talking about recent affairs if they didn’t know better.

Now, Myra was looking at her with worry. She knew Heather hadn’t realized that she had fallen in love. “Loving someone and dating them are two different things. There are a lot of factors to account for in the dating scene. Just because you love someone doesn’t mean you’d date them, and just because you date someone doesn’t mean you love them.” Myra decided to put her problems aside and counsel Heather. Her problems are bigger than mine.

Upon hearing that, Heather looked at her innocently. Myra could see the confusion in her eyes, and she realized Heather knew nothing about the ABCs of love. “Heather, look at me,” Myra told her seriously. “Have you had any breakthrough in romance?” She was reminded of how innocent Heather was. By now, Myra thought Heather would have started learning about the ABCs of love, but apparently, her friend was as ignorant as ever.

For that reason, Myra started worrying for her. Oh no. She received basic sexual education, but she knows nothing about love. D*mn, if this goes on, she’s going to run into some pervy b*stard sooner or later. Myra knew there weren’t any good men around Heather, and some were total manwhores.

The thought that Heather would date someone like that made her nervous, but when she thought about it, she realized Heather wouldn’t fall for someone like that either. Heather was a feminist, so she wouldn’t feel anything for misogynists. That was also one of the reasons Heather was still single.

With how much worse society was compared to school, Myra thought it would be harder for Heather to find a partner, since she couldn’t even get a boyfriend in high school. For some reason, Myra was starting to worry for her,

as if she was Heather's mom. She didn't mind how old Heather was as long as she could find someone she loved.

Most people couldn't stay single for life. They would need a partner, and with how happy things were going on between Myra and Tony, she naturally wanted Heather to be happy as well.

After all that explanation, she still doesn't understand? Wow, now I know how those top scorers feel when they teach me stuff. No wonder she never dated. If she knew nothing, she would gain nothing.

"Let's talk about you." Heather shifted the topic. Since she couldn't talk about her problem, she wanted to talk about Myra's; at least she could help her friend out that way.

However, Myra wouldn't let it slide so easily. She needed to have a long talk with Heather. Every time, she'd stop whenever Heather refused to speak, but not this time. She wanted to get to the bottom of it. "Don't mind me. You wouldn't ask me out for nothing. Stop running away from it. You love to help me, so let me help you for once. Just tell me what you have in mind." Myra stood her ground and wouldn't accept no for an answer.

Why did I ask her out? Heather didn't want to tell her about Matthias, and she couldn't talk about the agreement either. Since she had to keep the fact that Matthias was the source of her problems a secret, there was no point in the conversation. Myra could arrive at the conclusion if they kept it up, and that would be worse than Heather confirming it herself.

"Maybe I'm just lonely." Heather started making up excuses now. She had to fool Myra no matter what.

"You're lonely?" Yeah right. You're always busy, so that's not gonna happen. You don't have time for it, nor would you fall for someone because you're lonely.

"Yes. You'd feel like dating when you're lonely, won't you? And you'd even consider dating someone you would never give a chance to. That's why I asked you what it means to love someone." She lied through her teeth, but she genuinely wanted to know how it would feel like to love someone. Does affection equal love?

Myra didn't believe her fully, but she decided to take the bait. "I can't explain it to you, but you'll know once it comes for you." She couldn't define love that easily, since love came in different forms, just like how she loved Sean and Tony differently.

She loved Sean because of a lot of factors back then, while she loved Tony with all her heart. She knew nobody else could be a better match for her than him, and sometimes she felt like they were one individual instead of two. Myra couldn't explain all that to Heather, since words weren't enough to describe it. Even if she could explain it, Heather might take it the wrong way.

"So you're telling me to wait until fate comes knocking?" Heather smiled dryly. I've waited for years. It probably will never come.

"Maybe it will come sooner if you change your surroundings," Myra said in a roundabout way.

Heather looked at her seriously. She wanted to know what Myra meant, then she realized Myra was saying that her circle was filled with bad men. None of them were close to the kind of person she liked, and she had to admit it. "You think something's wrong with my circle?" she asked.

Myra nodded. "You like men who respect women, but the men in your circle can't even stay loyal. Even if they could, none of them are good enough to attract you," Myra explained. She was Heather's friend after all, so she knew how Heather thought.

"Are you worried I might die alone if this keeps up?" Heather smiled. The atmosphere was getting too depressing, so she had to loosen it a little, or everyone would think they were talking about something serious.

"Haven't you come across someone who's loyal and brilliant enough to attract you?" Myra asked. It seemed simple, but those requirements alone eliminated most men in her circle.

"I do," Heather answered after a moment of hesitation.

Myra's eyes gleamed. Great! She looked into Heather's eyes and continued, "When did you meet him?" Myra was getting excited that Heather finally decided to open up. Could that guy be the reason she's so frustrated?

“I can’t remember. Only a handful of guys fit the bill of the person I would like, but...” Heather trailed off, and the suspense was killing Myra. “But I feel nothing.” Then, she shrugged. Even though their physical looks fitted the bill, their souls didn’t; personality and tastes were important too.

Myra gave her a look of defeat. I can’t talk about romance with her. Guess I’d talk about the market next time. Nonetheless, Myra didn’t give up. “You don’t like any of them?”

“Well, all except one or two, I guess.” Heather thought of Matthias right away. She could see his arrogant expression and the smirk he always wore whenever she closed her eyes. Matthias always looked so vivid to her whenever she thought about him, but she was confused, and she wondered what she felt about it. Is this love, or something else? I just can’t hate him.

“A couple of them?” Myra couldn’t believe it. The conversation had too many twists, and she felt glad she never talked about romance in depth with Heather before, or she might have punched Heather in the face. Her friend wasn’t someone who was great with words, and she’d say something suggestive only for it to be something innocuous.

“I want to approach him and talk to him. Is that love?” Heather asked curiously. At that point, she saw Myra as her mentor in romance.

“Well, you might be feeling some affection for him, and that makes him special. Did you make any moves on him?” Myra asked quickly. She was more concerned about her friend than herself.

“No,” Heather said. She wouldn’t make any moves when she knew relationships were a chore. She started having some thoughts of her own, though most of them were about how she could dodge the matter at hand. When it came to love, Heather was a coward; she’d rather evade the matter than face it head on. There was one time where she liked a boy in her school, and the boy had some feelings for her, but she just had to go and ruin it.

That incident left an indelible mark on her. She knew Myra was worried about her, so she wondered if she should tell Myra about that little incident at school. Maybe I shouldn’t have brushed it off. I should have asked Myra about her thoughts.