

## Standing before Love Chapter 532

They were in a standoff. As Tony didn't want to continue to waste his time with Heather here, he gently carried the asleep Myra into his arms. Heather quickly took a towel and covered her with it. Judging from her actions, it was obvious that she really cared for Myra, so she probably had her reasons for hiding the truth from them.

Heather seemed natural under Tony's firm gaze. Since she was able to say aloud in front of Matthias that she shouldn't be held fully responsible for the incident that happened years ago, there was no need for her to feel guilty toward Myra.

She watched as Tony left with Myra. Their initially wonderful trip at the hot spring resort had been ruined, and the culprit was none other than Matthias. She intended to go and look for him, but the latter beat her to it.

It had been strange for Heather to stay at the pregnant women's zone to begin with, but Matthias' appearance made things worse. It was fortunate that there were no other pregnant women present at that time.

"I don't want to see you," she stated firmly with a furious tone.

Matthias came with a bottle of red wine and two glasses on the tray. As he poured some wine into the glasses and held the tray in front of her, he remained quiet throughout the process, resembling a puppet.

However, Heather pushed the tray back to him while coldly peering at him, refusing to have a drink with him again. When Matthias disappeared back then, Myra had fallen sick for a very long time. He had hurt Myra deeply despite the fact that it was Heather's fault.

Heather genuinely felt that Matthias would not be able to give Myra happiness. Instead, he would only wound Myra further, so she was reluctant for him to get in touch with Myra again.

"Anger harms your health." Matthias approached her, but she immediately avoided him.

The corner of his lips curved upward into a smirk; he even extended his hand in an attempt to touch her but she avoided him.

“Are you jealous of her?” He looked into her eyes playfully. Her eyes had reddened due to anger, which was especially enchanting.

A beauty was stunning even when she was angry. Heather was still as beautiful as she had been when he first met her. Suddenly, he grabbed her arm so quickly that she did not manage to react in time. Repulsed by his touch, she glared at him with a look of disgust.

Matthias’ complexion that was as smooth as a woman’s gave her a slithery sensation. As she did not want anyone to notice her awkwardness, she warned him in a low voice, “Let go of me. Your touch disgusts me.”

“Can’t you look me in the eye?” he growled, disgruntled.

She hated how he was behaving, how he took advantage of his taller and stronger build and lifted her chin with force.

“Look at me. Take a proper look at me. I don’t know what happened earlier, but I certainly read something from Myra’s eyes.” He started to explain to Heather about his previous actions in a commanding tone, but the latter had no intention to listen to him. All she had in her mind now was to figure out a way to escape his grip.

Upon being ignored, he carried on with his explanation. “I could tell from her gaze that she recognizes me. The way she looked at me was as if she remembered our past.”

Heather’s body stiffened at his words and a chill ran down her spine. There would be a day when Myra regained her memories, but it must never happen now when she was pregnant, for fear that she couldn’t accept it.

“Don’t ever let her remember the past, and don’t ever appear before her again,” she warned him cruelly. She seemed to realize something—the more Matthias appeared in front of Myra, the more the latter remembered.

“Don’t tell me what to do. Why should I agree to your requests?” He was considering if he should strike a deal with her as he had really given up on Myra—his unusual behavior earlier was merely due to the reminiscences of the past.

“If you are truly concerned about Myra, don’t ever make her remember the unpleasant past. You know that your disappearance had given her a

devastating blow.” Heather spoke the truth. Myra must never recall Matthias at this time; it would definitely trigger her.

“Both of us know who caused my disappearance. You are merely afraid that I will tell her the truth about what exactly happened back then and destroy your relationship with her. A freak like you only has one true friend since young, and that is Myra. You are afraid to lose your pathetic friendship.” His every word agitated her and caused green veins to protrude at her temple as she glared at him in resentment.

Nobody had ever dared to say those words to her. In reality, Heather was a woman with an unpleasant character, a pathetic worm who lacked friends and families. She even seemed to have no luck in romance.

With all the strength in every fiber of her being, she shoved him away and slapped him hard on his right cheek. Soon, his face became red and swollen, and just like that, the two glared at each other in indignance.

“Don’t you insult me.” To a prideful woman like Heather, his words poked her heart like a needle.

“Don’t do things that will make me look down on you, then. From the surface, you seem to be bursting with confidence, but you are, in fact, a pathetic worm with an inferiority complex.” Yet again, he used the term ‘pathetic worm’ to describe her, an insult that hurt her deeply.

“You dared not accept my feelings because you are afraid that the person I love is still Myra and that I have other motives for pursuing you. You thought about it a lot, yet you refused to believe that I love you. It’s your inferior self that made you believe an enemy like me will never fall in love with you. You don’t believe that you have what it takes to make me fall for you.” While Matthias emphasized his point, it sounded as though he was saying that to himself as well. They were both similar in character—if it wasn’t for their inferiority complex, the three of them would probably have been in different circumstances.

“Why can’t you believe that I have fallen in love with you the moment I lay my eyes on you? I have loved you for so many years. Despite so, I have been trying to persuade myself to give up on my feelings for you because I resented you a lot at the same time.” With both hands on her shoulder, he shook her body as he tried to talk some sense into her while ignoring the fact that his

currently swollen face looked hideous. All he cared about at the moment was that he couldn't get his feelings through to her.

"You should make it clear who you truly love deep down before saying all that to me. Ask yourself whether the person who you have set your heart on since the very beginning is me or Myra. Do you swear that you have never been charmed by her or liked her? If you told me that she was the one you loved in the first place but you then fell in love with me, I might find it more believable. However, you told me that the person you have loved since the very beginning is me and that Myra was the second choice because you thought that you were not a good match for me. Let me tell you this—you make a worse match for Myra." Heather wantonly expressed her indignance. The more Matthias tried to explain, the further he pushed her away from him.

"I don't know. Maybe I was too young and naïve. Now that I think about it, the person who made my heart race is undoubtedly you. It feels different to love you and to love her. At that time, I just thought that as long as I stayed with her, she could keep making me feel warm in my heart." He seemed lost; he was searching for an answer as well, but nobody could give him one, and nobody could tell him if being charmed and liking someone were the same.

"I like Myra platonically, just like how you like her. Doesn't she make you feel warm inside too?" he rebuked. He had taken relationships too lightly. Now that he reflected on his past, he realized that he had made a huge mistake.

"I like Myra, but I know that she will one day find the love of her life, and that person will hold a more important place in her heart than me. These are two different kinds of love—love between best friends and love between a man and a woman. Don't mix them up." Heather stood firm on her views, stubbornly thinking that Myra was the person whom Matthias truly loved and that all his confessions were baseless nonsense.

"Your stubbornness leaves me speechless." He gave up on persuading her as she almost talked him into believing her words instead.

"Please leave now. You are disturbing me." She pointed in the direction of the door. His action only made her find him more wicked and childish.

Left with no choice, Matthias scoffed and took his leave. It seemed like Heather would not be changing her mind, which instantly dispirited him. He had received kind treatment from the Langstons and gone to the gallery with

Heather the other day, so he thought that they had a fresh and pleasant start in their relationship, but it turned out that he had made a fool of himself.

Looking at Matthias from the back, she coldly added, “Matthias, no matter when you started to fall in love with me, your actions make me look down on you. You claimed that Myra was the one you loved before this, but now you totally disregard her well-being. You don’t love anyone at all. What you call love is nothing but possession.” Having been through all that, she had seen through him—he was someone she would never fall in love with, someone who did not deserve her love.

With that, Heather clambered up from the hot spring and wrapped herself in a towel. Her expression was indifferent, devoid of any warmth. If it wasn’t for the fact that Myra was now pregnant, she would have confessed the past to her. If Matthias continued to force her any further, she would have a breakdown.

There were private lounges in the resort. Heather found out where Myra’s lounge was and directly headed over. Her footsteps stopped in front of the door before she knocked on it and said, “It’s me, Heather.”

Tony soon answered the door, and then she went in. The room was heated to an optimal temperature. As Myra was sound asleep, Heather and Tony sat on the couch and looked at each other quietly.

The two of them silently waited for Myra to wake up; Tony pursed his lips with a solemn look on his face, and Heather’s expression wasn’t any better than him. Her cold expression seemed to make the temperature in the room drop by a few degrees.

With similar freezing air around them, they resembled two icebergs. Then, Heather averted her gaze and looked at some other place, while Tony did the same as well.

The atmosphere became awkward, with an invisible gap between them. He did not understand why she wouldn’t tell the truth, but she really couldn’t tell him. Therefore, at that moment, there was only silence between them.

The clock ticked away. Sometimes, one minute seemed like an instant; at other times, one minute seemed like an eternity. Currently, Heather and Tony couldn’t wait for the time to pass by. When Myra finally woke up, they inwardly heaved a sigh of relief.

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Hours after hours went by; three solid hours had passed before Myra woke up. The hot spring resort operated 24/7, so nobody woke her up. They patiently waited for her to wake up on her own instead.

When Myra woke up, she did not remember what had happened before this. All she recalled was that she had bumped into Matthias at the hot spring resort, and everything else that happened after seemed to have faded from her memories. Nevertheless, she simply assumed that her memories were hazy because she was too tired.

This was, in fact, good news to both Heather and Tony. It would be for the best that Myra did not remember any of it. At this moment, the awkward atmosphere instantly disappeared and the three of them were back to laughing and chatting around.

Although there were still some hard feelings between Heather and Tony, they did not show it in front of Myra. As both of them were good actors, they easily concealed it from her.

Myra beamed at them, causing them to ignore the flash of uneasiness in her eyes, as well as the cryptic gaze she had when she looked at Heather ever since she had woken up.

Both Heather and Tony did not notice her unusualness. They started to act natural when Myra woke up, so they were unaware that she had already regained her consciousness before they even noticed it.

She lowered her eyes so that the other two wouldn't note the difference in her gaze. Facing two masters of disguise, she had her ways to disguise her true feelings too.

"Let's head back!" Tony suddenly suggested.

It was late and they should return home soon. They had spent the whole afternoon at the hot spring resort after all. To that, Myra smiled and replied, "I'm afraid I won't be able to sleep when I return home."

Tony cast a glance at Heather before he turned to Myra. and when Heather noticed it, she sensibly chimed in, "Let's have some more fun and return home later, then."

Myra agreed to her suggestion, and Tony had no objection either. With that, the three of them—each with respective thoughts in mind—got into Heather's car and drove straight to Zion Club since they had not been there for a long time.

When Elliot was informed that Myra and Tony were coming, he went downstairs to welcome them personally and saw Heather. Upon seeing them together, he nearly could not believe his own eyes.

"Tony, Myra, I thought that you two were still abroad. Why didn't you inform us in advance that you are coming back?" Elliot was a little surprised by their sudden visit, but what was more surprising was that Heather was with them.

That was because Heather was rumored to be a workaholic. For multiple times, Philip had tried to invite her on a date but she kept rejecting him with the excuse that she was busy with work. Now, it appeared that she was the first person who learned about Myra and Tony's return. Elliot truly could not understand the relationship between Myra and Heather.

"Hello, Miss Langston. We've met again. You're beautiful as always." Elliot greeted her warmly as he was usually extra amiable when it came to beautiful women.

"Hello, Young Master Elliot," Heather greeted nonchalantly. Her expression was as though frozen for the entire day—she was either impassive or wore a stiff expression.

However, Myra seemed to not mind any of it. After all, when Myra looked at her, she would deliberately squeeze out a smile. Tony, on the other hand, seemed unfazed; he only acted like his usual self. Nevertheless, after the unpleasant encounter with Matthias and the series of events that came after that, which was something that even Tony had no knowledge of, Heather was in an awful mood. Yet, she still had to force herself to put on a smile, which explained her stiff expression.

Her phone was particularly quiet on this day, especially without Myra's text messages since the latter was right next to her. Moreover, Matthias also did not disturb her as they had a conflict earlier.

There weren't even Leon's chatty messages because she had planned to look for him the next day. Everything had jumbled up into a big ball of mess, and Heather really wished that she could drop all of it and devote herself to her

company instead. She believed that the following day would probably be a fresh start.

Meanwhile, Myra's appetite was whetted by the delicacies in Zion Club as she could not get such authentic local food abroad. She was used to the taste of the food in Bradford City. Although the foreign cuisine was refreshing, it was still no match to that from her hometown.

Like Heather, Elliot was shocked by Myra's increase in appetite after returning to the country. While devouring the delicacies, Myra discovered that eating scrumptious food would put her in a good mood. The more she ate, the fewer worries she had.

Although the four of them were not as hyped up as they had used to, Myra did not want to go home just yet. Therefore, they proceeded to have fun till late at night. If Tony had not forcefully dragged her away, she would have stayed longer.

In the end, only Elliot and Heather were left behind, staring at each other. Elliot took the initiative to ask, "Miss Langston, it's late. Do you need me to send you back?"

He felt that he should offer his kindness as a man since Heather had handed her car keys to Tony to lend him her car.

"No." She rejected his offer without any hesitation nor any words of courtesy.

"It's not safe to take a taxi home so late at night." Elliot continued to show her his concern. He even regretted a little for not asking Phillip to come over so that the latter would have the chance to send the lady home. However, he was aware of Myra and Tony's intention to set Heather and Lucas up. At the same time, he thought that with Phillip's character, the man was probably not going to be a good match to Heather, especially having seen how indifferent Heather could be. After some contemplation, he still found Lucas a more suitable man for her. In addition, ever since Myra had left, Heather had become even more unapproachable and cold—even looking at her expression gave him the chills.

"I'll be fine." When Heather gauged that Tony and Myra had probably left the club by now, she did not bother to talk to Elliot further. She stood up at once in an attempt to leave as well. Elliot had wanted to display his kindness, but upon seeing her unfriendliness, his words were stuck in his throat.



“Young Master Elliot, you can leave.” She emanated an aura that was even colder than Tony’s, making those around distance themselves from her.

Watching as she left, Elliot had a thoughtful look. Women like her were really rare, and she was very different from the rumors. According to the rumors, Heather was smooth and sleek in dealing with people, and she had indeed displayed amazing social skills during the day when he first met her.

However, she seemed strange this time around. He had a hunch that this was her true self, so perhaps her perfect social skills were merely a show she put up for the sake of doing business. It was obvious that she had a strong desire to succeed, which made her a completely different person from Myra.

He was baffled by friendships between women—Myra had a best friend like Heather and another like Estelle. Women surely were complex creatures. It was fortunate that Tilly wasn’t as complicated as them. In contrast, Tilly was simply much more adorable.

Concurrently, Heather had hailed a taxi and was on her way home. She disliked the shabby-looking interior of the vehicle and felt uncomfortable sitting on the hard seats without a soft cushion. With her arms folded across her chest, she pulled a long face that repetitively deprived the young driver of the courage to strike a conversation with her.

Every time he looked into the rear mirror and met her pair of cold eyes, he would swallow back the words he wanted to utter. Her gaze alone was enough to send shivers down the spine of anyone she was staring at.

As the car drove along the road, Heather’s face brightened and darkened intermittently under the passing street lights. She remained in the same position throughout the journey without the slightest change in her expression.

The young lad almost suspected that he had picked up a beautiful female ghost. When the taxi pulled to a stop in front of the Langston Residence, Heather opened the door and handed the driver a note worth 100.

The young man initially intended to give her the change, but she alighted from the taxi without looking back, so he went after her as he did not want to take advantage of her.

There was a bashful expression on his honest-looking face as he spread his palm to hand her the money.

“Here’s your change,” he shyly said.

Heather could not help smiling faintly and replied, “Just take it as your tips.” She did not take the money from him, and her voice sounded angelic in his ears.

After that, the main gate of the Langston Residence opened at her voice command and she headed inside, leaving the young lad rooted to his spot. Then, he held the money tightly in his hand and retracted his extended arm.

When he glanced at the lady from the back again, she was seen entering the door and slowly disappearing from his sight. Only then the young man revealed a shy smile. Meeting a stunning woman like her made his spirits fly high.

Heather had no idea that she had become a stunning scenery to someone else and made his day; she kept wearing her cold expression as she walked to her room. The day ended at the moment she opened the door, and the next day would be a new one.

Her room was filled with a familiar fragrance, which made her feel relaxed both physically and mentally. It was yet another awful day. Meeting Matthias had never been good news to her when he kept putting her life off track.

After all, he had disappointed her over and over again. Sometimes, even she could not figure out why she would still set her hopes on him despite knowing that he would never do anything to make her happy.

If this was how one behaved upon falling in love with someone, Matthias’ actions made her wonder what sort of mortal sins she had committed in her past life to gain his love in this life.

On this night, Heather was able to fall asleep very quickly as she already had plans for the following day. She had never officially introduced Leon to the Saffords, hence it would be a good chance to invite them out so that she could get them acquainted with one another.

Early in the morning, she woke up in time and immediately texted Leon. However, she did not receive any replies from him, so she thought that he might still be sleeping. Then, she texted Paige a similar message to invite her out to Cat Maid Café, where the waitresses dressed up in maid’s outfit and cat ears. There were also many cats of various breeds in the café.

Heather was an animal lover. Although it would be impossible for her to rear one on her own, she still enjoyed occasionally petting one. When Leon woke up and saw the name of the café, which sounded like his cup of tea, he immediately contacted Heather.

On the other hand, Paige was quite surprised that Heather would invite her over to a place like that. The café was designed with an anime theme, something she did not expect Heather to be fond of. Truth was, Heather chose the place to suit Leon's preference.

Of course, Josiah would not go to this sort of a place, but it was not Heather's intention to force him to go. She just thought to let the two youngsters, Paige and Leon, get to know each other.

After that, Leon showed up at the café on time. Upon seeing the waitresses in maid costumes and cat ears, he could feel his heart racing.

He arrived a little early this time. Since Heather had yet to arrive, he began his plan to flirt with the ladies.

Meanwhile, Heather had gone to Paige's office to pick her up. When they pushed open the door and entered the café, they saw Leon chatting with a waitress.

Paige spotted Leon at one glance and said to Heather, "I didn't expect there to be male waiters too." As she thought that there were only female waitresses in maid costumes in the café, she was surprised to find a mixed-race young man here.

Heather burst into laughter at her remark and then waved at Leon. "Leon's flirting with girls again when I'm not paying attention." Hearing this, Paige turned to Heather in surprise, then glanced at the puzzled Leon. Finally, it dawned on her that she had made a fool of herself.

She felt awkward, but Leon was clueless about it and walked up to them. It turned out that he was actually quite tall.

He kept staring at Paige, making her feel embarrassed, while Heather noticed his interest in Paige at once. This guy must be contemplating if he should pursue her.

Mercilessly, she stomped on his foot, making him turn to her in pain. “Heather, you’re giving my future girlfriend a fright!” With a forced grin, he exclaimed as he tried to contain the pain, but his frivolous tone made Paige look down on him.

Upon hearing his words, Paige ran off with a flushed face. Only Heather knew how much of a playboy Leon was, who constantly flirted around with women.

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Sunlight poured into the room, casting long shadows that overlapped one another on the floor. The three of them were quiet for a moment and the atmosphere was a little awkward.

“Let’s find a place to sit,” Heather said to Paige next to her, ignoring Leon.

After choosing a spot next to the window, she directly went to take a seat while Paige followed her from behind. Leon fiddled with his hair and the corner of his lips curved upward into a resigned smile before he quickly went after them.

As Paige sat down next to Heather, Leon took a seat opposite them. For the whole time, his eyes were intermittently glancing at Paige. Heather took in his behaviors and met his gaze in the course, so she was pretty clear of his intention.

He had always been interested in beautiful women, especially mature ones. Paige carried the temperament of a mature lady from her head to toe, but what was more uncommon was the sense of abstinence on her.

Naturally, a playboy like him could not resist the charm of a mature yet chaste woman.

“Introduce yourselves.” Heather prompted in a formal tone. Not only was she not against workplace romance, but she also thought it might be good for Leon to fall in love with Paige.

On the other hand, Paige particularly disliked Leon’s frivolous bearing. She cast a look at him and impassively said, “Nice to meet you. I’m Paige.” She was reluctant to even hold out her hand to shake his.

Courtesy was meant for those who deserved to be respected, and that did not include Leon. Paige's impression of him was awful, especially when he kept staring at her with a greasy gaze, which made her feel extremely uncomfortable.

A small smile formed on Leon's face. He looked mesmerizing and beguiling when he smiled, but Paige was not attracted to him.

"I'm Leon. Nice to meet you too." He winked at her, trying hard to make her fall head over heels for him.

Great, Heather thought, Paige's impression of him must have hit rock bottom now. While watching their interactions from the sideline, she noticed that Leon seemed to have hit a hurdle. Even with his heavenly handsome face, it could not guarantee him smooth sailing when it came to picking up girls.

However, the colder Paige treated Leon, the more motivated he was to win her heart. The challenging situation evoked his desire to conquer her. To him, women were always at hand, and he loved those who were hard to get.

Not only did he not learn his lesson from the failed attempt to charm Heather, but it instead intensified his urge to flirt with other women who were uninterested in him. Nevertheless, there were very few who were able to resist his charm, and it was rare to encounter them. Now, he had finally met Paige, who was similar to Heather.

Therefore, Leon definitely would not miss this opportunity. Still, he had to make clear one thing, and that was whether Paige had a boyfriend. Heather had only mentioned that Paige was unmarried, but she did not tell him if she was still single.

He wanted to know more about Paige, and although he was able to investigate her background using the computer, it would be more direct to hear it from Heather.

After a while, three cups of civet coffee were served by the young waitress that Leon had flirted with earlier. She was a girl in her teenage years, and her face was flushed red from shyness.

Seeing Leon wink at the waitress, Paige felt disgusted at him. She found this sort of behavior childish and irresponsible. However, the young waitress was

mesmerized by Leon's flirtatious acts. If Heather had not darted her a sharp gaze, she probably would have been reluctant to leave.

The timid girl cast a glance at Heather before hastily leaving. Then, Heather darted a warning look at Leon, whose playful smile remained, unfazed by her warning. Meanwhile, Paige tried to not look at him as the very sight of him annoyed her.

Two years ago, Paige had a relationship that she would never forget—she had encountered a playboy. She initially thought that she would spend the rest of her life with him, but it turned out that the man had merely been fooling around with her.

Throughout their relationship, he had been caring to her; he treated her with extreme gentleness and would always say sweet nothings to her. However, she later realized that it was exactly how he had treated every woman he met, with the same tactics and means.

Just as she had genuinely wanted to marry him, she found out about his true colors from someone else. As the saying went, once bitten, twice shy. Ever since the incident, Paige had been devoting herself to work and never fantasized about romance.

Now, looking at Leon reminded her of the man; he even had the same flirtatious gaze as the latter. When one succumbed to love, one might mistake the flirtatious gaze as admiration to oneself. It was only after one had come to their senses did one know that he or she was merely a prey who had been played.

As seconds went by, Leon's interest in Paige grew, but it was the opposite for her feelings toward him, especially when she noticed the trace of lust in his gaze as he looked at her.

After all, Heather had introduced Leon as her junior in university as well as her friend.

So why is he looking at his friend's friend like that? Paige felt disdainful as she thought. He is just the same as my ex-fiancée. Both of them are sc\*mbags.

Meanwhile, Heather gracefully took a sip from the cup of coffee in her hand. Unlike her, Leon disliked doing things slowly. He preferred gulping the coffee because to him, coffee was merely a drink to keep him awake.

The way Paige drank her coffee was different from Heather's as well. While the latter usually seemed as if she was conducting a coffee-tasting session, Paige drank like any other ordinary person.

Upon seeing the way Heather drank, Leon wore a smug look on his face. "Heather, you possess the temperament of a noblewoman no matter what you do." Leon had always loved to make fun of people—the more he liked a person, the more he made fun of them. Judging from the wide grin on his face, Heather could more or less guess that he was not complimenting her. After all, he usually praised the person before saying anything harsh.

"Shut up," Heather replied rudely.

Hearing this, Paige looked at the two of them with a puzzled look on her face. This is probably how they interact. Therefore, she remained silent as it would be safer to watch quietly from the sideline to prevent getting involved in anything.

"Heather, I was complimenting you. Why are you so fierce to me?" Leon grumbled in aggrievement. However, Paige found his attention-seeking behavior unacceptable, especially when it came from a man because her ex-fiancée had used to do the same, just more extreme.

Why would a grown man like him try to make people feel sorry for him? Is he trying to compete with a woman to find out who is more sentimental between them? With such thoughts in mind, she inwardly gave him a negative score.

Nonetheless, she had some reservations about his working ability. After all, he must be a professional in his industry to be able to be recruited by Heather. No matter what kind of character he had, she still hoped that he would be mature and responsible in his work; hence, she suppressed her disapproval toward him for the moment.

"Nothing good ever comes out from your mouth. You can tell me straight if you want to criticize me. Don't play any tricks," Heather snarled. Paige, who witnessed Leon being told off, felt a little happy as seeing Leon being scolded actually eased her discontentment.

"Heather, I can't believe that you view me in such an awful manner. I complimented you from the bottom of my heart, yet you treated me so cruelly." Leon continued to act pitiful; his pair of large bottomless eyes could even melt the heart of the observers.

Then, he took the opportunity to approach Heather but was pushed away by the latter. "Drop the act. We are here to talk about some serious matters." She did not want to continue to watch him fooling around, and at the same time, she did not want Paige to see her fierce side.

"Okay, I understand. The reason you asked me out is to discuss the start-up of the business, right?" Leon casually replied. He seemed nonchalant, as if he did not treat this important matter seriously.

"What are your thoughts? We can briefly discuss it today." At this topic, Heather's attitude became stern as she pushed the cup of coffee to one side. The way she slightly narrowed her eyes was stunning.

Her eyelashes were prominent and her complexion was flawless under the sunlight that cast on her face. Leon could not take his eyes off her gorgeous face, and Paige took notice of the hint of inconspicuous fervent emotions in his gaze.

However, it lasted for barely an instant. When Paige looked into his eyes again, all she could see was a smug look. It stunned her for a moment and made her think that she might have seen things. Nevertheless, Leon falling in love with Heather wasn't something surprising.

"Pick an auspicious day to start the business. It's that simple. We will play according to the rules and take it one step at a time. We are just starting a company. Relax and have fun." Leon had always been skittish, but the word 'have fun' stung Paige's heart and caused her to glare at him in anger.

When he realized that her fierce glare was directed at him, it was too late for him to regret his words. Then, she uttered in dissatisfaction, "We are not starting a company for fun, so I hope you can take this seriously. The three of us gathered here today to make plans about our business, and we are going to start from scratch. This is an important moment in our lives. If we have this sort of carefree mindset, how are we going to face all the future challenges?"

Listening to Paige, Heather became more engrossed in watching the commotion and gloated over Leon's position. He's in deep trouble now! He actually rubbed the nice-tempered Paige the wrong way and infuriated her. Thinking of this, she was somehow secretly excited about the turns of events. Although she knew that Leon was extremely serious about their new business set-up, she had no intention to explain to Paige on his behalf. Instead, she



wished that Paige would be able to teach him a lesson for speaking without thinking.

When Paige started questioning Leon without warning, the atmosphere suddenly became so serious that he felt awkward. It seems like Paige can't take jokes.

Pleadingly, he darted a glance at Heather, hoping that the latter would stand up for him and explain the situation. However, she only gave him a you-are-on-your-own glance in return.

"Please don't misunderstand me." Since Heather had no plans in helping him, he had no choice but to clear the misunderstandings himself. "Have you heard of Chairman Mao's famous quote? It is said that 'all enemies are paper tigers'. Our strategies should be built on the foundation of our contempt toward the enemies, but our tactics should be devised by starting from taking them seriously. What I'm trying to say is that we should have a carefree mindset when working. A happy job makes a healthy life."

Leon was not sure if Paige accepted his explanation, but from the surface, her anger seemed to ease a little. Her gaze somehow made him feel guilty and reminded him of his homeroom teacher when he was in third grade, who had dominated his nightmare as a child. He intended to ask Heather in private if Paige had been a teacher before this because her intimidating presence was comparable to that of a stern homeroom teacher.

Heather took another sip of coffee, concealing her smirk with the cup. I can foresee that things will become interesting between them. They seem to make quite a good match.

"Paige, do you have any suggestions?" Heather thought that it was time for her to say something, else Paige and Leon would continue to stare at each other awkwardly.

"November is just around the corner. Why don't we set the grand opening on the first day of the month? I've checked and it turns out that it's an auspicious day." Paige had long been waiting for this day to come. Ever since Heather mentioned finding a day to officially start their business, she had been keeping it in mind. After conducting some research, she thought that 1st November was a good day.

“I don’t really mind the date. The arrangement of marketing activities on that day is more important. Don’t you think that you guys should be a little more specific and practical in your proposals?” Heather said helplessly. Not only was Leon being unhelpful, but even Paige’s suggestion was not on point.

## Standing before Love Chapter 535

In an instant, the atmosphere changed and Paige’s face flushed pink. When she thought about it carefully, she realized that she had been influenced by Leon and provided an irrelevant answer. In fact, she had actually made a presentation deck about the proposal for their business start-up, but she had forgotten to bring it along when she came in a hurry.

Besides, Paige was not used to discussing serious matters in such a carefree environment. Just as she was about to respond to Heather after recalling the content in her presentation deck, the latter dropped the topic and glanced at her watch before saying to the former, “ It’s almost time. I will send you back to your office.” This time, they had set their meeting during Paige’s lunch break, so they did not have much time left.

When Paige was about to present her points, Heather’s sudden reminder caused all that she was about to say to get stuck in her throat. Although she did not like disappointing her boss, she did not even have the chance to remedy the situation, and this was all Leon’s fault.

“Take me along,” Leon chimed in shamelessly.

A cryptic smile appeared on Heather’s face when she looked at him. She was clear of his intention, but she only smiled and said nothing, which was her way of giving her consent. Upon seeing that Heather did not refuse his request, Paige kept quiet as well.

When they were getting in the car, Paige took the passenger seat, so Leon had no choice but to sit alone in the backseat. Seeing this, Heather chuckled inwardly. It seems like Paige is avoiding Leon as if he has some sort of disease. I bet that he will have a tough time pursuing her.

Along the way, Leon was oddly quiet, while Heather and Paige chatted casually. There were times when Paige tried to tell Heather that she had prepared a proposal and that she had made a mistake earlier, so she hoped that they could find time again to discuss it in detail.

However, when she remembered that Leon was in the backseat, she could not bring herself to say it. In addition, Heather seemed to have no intention to talk about work, so she could not find the chance to bring it up.

Soon, they arrived at Paige's workplace. Heather parked the car, then Paige opened the car door and got down. After that, she thanked Heather politely, and the latter waved at her and asked her to quickly leave so that her work would not be affected.

After Paige had left, Leon returned to his active self and kept asking Heather various questions.

"Heather, is Paige really the same age as you?" He thought that the way Paige carried herself made her appear more mature than Heather.

"She's one year older than me." Paige was older than her if she was not mistaken.

"Then, what do you think her personality is like in private?" Leon went straight to the point. He was certain that Heather had noticed his intention to go out with Paige, so he need not hide it from her.

"How am I supposed to answer your question?" Heather was baffled as the concept of 'in private' was too general. She could not be giving him a detailed biodata of Paige.

"I'm asking about her personality," he replied seriously.

Heather stopped the vehicle at a cross junction that required them to wait for a long time before it was their turn to cross. Then, she turned around and stared at Leon, making him feel uneasy.

"You should be aware that Paige will be your future colleague, as well as your close work partner. It is better to maintain your relationship with her as friends." She had to make things clear and she hoped that Leon could set a clear boundary between public and private matters. This was to make sure that his work would not be affected by relationship issues.

"It's good to become lovers too," Leon spoke his mind as he didn't want to beat around the bush. He intended to pursue Paige, so he refused to suppress himself.

“It’s going to take a while for our new company to get on track. I don’t wish to see my two most important assistants unable to do their jobs properly because of relationship issues.” The way Heather explained was subtle, yet it was enough to highlight the possible consequences to him.

“Heather, I understand your concerns. I know you want me to be serious with her.” It would be impossible for Leon to not understand what she implied.

It was soon their turn to cross the junction, so Heather immediately turned around to face the front and maneuver the car to move forward. A sly expression flashed across her face as she thought, With his charm, not anyone he targeted can escape.

“You have to be serious with her, and also with the condition that it won’t affect your work. Of course, I don’t wish to see you playing with her feelings.” She was harsh with her words and even stressed them by using a stern tone, which, in fact, made him feel quite uncomfortable. Moreover, she also used the words ‘playing with her feelings’. In his dictionary, relationships were consensual and should be formed or broken without any hard feelings.

“Don’t you think it’s inappropriate to think of me so lightly like that?” Leon felt aggrieved. I’m not a jerk who takes relationships lightly.

“You know how you felt about those ex-girlfriends of yours. You insisted on dating them the moment you took a liking to them even though deep down, you knew that they weren’t exactly suitable for you. Therefore, you didn’t commit yourself in those relationships and ended up hurting not only yourself but the girls as well.” Heather had long been wanting to tell him off for his ways in dealing with relationships, so she took the opportunity to reprimand him.

Leon was a little ashamed when she mentioned this, but he was never a person who would learn from his mistakes. To him, the shame was merely temporary, and he would soon forget about this and continue to do what he had been doing—indulging himself in women.

“We can be in a relationship when we start to take a liking to someone. There isn’t anything wrong about it.” The bullheaded Leon refused to face his problem despite knowing that his actions were wrong.

“You have to be serious when you like someone. You have to devote 100 percent of yourself to the relationship and not exhausting all your effort but

only manage to give 60 percent in the relationship. Love is not an examination with 60 marks as a passing score. Without giving 100 percent of sincerity and affection toward your partner, you won't be able to continue to walk the path of life together with her." Deep down, Heather still believed in true love, but she did not believe in the existence of a person who would commit 100 percent in the relationship.

While she was afraid that she could not meet someone who she would love wholeheartedly, she was also afraid that the person she fell in love with would not love her back the same way she did—this was the reason she dared not be in a relationship with anyone.

"You say that I have to be 100-percent committed, but that doesn't mean that I have to reach 100 percent from the very beginning. We can take our time, and during the process, it's natural for couples to split or separate." Leon disagreed with her obsession to commit 100 percent in love. If relationships could be so perfect, there would not have been so many break-ups in the world.

"Therefore, you chose to settle for infatuations. Although I disagree with it, I won't interfere in your affairs. However, it's different this time. Paige is my old friend and my future right-hand man. I have to remind you and hope that you can think before you act," Heather replied sternly as she had to make sure he understood that if she were to choose a side, she would definitely side with Paige without any hesitation.

As Leon twiddled with his finger, a frivolous smile played by his lips. This was the first time he received a warning before he even started pursuing a woman.

"Heather, I know my limits." Of course, it would be impossible for him to back away unharmed when it came to relationship matters—just like how hard he had tried to win Heather over but to no avail.

Love was something that nobody could ever fully comprehend. She had unhesitatingly sided with Paige, which indicated that she probably had not thought that he could get hurt as well.

In the last few years, Leon had been deeply wounded by Heather. He had taken things very seriously with her and threaded carefully in giving his all in order to pursue her. In the end, all he received in return was a reply that they should remain as friends. Sincerity never promised one a lover. There were

even times when he thought that she felt something for him, but she had resisted her feelings without letting him know about it.

Not only that, but she had never even given him the chance to start a relationship with her, which was more devastating and disheartening to him than knowing that she did not have any feelings for him. If only she had gathered her courage, even if it was just a little, and was willing to take one step toward him, they probably would have been able to reach the 100-percent love that she had been fantasizing about.

“We’re here.” After a while, Heather parked the car in front of a housing area. It seemed like she had no plans in going in together with him.

Leon hesitated for a while, and when Heather looked behind, she noticed the complicated expression on his face. Perhaps I managed to get my words through to him and he is giving it some thoughts now. Unfortunately, she was probably wrong—Leon was merely regretting the fact that he never had the chance to start a romantic relationship with her.

“Heather, accompany me in. I have something to show you.” In the past few days, he had managed to discover some information, and he thought that those documents would definitely be of use to her. Frankly, he had put in a lot of effort in helping her.

“Is it about the Moriarty Family?” Hearing this, she immediately thought of the Moriartys.

“No. It’s the Lincoln Family.”

Puzzlement flashed across Heather’s face. She had always thought that it was the Moriarty Family, but he mentioned the Lincoln Family instead. Even though she certainly would not want to have anything to do with the latter, she was interested to take a look at Leon’s discovery as she was curious about the Lincoln Family’s hidden abilities.

The door was pushed open and they entered the apartment. It was clean inside, a stark contrast with how it had been before. Heather cast a glance at Leon beside her, wondering when he had started to care about his living environment.

“Let me get you the documents about the Lincolns.” After saying this, he entered his bedroom. Heather was more concerned about the Moriarty’s, but

conversely, he paid more attention to the Lincolns—he did not wish to see her spending her life with the wrong man.

While waiting for him, she took a seat on the couch and surveyed the surroundings. For some reason, she felt that something was off and could not help but frown deeply. As a sharp and sensitive person, she was exceptionally perceptive.

It was only when Leon exited his bedroom that she snapped out of her thoughts. Upon seeing her expression, he wore a knowing expression.

“Heather, stop playing detective. I’m not hiding any women in my house,” he said resignedly. It was obvious from her expression that she suspected him of that.

“Your house can’t possibly be immaculate if it was cleaned by a part-time cleaner. It seemed as if it was cleaned by a girl who fancies you. You should just admit it.” She reckoned that Leon had probably hooked up with a young lady and brought her home. He’s seeing a woman, yet he is going to chase Paige. He’s pissing me off!

“To be frank, I cleaned the house on my own.” Leon pouted. In fact, he wasn’t that incapable of managing his daily life; in the past, he had tried to use that to attract Heather’s attention.

A look of disbelief spread across her face at once, but Leon simply handed her the documents in his hands. “Here you go. Read it carefully.” He had no intention to explain to her about the things that he had done in the past which caused her to have such thoughts now.

Casting a glance at him, she lowered her head to read the documents after taking them over. At first, she casually read it to fulfill her curiosity, but the more she read, the tighter her brows were knitted. It turned out that the Lincoln Family was involved in illegal activities, which was not something that one could overlook. They did everything that could bring them profit; they were not businessmen who kept their hands clean.

“Wow, the Lincoln Family is surprisingly amazing.” Her knitted brows smoothed but her expression was a little stiff.

“A family like them will sooner or later fall apart. This is probably the reason why Matthias came to Bradford City.” Leon made a guess. In fact, his family

was no different either. He had been waiting for his corrupted family to completely collapse.

While he did not know whether Matthias shared his thoughts, his impression of the latter was quite pleasant as he could even see himself in him.

“All this has nothing to do with me.” Heather was not concerned about the Lincoln Family nor Matthias’ purpose.

Leon smirked like a cunning businessman as he replied, “The Lincoln Family is extremely wealthy. Don’t you wish to get something out of them? Do you remember my previous suggestion? You can get in touch with the Lincoln Family through Matthias. It won’t do you any harm.”

It was obvious that he exceeded her in terms of using unscrupulous methods—perhaps due to the fact that men were usually more thick-skinned. In contrast, she would usually dismiss actions like gaining advantages through other people’s family.

Upon seeing her being unfazed by his suggestion, he revealed another important news. “Someone from the Lincoln Family is colluding with the Moriarty Family. Atrigall City was not only the Moriartys’ territory as it housed the Lincoln Family’s hidden forces as well.”

## Standing before Love Chapter 536

This was a sensational piece of news related to the Moriarty Family, and Heather immediately jumped up in excitement upon realizing it. She hastily flicked through the information held in her hands once again while wondering how come she had missed this point as she was quite certain that she had not missed any details before this.

“There’s no point in going through that again because that clause isn’t in there.” Leon pointed to his head to indicate that he had already stored all the important information in his mind. He reckoned it was better to be straightforward about this to her.

“What other important information do you have? Why don’t you reveal it all in one go?” Heather had no patience to deal with the element of suspense he was trying to create. She wanted to know more, there and then, because the Moriarty had evoked a sense of danger in her.



“The Lockes and the Moriartys took hold of Bradford City, one after the other, and their relationship spans in a complicated pattern like a spiderweb.” He reminded her of this point, which was something everyone rarely paid attention to.

Hearing this, she placed down the documents and stared at him with a knowing look. He’s quite right about this. She had never expected the Lockes to have anything to do with the Moriartys. After all, Matthias had openly revealed his intention of coming to Bradford City and had sought cooperation from the Langstons more than once.

“That means, on the surface, it seems like Matthias is here to take over the corporate world and fight for the top spot with the Hart Family, but in actual fact, he’s secretly plotting with the Moriartys.” From Heather’s point of view, Matthias represented the Locke family; judging by his position in the family, she reckoned her views were justifiable.

Unexpectedly though, Leon shook his head and replied firmly, “Take note of my choice of words. I said someone in the Locke family joined forces with the Moriartys, but that person isn’t Matthias.”

“How can you be so sure?” Heather couldn’t help questioning him. After considering the situation, she felt that Matthias was the most suspicious and she could not quite recall any other person from the Locke family who could possibly be involved. Is it possible that Matthias was unaware?

Meanwhile, Leon raised his brows and thought, It seems she doesn’t trust Matthias at all. This is bad news! Lack of trust in a relationship is a relationship killer. What could he have done to leave such a bad impression on her?

“Matthias is the President of Locke Group and he’s been operating the business fairly and squarely. So far, he hasn’t been involved in the underside of the Locke family. Besides, they haven’t actually worked together with the Moriartys openly. It’s all done under the table, so it’s quite likely that Matthias hasn’t a single clue about all this.” He carefully analyzed the situation for her. Then, he pondered again, I’ve done the most I can by explaining things from Matthias’s perspective and helping him win her favor even though he’s my rival.

Despite the reassurance, Heather could not control herself from rapping her index finger on the coffee table, and her action gave out a soft tapping noise. Seeing this, Leon clearly knew what this action meant.

It looks like she's torn in between right now. This was the most he could do for her; as for her subsequent choice, that would be her own decision to make.

"It looks like the Locke family might be a breakthrough for us," Heather said this with a contemplating look on her face. It was hard to get through via the Moriartys, so perhaps it would be easier to go the other way.

"That's why Matthias is critical to this plan." Once again, Leon emphasized the importance of Matthias to her. His main intention was to make her aware that she had to find a way to get closer to Matthias. After all, that was necessary to build up a relationship. If she refused to have anything to do with Matthias, then no matter what, there would not be any spark of interest between the two of them. Leon was just like Cupid trying hard to help build up their relationship.

Hearing this, Heather narrowed her eyes, and the smile she revealed exuded coldness. He's been putting emphasis on Matthias this whole time. It seems like there could be something up his sleeves.

"So, what should I do about me and Matthias?" She continued the conversation and questioned him.

He smiled and answered, "Maintain your relationship with him and infiltrate the Locke Family. It will be beneficial for you."

Looking down, she pondered over the situation. Although his suggestion sounds reasonable, I don't think I can do this. She recalled the encounter she had with Matthias at the hot spring the day before and concluded that they must be mortal enemies. Something bad always happens whenever I meet him. There's no way I can keep up this pretense. Meanwhile, as Heather considered the situation carefully, she also focused her gaze on Leon's face to try and read some insight from his expression.

"Heather, why don't you tell me the things that happened between you and Matthias?" Leon asked as he noticed her hesitation. It looks like things are not going smoothly for her and Matthias. It's quite obvious that they have feelings for each other, but they choose to keep tormenting each other. At this point, he felt like he was starting to become a busybody. After all, he had in fact spent so much effort being involved in things between the two.

When he noted her hesitance, he quickly added, “There’s no need to hide anything from me because I can give you some suggestions from an objective point of view.”

Perhaps he’s right. Subsequently, Heather revealed her innermost feelings to him and told him about everything—both good and bad—that had happened between her and Matthias.

The conversation went on and, suddenly, it became a complaint fest about Matthias. To sum it up, she was fairly displeased with Matthias. This was to the extent that she no longer had any intention of being in contact with him. Each time she encountered him, something bad would definitely ensue soon after that.

After listening to her, Leon burst into a rumbling laugh. She’s finally met her match! There’s finally someone in this world who could cause her distress. Come to think of it, she’s usually the one who gives the other party grief.

“I’m quite impressed with him for being able to subject you to such misery,” he could not help himself and said. However, as soon as he finished his words, he regretted it upon seeing the fierce glare she gave him.

Heather was angered beyond words. His attitude is so unbelievable! I can’t believe he’s on Matthias’s side! At that instance, she was so tempted to rip him to pieces as she felt that he was as despicable as Matthias. Hence, she glared at him continuously to express her displeasure.

As soon as he noticed this, he immediately turned on his words and said appeasingly, “Matthias is such a despicable person. Heather, you’ve encountered a difficult person there. Perhaps the two of you are just not well-suited with each other.” While speaking, Leon tried to maintain a solemn expression but could not contain his smile.

“I’m not interested in hearing your nonsense. Where’s the objective suggestion that you said you’d provide me?” Undeniably, she was quite keen to hear Leon’s objective thoughts.

Just then, he ruffled the back of his head and considered it for a moment before saying, “You don’t have to be too concerned about this because he’s definitely no match for you.”

After waiting for so long, she could not believe her ears as soon as she heard his answer. She stared at him in disbelief. What the heck?

However, Leon beamed widely and continued, "Since he's pursuing you, then why don't you pretend to accept him? By then, you'll be the one who has the say in the relationship. I'm sure you'll be able to torment him."

With a look of dismay, she stared at him and thought, I've been going on and on for so long, but was he even paying attention to my words? "How can you tell that there's no ulterior motive behind Matthias's pursuit? I don't think he's really got feelings for me." This was actually what she was truly struggling to come to terms with.

Hearing this, Leon became even more certain that she had feelings for Matthias. Otherwise, she would not be struggling to come to terms with this. It would not matter at all whether he loved her or not; after all, it would just be a battle of wits between them.

"What if he's really in love with you? What would you do then?" he couldn't help asking. Truth to be told, he was rather hurt that her thoughts were nearly fully occupied by Matthias.

"What else can I do? It's impossible for things to work out between us," Heather uttered without even considering the possibility that things could work out. She'd never envisioned being in a relationship with Matthias; even more so, she would never ever regard him as someone whom she would spend the rest of her life with.

"Since it's impossible, then it would be quite easy for you to put on an act of agreeing to his pursuit. Whether he loves you or has an ulterior motive, it doesn't matter. All you would need to do is to infiltrate the Lockes and obtain the information you are after." After carefully analyzing the situation for her, he felt helpless as he knew that she was not being honest at all. She could not even admit that she liked him.

Heather listened to his analysis and realized that his words made sense. Since there was no chance of her getting together with Matthias, then naturally, there was no harm in them making use of each other.

"I usually don't like to use my relationship as a bargaining tool, neither would I toy with someone's feelings," she mentioned her concerns to him. After all,

she wasn't a player. As for Leon, he was very likely just an accident since she had a clean record all these years.

"Heather, you always have a good strategy, so I'm sure there's nothing you can't accomplish." Leon was quite confident in her capabilities. After all, she had known of his secret feelings toward her all these years, yet she still managed to subtly convince him to work for her willingly.

She looked at him squarely in the eyes. His eyes flickered brightly like a diamond, and the look of affection masked under his expression resembled a deep, cold lake that exuded coldness.

For a moment, Heather maintained her silence and did not say another word as she considered Leon's suggestion in her mind. So far, Tony's impression of Matthias isn't that great. Furthermore, Myra has such a dramatic reaction whenever she sees Matthias. So, I really don't think it's a good idea to continue being in contact with him.

Right away, Leon figured out Heather's concern. "Are you worried about how you're going to explain it to Myra?"

She nodded in response. Right now, Locke Group was at odds with Hart Group, hence Matthias would not be able to appear in front of Myra and trigger her further.

"That's why you should try harder to restrain him. If you don't do anything to rein him in, aren't you worried that he'll go after Myra?" he questioned her further. After considering all the options, he was quite sure that Heather and Matthias were fated to be entangled with each other, so he was quite keen to give them a nudge.

His reasoning made a lot of sense to her, and it was quite rare to see him so serious. Although she was still somewhat hesitant, it was quite obvious that the scales were tipped in the other direction.

"Give me some time and I'll consider this carefully." Heather finally compromised; meanwhile, she started to plan everything silently in her heart.

After that, she left Leon's apartment with a dejected expression on her face. He was used to her being like this, so he assumed that she was probably affected by her relationship woes. Without warning, he reached out and pinched her on her cheeks before hastily shutting the door. Then, all she

could hear was a faint voice that came from the door crack, "Be happy! Don't frown too much!"

She stared at the tightly shut door with a tired look on her face. Normally, she was quite alert and there was no way that Leon could sneak up on her like this. She brushed her cheek lightly, but her expression remained quite dejected.

Meanwhile, Leon leaned against the door and stared at his hands with a silly smile on his face as he recalled the silky touch of her skin, feeling his heart skip a beat.

"Matthias Locke, there's only so much I can do for you. Good luck in winning the heart of our goddess," he muttered to himself.

Along the way back home, Heather's cell phone rang loudly. She calmly took it out and noticed that it was Matthias on the line. After talking about him for the whole afternoon with Leon, his unexpected presence surprised her. His number would have very likely been on the blacklist of her cell phone if it wasn't for her hesitancy.

After some hesitation, Heather answered the phone call and Matthias's gentle voice rang out. Recently, he'd been intentionally trying to show her his soft-spoken side. Initially, she found it hard to get used to, but now she was basically immune to it.

"Heather," he addressed her tenderly.

"Stop that." The moment he spoke, she was already triggered as she disliked being addressed so affectionately, feeling that he had no right to do so.

"I've been quite confused about yesterday's incident. I would like to talk to Myra about it in private. Could you help me arrange that?" As he spoke, his words were grating to her ears. Things were proceeding according to what Leon had analyzed, and everything happened so swiftly that she had no time to react.

"Heather, are you still on the line?" Matthias sounded frantic on the line as he pestered her for an answer.

## Standing before Love Chapter 537

The sound of cars honking from the back brought Heather back to her senses. Meanwhile, Matthias's voice rang out from the phone next to her ear. It was quite fortunate that he had the patience of a saint and had not hung up the call despite her long silence.

Recently, she had become indecisive and found it very hard to say 'no'. She was no longer as resolute and firm as before. Just then, Matthias sensed her hesitation and cleared his throat. Since she's not going to respond, then I'd better back off.

"If you don't want to help, I'll try to find a way by myself." He had no intention of making things difficult for her. After all, she had always been against the idea of him looking for Myra.

After remaining quiet for a long while, she finally replied, "Do you really have to talk things through with Myra? She's pregnant now, and I don't want this to affect her pregnancy." Hearing this, he could tell that she was full of concern for Myra.

Although he was not surprised at all by her answer, this was something that had bothered him for quite some time now. He no longer had any feelings toward Myra, but he could not bring himself to brush off their past either.

"Do you have any other better suggestions? Do you think we should remain as strangers as it is? Someday, Myra's going to recall all this." Speaking of this, he suddenly remembered the joke he once told Myra in the past.

"If I forget about you someday, you must try your best to make me remember. You mean a lot to me." Myra's words stuck to him even till now, and he didn't want to go against his words. Although she had probably meant that as a joke, he had taken it to heart. When Myra said that, she definitely wasn't expecting herself to actually forget about him someday. However, he linked the current situation with her previous words and was quite fixated on these very words she uttered.

"Don't appear in front of her. Or at least stay away for the time being because she can't take all this right now, especially not in her current condition. After she's given birth and recovered, I won't stop you from seeing her and explaining everything." Heather tried hard to make him act with common

sense. She knew that he was not in the best condition right now and it seemed very likely that he would make a rash decision at any time.

On the other hand, Matthias kept his silence. Even though he knew she was being reasonable, he did not want to wait any longer. Why am I the one who's at fault right now? Why do I have to avoid appearing in front of Myra and hide from her like a fugitive just because the past has to be covered up?

"Give me some time to consider this," Matthias replied with hesitation.

Noticing this, she decided to add fuel to the fire. "Didn't you insist that I'm the one you loved? If so, why do you have to make Myra remember the past?" Heather tried to change the topic in hope that this could stop him from acting recklessly.

Matthias seemed overwhelmed by her questions. "Those are two separate things, so why are you bringing them up together?" In the end, he still felt that he was not at fault here.

"Do you even understand women?" She had no choice but to explain this from a different perspective; she wanted him to realize that there was a problem in his train of thought and she didn't want him to insist on seeing Myra.

Hearing this, he was perplexed yet again. I'm indeed not too familiar with how women think. However, he did not know how to respond to this question she had pointed out all of a sudden.

"You keep mentioning Myra in front of me and reminding me of your past with her. Because of that, I feel that your feelings for me aren't sincere. Shouldn't your thoughts be filled with the person you are infatuated with? I don't think it's right to be together with me while thinking of another woman at the same time." Without any hesitation, she blurted the words that she'd never told him before in an attempt to convince him.

In fact, she found it difficult to express her feelings so openly, but at this point, she had resorted to it for Myra's sake. Just yesterday, I decided that I would not forgive him, but look at how I'm calmly expressing my feelings to him right now! Thinking of this, Heather could not control the burst of anger she felt at the moment.

Matthias remained silent as he realized that she was right. Finally, he understood why she always had the notion that he was still in love with Myra.



“You should properly think this through. If you genuinely love me, show me your sincerity. I don’t want you to go anywhere near Myra. Listen to me for just this once, alright?” Making use of his love confession toward her, Heather subtly nudged him into compromising. At the same time, she had subconsciously chosen to follow Leon’s suggestion.

Soon after that, Heather hung up the phone. Meanwhile, Matthias remained silent for quite some time after he hung up. He glanced at his cell phone but was at a loss of what to do. It was definitely time to discuss these problems with Evan. Since Heather had mentioned that he did not understand women, then the best way to overcome this was to talk to the person he knew who understood the most about women—Evan.

“Evan, come over now,” he ordered with a commandeering tone.

When Evan noticed his solemn expression, he wondered, Did something bad happen? Worried, the former went up to the latter at once.

Matthias tried to come up with the words to say but failed, and this caused further anxiety for Evan. In the end, the latter asked, “Sir, is there anything I can do for you?” Right after saying that, he bowed politely. “I would be very pleased to offer my services.” He enjoyed joking around with Matthias like this because he hoped that this could relieve some of the latter’s tension.

However, Matthias’ brows remained tightly furrowed and he looked quite torn. Seeing this, Evan was surprised. What could possibly cause him so much distress? Could it be Regan who’s getting more and more arrogant day by day? Or could he be stressed because of Heather? Evan could somewhat hazard a guess.

“Heather thinks that I haven’t gotten over Myra. She wants me to stop bothering Myra and show her my sincerity. Does she want me to prove my feelings for her by doing all these?” Finally, Matthias tentatively voiced his doubts. Despite feeling that these requests were unnecessary, he was also aware that women were more complicated in their train of thought, which he could not seem to comprehend.

“Sir, since she has already verbally confirmed this, what else are you confused about?” Evan was dumbfounded by Matthias’ question. Heather had obviously stated everything quite clearly, but the latter still doubted her meaning.

“I promised Myra that I would never let her forget about me.” Still, Matthias was quite insistent on this point. He reckoned that he had the perfect opportunity the last time to do as he had promised. After all, his past with Myra remained an important part of him.

Feeling resigned, Evan shot a look at him. He’s quite smart when handling all the business dealings, but why is he so ignorant when it comes to relationships? He’s quite dense about everything.

“Heather’s actually a prideful person, but for her to say all this to you, you must mean something to her too. As such, you should not disappoint her this time. Otherwise, you might not get another chance of getting close to her.” Upon realizing Matthias’s ignorance, Evan began to worry that he seemed to be treading on thin ice with each step he took. Naturally, it made sense for Heather to reject him.

Evan’s tone of voice and his words made everything sound so serious. Matthias was at a complete loss for what to do, so he subsequently described what happened earlier to Evan.

After listening to him, Evan thought to himself, If you weren’t the one paying my salary, I would only have four words for you: You are completely hopeless! Recently, he had been quite anxious about Matthias’ relationship woes. The former realized that the latter—being such a blockhead in his relationship—was definitely a torment for his potential partner.

“You don’t understand women at all. I’ve said all I can, so you need to figure out the rest of it yourself.” Evan felt frustrated after spending so much time explaining to him. What is going on in his head anyway? It’s so frustrating talking to him!

Noticing this, Matthias looked at Evan with an incredulous expression. Why is he so frustrated? I don’t think I did anything over the top. I’ve let go of my ego and gone after Heather with a humble attitude. Look at how she’s been treating me in comparison! Therefore, he had doubts about whether to persevere in his effort.

While Evan had always insisted that Heather had feelings for him, he could not seem to sense it. He felt that she was always keeping a distance from him and he was hurt by it. At this moment, another unexpected incident happened all of a sudden. Robert, who must be up to something, rang up to talk to him out of the blue.

Matthias glanced at the caller ID on his phone and was quite confused, but he hastily answered the call. Right away, Robert's voice rang out, "Matthias, we haven't completed our discussion about our collaboration. If it isn't a bother, could you come over today?"

The sudden display of affection by Robert took him aback. At the same time, he saw a ray of hope at that very instance. If I'm an esteemed guest at the Langston Residence, then surely I would have more chances of seeing Heather. Being able to see her more often would be beneficial in the progress of our relationship!

"Sure, I can drop by anytime. I've actually got all the information ready." After Matthias had returned from the Langstons the last time, he had immediately compiled all the information needed within that night.

"Then just come over right now." In fact, Robert knew that Heather was on her way back home and there was not anyone else at home this time of the day. Therefore, he planned to get her to serve Matthias and they could spend time together to build up their relationship.

"Sure," Matthias agreed immediately; he was anxious to prove his worth to Robert. After all, Robert meant a lot to Heather and Evan had taught him before to win the favor of everyone she cared for.

Subsequently, he brought along a stack of documents and made his way to the Langstons. The white suit he was dressed in further accentuated his milky-white skin and made him look younger than his age. Overall, he appeared energetic and full of vigor.

As he drove to the Langstons, he recalled all of his encounters with Heather. Without even realizing it, he found that he had arrived at the courtyard of the Langston Residence.

Meanwhile, Heather wasn't surprised to see Matthias show up. Robert had been so obvious in his intentions, and she had no choice but to allow it. However, she was still mindful of their unhappy conversation earlier so she did not even bother to greet him as soon as she saw him.

Meanwhile, Robert was unaware of their tiff and simply assumed that she was unhappy because he had invited Matthias over. Throughout their meeting, her face looked stormy.

“Come with me to the study room,” Robert mentioned to Matthias.

As for Heather, she took a seat by the side and kept a low profile. The two men stood up, one after the other, but she remained in her seat, not intending to join them in the study room.

“Heather, come along too.” Robert did not know what Matthias had done to offend her as such. She seems to be quite against him today.

“You guys can go ahead and talk about work. I’m not interested in joining the discussion,” Heather politely rejected. I’m no longer working for Langston Group, so this has got nothing to do with me. Blake should be the one to be involved.

“Heather, I need your insight too,” Robert spoke in an insistent tone.

Left with no choice, she trailed along with them. At the same time, she maintained a distance from Matthias and her rejection toward him was obvious. Matthias didn’t expect to see this soft, feminine side of her; he was also quite surprised that she was actually throwing a tantrum because all this while, despite being mad at him, she would normally just give him the cold shoulder.

If Robert was not around, he would have directly gone to her and talked things through. But unfortunately, this was not possible with the three of them being in the same room. He eagerly helped Robert push the door open, trying hard to depict himself as an agile person of the younger generation. After all, the former was not in tip-top condition lately, so he was expecting that his eager action would win the former’s favor.

Standing on the side, Heather watched Matthias’s overly eager action with a cold expression. What does he intend to achieve by intentionally performing in front of Grandpa? Besides, the Locke Family has links to the Moriarty Family too. Heather hadn’t made up her mind whether to inform Robert about this. After all, if Matthias was well-aware of everything, then they would have brought chaos upon themselves.

## Standing before Love Chapter 538

It was early in the afternoon. Rays of sunshine shone through the drawn shades, dimly lighting up the study room. The atmosphere at the Langstons was quite lively with the noises of children playing with each other in the

lounge. While it was fortunate to be surrounded by so many younger generations, Robert somehow felt that something was amiss.

They entered the room and then silently shut the door behind them. Meanwhile, Matthias directed his gaze at Heather, and his eyes blurred together just then. After that, Robert switched on the light and the whole room immediately became illuminated, thereupon Heather's face appeared clearly in front of Matthias.

"Take a seat." Robert made himself comfortable on a chaise as he invited them to sit, his hands carrying the information provided by Matthias. The former put on his reading glasses because the words on the paper were just too tiny for him to decipher. As for Heather, she casually took a seat on a bronze-colored wooden chair, and to her annoyance, Matthias swiftly took the seat next to her. Seeing this, she furrowed her brows in response.

Matthias then directed a warm smile toward her, but she chose to ignore him; she had no intention of talking to him. Nevertheless, she was preoccupied with her thoughts regarding the Lockes' relationship with the Moriartys. Matthias is the current leader of the family, so it's not possible for him to be unaware of that matter.

She contemplated whether it was necessary to feel him out. I won't be able to obtain the information I'm after if I keep ignoring him. Due to Robert's presence in the study room, she couldn't get close to Matthias so they could only look at each other and communicate silently with the occasional eye contact.

Initially, she avoided his eyes and her expression clearly revealed her displeasure toward him. Nonetheless, slowly, she suppressed the disgust she felt and met his eyes a couple of times.

As for Matthias, he also tried hard to convey his feelings through his expression; he hoped that she could look at things from his point of view. Gradually, her expression softened. Clearly, both of them needed some private time to talk things through, face-to-face.

After a while, he took out his cell phone and tapped on his screen, and Heather heard the 'ping' sound indicating a notification on her messenger system shortly after. She tapped to open it and evidently, it was him who'd sent her the message.

'Would you like to join me for dinner tonight?' He extended an invitation to her. After she had seen the text, she switched off her phone without giving a reply.

Next to her, Matthias saw her series of actions and stared at her with a resigned look on his face. All of a sudden, he saw her give a subtle nod; it was merely an inconspicuous movement of her head.

Just like that, Matthias could not control his glee. He tried hard to suppress the happiness bubbling in him and revealed a slight smile. However, she did not even bother to cast her eyes on him thereafter. After that, he could not help wishing that time would pass by faster so that he could have some private time with her soon. Nonetheless, Robert had not made his decision yet, so there was nothing else Matthias could do but wait anxiously. Unbeknownst to him, Robert was quietly observing all of his and Heather's subtle actions.

The time passed by quite slowly. Matthias had never felt time go by as slow. As for Heather, she maintained a cool composure by his side. Although she'd agreed to have dinner with him, she was still trying to figure out how to glean information from him later on.

Her motive was simple—to figure out the exact relationship between the Lockes and the Moriartys and to find out exactly how much information Matthias possessed. On one hand, she hoped that he would have some insider news so she would not have to get too close to the Lockes; on the other hand, she hoped that he had nothing to do with the Moriartys. After all, if he was in cahoots with them, then their collaboration would not be possible and the Langstons would have another enemy to watch out for.

Staring at his face intently, she wondered if this man could be trusted. As far as things went, for now, he had been quite open and frank in his behavior. Besides, he had also mentioned that he had provoked Hart Group solely because he wanted to replace Hart Group as Bradford City's top-performing corporation.

After all, it was inevitable to become rivals in the corporate world. Most of the time, it was quite hard to distinguish between friends and foes. Firstly, Hart Group was not part of Langton Group's allies. Next, Heather was also clearly aware that she had no say in this matter. Furthermore, Langston Group had previously intended to wait and reap the benefits without putting in the effort.

If it wasn't for the sudden appearance of the Moriartys, the situation in Bradford City would not have become so complicated. As such, if the Lockes were secretly in cahoots with the Moriartys, then the whole situation would become unfavorable for the Langstons and the Harts.

Disregarding the fact that it was very rare for the Harts to cooperate with the Langstons, but even if they did, their collaboration might not be comparable to the joint efforts of the Lockes and Moriartys. Everyone was fully aware of what the Langstons and Harts owned because their business dealings were rather transparent. They were proper, reputable business enterprises after all.

Meanwhile, the Lockes and the Moriartys were different. The Moriartys were very mysterious and no one seemed to be able to identify their actual business dealings. As for the Lockes, they had a hidden side in their corporation that actually touched on the gray side of the law. If the Lockes made use of their hidden influence, then they could definitely plan a surprise attack behind their rivals' backs.

Therefore, in order to get to know in detail the Locke family's dealings, Heather had to maintain her position as Matthias' girlfriend. Not only that, but Leon had also mentioned to her that Matthias' family was pestering him to get into a relationship because their family had a golden rule specifying that each member had to marry by the age of thirty. Since Matthias was nearing his thirties soon, he would have to get married before that.

The elders of the family had introduced a few women to Matthias, but he'd rejected each of them. Now that Heather was officially in a relationship with him, she would obviously be invited over to the Locke Residence; this would be her chance to find out more information and get closer to the other members of the family. By then, it would be easier for her to identify the person who was working with the Moriartys.

After figuring out the whole process, the only thing left was to put this plan into action. The Moriartys were currently keeping a low profile and not making any moves; hence, the only method now was to tackle things from the Lockes' side. Moreover, she reckoned that it was much more comfortable to be in a relationship with Matthias than with Caleb.

From all the years ever since entering the society, she'd never made such a huge sacrifice. Moreover, she had never wanted to sully a past relationship and was quite reluctant to be a despicable person who toyed with one's feelings. However, the circumstances right now gave her no choice at all as

she no longer had the time to consider things carefully. In fact, her grand-aunt, Claris, had lost her life back then because of a similar incident.

Despite knowing that times had changed and it was no longer possible to lose a life from something like this, the consequences of everything on Langston Group and the Langston family were serious and it was very likely that this could lead to the destruction of everything they owned. Although she did not like everyone in the family except for Robert, she also cared for the company that the latter had put so much effort into throughout the decades.

Just then, Heather had basically figured out all the insider news and everything that had happened in the past. Because of that, she could not help feeling worried. At the same time, she finally understood Robert's anxiety.

However, she silently cheered for herself multiple times to boost her self-esteem, and Leon's words appeared in her mind on and off. The current situation reminded her of her first interview ever—she seemed calm on the outside but on the inside, she was anxious beyond words—and her current feelings were just about the same.

At this moment, she recalled her younger, immature self but quickly recollected her senses and tried to overlook the messy situation. I need to figure out my own intentions. There's really no point in being so indecisive because once I start to waver, things will surely turn out a mess too.

All of a sudden, Robert, who had been going through the documents for quite some time, finally said something. His aged voice sounded raspy as he spoke, "Matthias, your proposal is very sincere." Although it was just a simple sentence, it was enough to calm Matthias' nervousness.

After all, he had single-handedly compiled all the information provided to Robert, and it was prepared concisely. Being the one in charge of the Locke Group, he knew the whole corporation like the back of his hands.

"How do you plan to implement our collaboration?" Nonetheless, even though the information provided was concise, the details of the collaboration were not specified.

"I'll bring the proposal over tomorrow." In fact, Matthias had already prepared everything and only needed to make a few amendments once he got home. If he pulled an all-nighter later, then he definitely would be able to have it ready by the next day.



Robert smiled in response. Looks like he's very keen on working together with us. He's quite sincere about it. The proposal he mentioned would have taken some time to prepare; he must have prepared everything in advance to be able to produce it by tomorrow. Thinking of this, he was quite pleased with Matthias' attitude.

Ultimately, he preferred Matthias as Heather's other half, instead of Caleb. Between the two, the former was the best candidate out of all the people he had met so far.

There was also Lucas who'd visited them before, and Robert had obtained all of his background information from a private investigator. His family background was incomparable to the Moriartys. Furthermore, even the Harts had nothing against the Moriartys, so the Lockes were their only hope left. After all, the Lockes' were quite powerful and should not be taken lightly.

In the interim, Heather and Matthias sat next to each other under the flickering light. As Robert looked across the room, he found that the two of them looked like a great match. Heather was his darling granddaughter after all, and no one else in this world knew her better than he did. Evidently, he could tell that she had feelings for Matthias, but there were just way too many factors that made things complicated between them. As such, it hindered their relationship progress.

Although he was merely aware of their most recent tiff, he would definitely understand her complicated feelings for Matthias if he were to learn about everything that had happened in the past.

Meanwhile, in the study room, Matthias was deeply engrossed in his conversation with Robert. As for Heather, she sat quietly without expressing her opinion, which was quite unlike her. Robert shot her multiple questioning looks, but she maintained her impassive expression without responding to him. Though he was tempted to chide her, he chose not to do so in front of Matthias.

Instead, he enjoyed himself talking to Matthias until a slight knock on the door from outside interrupted their conversation. "What's the matter?" His voice turned shriller as he asked the person on the other side of the door.

The butler's voice rang out inaudibly from behind the door due to the good soundproof system in the study room. Impatiently, Robert indicated for him to

enter the room. As soon as the latter entered, the vibe in the whole room changed all at once.

He walked forward to stand in front of Robert before saying politely, “Master, I’m here to confirm tonight’s menu with you.” Earlier, Heather had instructed the kitchen staff to prepare some special dishes for their guest. Everyone knew that Robert paid particular attention to the said guest, so the kitchen had purposely brought in the menu for Robert’s perusal before they started preparing dinner.

Just then, Heather took advantage of Robert’s preoccupation with the menu to talk to Matthias. “It looks like Grandpa will keep you here for dinner.”

Recalling his invitation earlier, she could not help curling her lips into a smirk. I know Grandpa’s plan. He wants everyone in the family to realize Matthias’ importance.

From then on, this would further cement the fact that Matthias and Heather were in a relationship. As most of the Langston family members were not aware of the collaboration between the Langstons and the Lockes, Robert intended to make use of their mouths to spread the word out to the public.

Usually, she loathed being taken advantage of, but this time, it was done by her grandpa, who doted on her the most. Therefore, she accepted it willingly. Perhaps, it was also because she knew that there was no other way to handle this. Anyway, there was no harm in going along with Robert’s way either. After all, she was well aware that he merely wanted her to avoid the same tragedy that happened in the past.

Overall, this was all due to Robert’s wariness against the Moriartys. He had already planned in advance to seek protection for Heather and this could only be because he had no confidence in their family. If the same thing happened again, they would remain on the losing end; he had chosen to give in back then—in order to protect their family—but this time, he would no longer allow this to happen. He would do all he could to prevent the Moriartys from getting their way.

After Robert confirmed the menu, he pushed the bridge of his reading glasses and said to Matthias, “Stay for dinner tonight.”

## Standing before Love Chapter 539

Since Matthias wanted to please Robert, he had no reason to refuse Robert's offer to stay. Heather grinned at Matthias, since it would be interesting to see how Matthias would act with the Langstons around during dinner.

When they came back down, the living room was already wrecked by the kids. They pulled no punches because Robert wasn't around to control them. The sight shocked Matthias, who had never seen how destructive kids could be, but Heather was already used to it. On the other hand, Robert was dangerously quiet. These kids are getting rowdier. Didn't see that during my kids' time. How unbecoming.

The kids immediately quieted down when they saw Robert. Heather had a strict upbringing, but the kids were nothing but spoiled brats. Robert was ashamed that Matthias had to see that, but he pretended that nothing had happened, while Heather shot a look at the kids, and they started shivering. I see Heather holds some sway on them, huh?

The kids were also scared of Robert, so they quickly went away the moment Robert came down, and everything was quiet. It was getting late, and the adults were going to be home soon. The Langston Family was a big one, so not everyone was working at the company. Some members had their own pursuits, so they worked elsewhere.

Blake would be home soon. Since there wasn't much to do domestically, he preferred to work from home base. The work was easier to handle, and working at the headquarters was more secure than toiling overseas.

On the other hand, Heather would have stayed overseas if not for Robert's plea. She had done a good job there, since she had successfully expanded the business in other countries. Robert wanted her to stay abroad for a few more years, but since his health was in decline, he was worried he might die before he saw Heather again.

Sometimes Robert thought he was just a burden for Heather, since he was the only thing tying her to the family. If or when he passed, he knew she wouldn't stay in the family any longer. "Take a look at this, Heather." Robert took some documents out of his study, which was surprising, since they usually wouldn't talk about work at home.

Heather took the documents from him, but she had a lot of questions in mind. According to their deal, she didn't have to help the company out unless it was on the verge of collapse. Besides that, Blake was supposed to be the one to access the documents instead of her, so she wondered what Robert was thinking. But nothing good can come from this. He won't do something like this otherwise.

Heather only skimmed through the documents, unlike Robert. She didn't want Blake to stumble across this, or he'd try to trip her up again. Since she had left the company, she didn't want to make things worse between her and Blake. If it weren't for Matthias, she wouldn't even have taken the documents from him. We had a deal, so stick to it.

"I don't see the problem here, Grandpa." She quickly handed it back to Robert, at the same time wondering why Blake wasn't home yet. Matthias wondered why she was looking like she was getting rid of something disastrous, but Robert knew why she did that.

"Blake needs to see some clients tonight. We'll go on ahead without him." Robert took the documents back.

"I see," Heather answered calmly. Robert was just trying to tease her, but just as he expected, Heather was walking on eggshells around Blake after her departure from the company. They used to be in a competition, but now Heather was staying away from him. Robert thought it was a good thing, since he didn't want their relationship to worsen any further.

Matthias was still confused. He thought Heather was refusing to work with the Langstons because she had another target—the Hart Group. It was precisely because he had that thought that Matthias wanted her to work with the Langstons. The Locke Group wanted to partner up with the Hart Group after all, so he couldn't let the Langstons work with the Harts.

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The other Langstons started coming home just when dinner was done. Dinnertime was the merriest time in the Langstons, as they had a tradition of having dinner at home. If they didn't, the family would eventually break apart, as nobody would talk to anybody.

It was the first time Matthias ever experienced a family gathering. Back in his family, Matthias rarely had dinner with his family, for he was an aloof man. It

was the first time he thought family gatherings were nice. Since the main problem in the Langstons was between Heather and Blake, most of the family were disinclined to pick sides.

However, as Blake was a social man, he maintained a cordial relationship with everyone. On the other hand, Heather was a lone wolf, so the family was on better terms with Blake. But since Robert supported Heather, none of them ever picked a side when Heather and Blake got into a fight. Robert was the head of the family after all, and he was the decision maker for the most part. Technically, Blake didn't have full control over the company yet.

It was the merriest time, but dinner went by quietly. Nobody talked when they were eating, since Robert disliked any chattering during meals. The only reason they gathered around was for a feeling of togetherness. Any chitchat was not allowed on the table. Even so, Heather was unusually quiet that night.

At the same time, Matthias noticed the girl who was sitting beside Heather. She was young and lively, and he thought she must still be in school. Everly was also staring back at him from time to time, for she was interested in the man who was embroiled in the scandal with Heather. Everyone in the family knew Matthias, but Matthias noticed Everly because of her outstanding looks.

Since she was already staring at him, Matthias would naturally return the favor. If it weren't because of the fact that he was dating Heather, Everly would be a star in his eyes. But after he started going out with Heather, he knew that Heather's beauty came from the soul, while Everly's beauty was only skin-deep.

True beauty came from within. Someone like Matthias had seen many gorgeous women, so even though Everly was gorgeous, she lacked the X factor for him. Heather noticed Matthias making eye contact with Everly, so she shot him a look, and he stopped staring at Everly.

He only looked because his interest was piqued. Everly was Heather's cousin, so they looked similar, and thanks to that, he unconsciously compared them. Of course, Everly was still young, but she might grow up and become someone like her cousin.

However, that was all speculation. The truth was that Everly was still a child, and Matthias was just admiring her looks. He wasn't getting any ideas, but Heather's look was scaring him. Everly noticed that, and she chuckled quietly. So he's scared of Heather.

Everly was envious of her cousin, if she were to be honest. She knew most of the family disliked Heather, but at least Heather had the freedom to do anything she wanted. The men who liked her were all prime real estate, as if she was the perfect match for every perfect man. On the other hand, Everly was insecure about herself, just like Blake. Blake thought Heather stole his spotlight, so he tried to trip her up at every chance he got instead of working together with her.

That was his way of venting his insecurity out, but Everly wouldn't do that. She didn't even have the guts to be jealous of Heather, let alone going up against her. All she could do was be the nice, quiet girl she always was. She knew Heather disliked the Langstons, but she also knew Heather didn't hate her, so she had been wanting to befriend her cousin.

She then thought about the case with Caleb. Blake promised he would help her out with her relationship, but he never did. Everly didn't get into a relationship at school because she didn't have the courage to accept their confessions. However, she eventually fell for Caleb, and her love consumed her.

In the end, she was even willing to woo Caleb herself. It was love at first sight, and Everly didn't know why she fell for him no matter how many years had passed. All she knew was that she wanted to marry him.

Heather noticed the love in Everly's eyes, and she squinted. She thought Everly had feelings for Matthias, but unbeknownst to her, her cousin only loved Caleb. Most people wouldn't believe it either, for Caleb was an unapproachable man. He was a terrifying killer, so nobody would expect a quiet lady like Everly to fall for him. It was an absurd love story as far as love stories went.

Thanks to that discovery, Heather started glaring at Matthias, and unlucky for him, Matthias looked straight at her. There were only a few people in the family whom Heather didn't dislike, and Everly was one of them. Hence, she would never allow Matthias to make a move on her lovely cousin.

Matthias wondered why Heather was getting angry, while Everly chuckled quietly. She looked lovely when she smiled, so Matthias smiled back at her. Wrong move. Heather wanted to get him away from Everly, so she got even angrier when Matthias smiled. I have to talk to him after this.

Everly thought Matthias was a gentler person than her cousin, though Heather was a great match for him. Oh, Caleb says he likes Heather. Hm, gotta take him back from her, I guess. Everly was scared by the prospect, then she remembered Caleb telling her about how Heather loved to play men like a fiddle. She then wondered about Heather's relationship with Matthias. I can see Matthias' love for Heather, but not the other way around.

## Standing before Love Chapter 540

Love could make a woman grow overnight, but it could also change them drastically. Everly could feel her greed overwhelming her after she fell for Caleb. Eventually, she thought it was okay to use Heather as leverage if it meant she could get in touch with Caleb. Everly had been waiting for Caleb's visit, but he never came. Instead, Matthias showed up.

In that case, she wanted to match Matthias up with Heather, since the only way to make Caleb give up on Heather was to get a boyfriend for her. But what Everly didn't know was that men would never give up on a woman—unless they lost their love for her.

It was the first time Robert realized that Everly was no longer the young girl she once was. And then he made the same mistake as Heather—Robert thought Everly was falling for Matthias. But no matter what Everly had in mind, Heather and Robert would not let it go on. Subsequently, Heather and Robert exchanged glances.

Robert didn't let Matthias stay after dinner, as he asked Heather to send him off. Then he summoned Everly to his study. I have to nip this in the bud.

Heather and Matthias were walking side by side under the moonlight. Heather was staring down, and she saw that their shadows were getting drawn out by the silvery moonlight. Matthias was stepping on her shadow, which reminded her of a legend that went like this: if one stepped on someone's shadow, one would never break up with them.

"Why did you stare at Everly back then?" Heather needed an answer right then and there.

"Oh, is that her name?" Matthias didn't know who Everly was, so that was the first time he had heard of her name.

“What are you trying to do? Trying to seduce my cousin because I’m not letting you pass?” Heather questioned irritably. Then she realized she sounded jealous, and her face turned scarlet.

It wasn’t something big, but Heather was vexed by what she saw earlier. If Matthias was really a playboy, then she had made a bad choice.

“Don’t take this the wrong way. I think she’s cute, and she looked at me first. I thought there was something on my face,” Matthias quickly explained himself. All he had was admiration for Everly and nothing else.

“There were a lot of people looking at you, so why did you only stare at her?” Heather didn’t believe him. Her family was a curious one, so almost everyone was staring at Matthias earlier.

He smirked and nudged her with his elbow. “Someone’s jealous.” She’s jealous.

“As if.” She snorted. Someone’s getting ahead of himself.

Oh, she’s not admitting it, huh? Matthias continued, “She’s a pretty one, so she caught my attention. I like all things beautiful.” Matthias instigated her.

“Don’t get any ideas. She’s too good for you.” Heather insulted him, much to his annoyance.

Matthias snapped. “It’s the other way around, okay? You think your family’s all that? Well, my family doesn’t think so. We’re just accepting the proposal out of pity.” He wouldn’t back off once the fight started.

“Ah, don’t worry. None of us would marry a member of your family anyway.” Heather jeered at him. She was going to play along as his girlfriend and get something out of him, but the more she talked to him, the more she realized they couldn’t get along, let alone falling in love. Heather was infuriated, and she thought he was just wooing her for fun. No matter what, she could never get along with him.

Matthias was dumbfounded. What was I even saying? Why’d I bring our families up? Sh\*t, now I’ve done it. Matthias wanted to take back what he said, but he knew it was too late.

“Your car’s up ahead. Have a safe trip.” And Heather turned back.



Matthias saw her off, but he had nothing to say. Everything was going fine up until the end, and as a result, Heather stormed off. Goddammit!

Everyone was still in the living room when she came back, but Robert and Everly were nowhere to be found. Not that she cared though. Everyone lowered their voice when she came in, and they looked at her as if she was Robert. They feared her, so they didn't talk much.

She went straight to her bedroom, feeling frustrated. Life hadn't been well, for Matthias was there. Ever since he showed up, her life had turned upside down, making it harder for her.

At the same time, Everly was sitting up straight in the study, facing her grandfather. She was nervous about the fact that Robert summoned her there. Getting called to the study was never good news.

"Hello, Everly," he called her gently. Robert never watched over Everly much, and when he wanted to take a good look at her, she was already all grown up. Everly used to be a cheeky one back then. She would play all sorts of tricks, and she was as adorable as she was now. She loved to dress herself up when she was younger, so she was a precocious one. But eventually, she grew up to become a quiet and reserved one.

Nobody would realize she was there if she said nothing, and her tastes in clothes changed. Most of the time, she wore pastel-colored clothes, and her favorite color was white, just like Heather. But unlike Everly, Heather was the center of attention no matter what she wore.

Because of that, Everly was always left in the background, her spotlight taken away by Heather. Nobody would know she was there if she stayed silent. "H-Hello, Grandpa." Everly was scared of her grandfather, since he punished her a lot for the pranks she pulled back in the day. And the study was where he punished her.

She thought she didn't do anything wrong, so Everly wondered why Robert called her over. Overwhelmed by fear, she couldn't even look him in the eye.

"You've grown up, Everly. I don't think I ever got the chance to talk with you, did I?" Robert started calming her down, since he could see that she was afraid.

“Y-Yeah.” Everly was still looking scared. Women of her temperament would be preferable for men, but all the brilliant men now would like women who could stand on the same level as they were.

“Do you have someone you like, Everly?” Robert looked her in the eyes.

Oh no. Did Grandpa find out that I like Caleb? She clenched her fists and started sweating. Everly couldn’t admit it, and she stared down in fear.

“Don’t be scared. I’m just asking. It’s normal for girls your age to fall in love.” Robert calmed her down. The younger someone was, the purer their love was, and they wouldn’t ask much from their partner. The more they grew, the less pure love would become. It would become harder to fall for someone, let alone open up to them.

“Why are you asking me about that all of a sudden, Grandpa?” Everly didn’t want to keep talking about it, since she was getting jittery. Even her parents never talked about that. All they told her was to not date anyone while she was in school.

“They think I’m siding with Heather, but no. I love everyone fairly.” Yes, Robert might give Heather preferential treatment, but that didn’t mean he didn’t care about everyone else.

Everly was surprised, since she seldom heard Robert talking about sentimentality. Finally, she looked up at him and saw the genuine look in his eyes. I guess he’s being honest. Everly had pushed down a lot of her thoughts, but at that moment, she wanted to tell her grandfather everything.

Heather wasn’t the only one who wasn’t loved in the family; Everly wasn’t, too. At least Heather still had Robert on her side, but nobody was on Everly’s, not even her parents. It wasn’t as serious as Heather’s parents, but she didn’t feel the love nonetheless.

That was how the Langstons were. Everyone lived together, so it might seem like a happy family at first sight, but the concept of family was fickle at best. The most they felt for Robert was respect, and there wasn’t any love between parent and child, unlike the other families out there.

“Can we not talk about this, Grandpa?” Everly mustered up her courage to say that, since she didn’t know what else she could say. But even that short question drained all the color from her face, obviously exhausting her.

“Why not? Don’t you trust me, your grandpa?” Robert tried to wheedle it out of her. He felt sorry for Everly, but he needed to nip the forbidden relationship in the bud, or else Everly would be hurt. He thought Everly liked Matthias, as Matthias was the gentle, shining knight every girl liked. If he knew Caleb was the one she liked, Robert would have had her under house arrest until she gave the idea up.

“No. I won’t betray the family, nor would I shame the Langston name. Can you stay out of this, Grandpa? Just let me crush on him for a bit. I know what I’m doing, and I won’t get in Heather’s way,” she said, embarrassed, as well as nervous, as if she was thrown into the public in nothing but her birthday suit.

Robert didn’t want to force her either. Even if Everly did like Matthias, that didn’t mean she’d compete against Heather for him. But he didn’t want her to wallow in her sadness any longer.

“I know you’re a good girl, so keep that love deep in your heart, okay? You’ll feel better once you meet your true love, so don’t be too hard on yourself.” He spoke in a roundabout way. That was all he could say. There was once where he fell in love with someone he couldn’t get, and he did something crazier than all of his descendants did, so he had no right to judge them.

## Standing before Love Chapter 541

Everly came out of the study and came across the butler. He smiled at her, and she returned the smile, since she was polite to everyone in the family. In most cases, Everly would be a likable girl, but the Langstons only cared about an individual’s ability. Someone like Everly would never get their respect, for all she knew was study.

Her parents had told her to learn from Heather, who was already financially independent when she was still a high schooler. Back then, Heather was already studying abroad and handling the family business there. On the other hand, Everly was just a normal undergraduate. She still had to rely on the family for money, and she couldn’t provide any help either. To make things worse, she chose to major in pure arts, which was useless to the family. All she did was paint, so her parents had given up on her.

They didn’t blame their daughter though, since they couldn’t help their family either. Not to mention they were still living in the house because Robert was still the head of the family. Everyone was still living together on his request.

“Nobody is allowed to live by themselves as long as I live. Anyone who lives by themselves will be exiled from the family.” That was what he said, and everyone was living under the same roof only because of that. They’d live separately otherwise.

Everly knew what her parents were planning. Once Robert had passed and they had gotten the share of the wealth, they’d move out. Everyone had the same plan anyway. The whole family was just together in name only, for everyone was branching out in different industries, so there was nothing in common between them.

Living together was torture for some people, since not everyone could be a success story, and they’d feel bad once they compared themselves with the better members of the family. Everly didn’t like her life in the residence, but she liked the estate. Her friends thought she was a princess and would call her such, much to her delight. But she knew there was only one princess in the household, and it wasn’t her.

Sometimes she wasn’t just envious of Heather, but was jealous of her. Everly had always thought she was a talentless woman, unlike Heather. Heather had been smarter than her peers ever since she was a child. She was a natural-born businesswoman, so the older she got, the more cutthroat she was.

There was one time where Everly got on Heather’s nerves when they were little, and the memory still haunted her until this very day. Her curiosity led her to Heather’s room, but the door was shut. She knew Heather was inside, and she wondered what Heather looked like when she was alone.

Everly hesitated for a long while, but she couldn’t bring herself to knock on the door. She couldn’t bring herself to see Heather for fear of getting looked down. She knew Heather could see through everyone, so she never looked her in the eye. After all, Heather was a fearsome figure for her.

Unbeknownst to her, the butler saw the whole thing. Under Robert’s behest, the butler started keeping an eye on her after she left the study. He noticed Everly was going the wrong way, since her room wasn’t in that direction. Her room was on the fourth floor, so no matter if she took the stairs or the elevator, she shouldn’t have reached Heather’s room.

The butler thought it was weird, but his job was to report everything to Robert. Everything else was outside his jurisdiction. He pushed every question aside

and kept observing Everly. She's been standing there for a while. Does she want to see Heather? But she's not knocking. What is she trying to do?

In the end, Everly left, and she went upstairs. Once he heard her going upstairs, the butler stopped following her. It was getting late, so she must have retired for the night, he thought. He wouldn't get anything else even if he continued following her.

The castle-like Langston Residence had six floors. The first floor housed the body, the gym, and the swimming pool. Robert's quarter was on the second floor, where he and the family's important figures lived. The third floor was where the young couples lived, while the fourth was where the less important members lived. The fifth and sixth floor was where the servants stayed.

Heather couldn't sleep that night, for she was still mulling over Matthias' answer. His interaction with Everly and his awkward explanation haunted her, so she wondered if she could trust him.

It wasn't the first time he had let her down, so she wondered if he was wooing or torturing her. Is this how everyone treats their crush? No, it's just him. She was pondering on the plan's feasibility, wondering if she would really fall for Matthias if she accepted his confession.

Heather had no need for an unpredictable future. Matthias was the biggest surprise in her life, and he was already causing her a lot of trouble. Ever since their meeting, her life had been spiraling into chaos. She tossed and turned, but her frustration kept the sweet embrace of sleep away from her. Since she couldn't sleep, she wanted to do something.

There was a swimming pool beside the lobby, so she wanted to swim. Moving her body would distract her from her troubles for a while. Thus, she wore her swimsuit and covered it with her pajamas before going down. Since the pool wasn't connected to the living room, she had to enter it through the other way.

The wind was cold that night, so she tightened her clothes, looking ahead calmly. Blake was sitting on a sofa in the living room then, looking drunk. The smell of alcohol wafted across when she went past him, and she scrunched her nose up.

Blake was mumbling something, but she pretended not to hear him. Instead, she stayed far away from him, since he might puke on her if she got closer. But even though she had stayed away, he stopped her. "Hold it, you."

She stopped, feeling annoyed, and she looked down at him. Looks like the alcohol made him even worse. Right, let's see what he's going to do.

"The project's ruined because you quit all of a sudden, Heather," he scolded, putting all the blame on her.

Heather smirked, surprised that Blake could even blame her for that. If she had her phone with her, she would have recorded everything he said. "You should know the reason for the project's failure." Before this, she thought Blake could still be redeemed, but now she had seen him for the scum he was.

He could do anything just to achieve his goal. For example, he dragged the company down just to get back at her. Heather prioritized the company, so she never duked it out with him, but even so, he never let her go, backing her into a corner.

If excellence was a sin, then Heather thought she would be in the depths of hell when she died. The Langstons were jealous of her brilliance, so they never got along with her, and they would talk about her behind her back.

That was how weaklings worked. A truly strong person would acknowledge the gap between them and the people ahead of them, then they would work to close the gap and surpass their competition. That was why the strong became stronger. The weak lost because of their mindset. Without a strong soul, they could never overcome the challenges in their lives.

"You think you're so good, Heather? The whole family worships you, but all you ever did was insult us. Have you ever even seen me as your brother?" Blake was throwing a tantrum because he was drunk.

Heather gave him a sardonic smile. She didn't care about anything Blake said, but she wondered why he cared so much. Pathetic. "Have you ever seen me as your sister, then? Everyone hates me here. You guys hate me because I'm successful, but have you ever asked how much I had to give up to be where I am today?" The Langstons didn't care about that. All they cared about was their own comfort, even if that was at the expense of others.

"Well, it seems like you know where you stand. So why didn't you move out, then? Seeing as everyone hates you," Blake interrogated. As long as Heather was there, he could never rest easy.

“As long as Grandpa is here, then so am I. If you don’t like it, you can piss off right now,” she scoffed. Heather didn’t care about Blake, since the whole reason she stayed was because Robert was there.

“I hate you, Heather. Why do I even have a sister like you?” Blake gnashed his teeth. If it weren’t because of her, he would have been the most outstanding person in the family.

“Grow up, Blake. Don’t make me look down on you more.” Heather didn’t want to waste her time any longer. She was here to swim, not to fight, so she left right after that.

The butler heard the whole conversation, and he would tell Robert all about it. Once that happened, Blake would get an earful from his grandfather the next day.

Heather never wanted to compete with Blake, but he wouldn’t let her go. No longer wanting to ruminate over his ramblings, she went around the place and headed to the pool. He’s not even a worthy rival.

The air around the pool was chilly, and it cooled her off. The door to the pool was locked, so she went to see the guard, since he was the only one who’d patrol the pool at night, and he was the only one who had the key.

I shouldn’t be rash. It’s past the pool’s opening hours, so why am I doing this? I-It’s immature. Did some of Matthias rub off on me? The heating system was off at this hour, so the pool would be icy cold. She didn’t factor that in, but going back after coming all the way wasn’t her style. She would finish everything she started, for giving up was a bad habit.

When the guard came around, she called out to him. “Open the door to the pool.” Heather insisted on her night swim. An autumn swim wasn’t any trouble, since she wouldn’t freeze to death. Winter was another story altogether though.

The guard looked at her with hesitation. He didn’t want to go against her, but he didn’t want to break the family rule either. “It’s too cold for a swim, Miss Heather.” He had to remind her about that fact. If something were to happen to her, he would be in for a disaster.