

Standing before Love Chapter 612

The kitchen was in total chaos—Heather was busy cooking while Leon washed the ingredients at one side. They didn't have any fresh fruits and vegetables, so Heather eventually solved the embarrassing problem by placing an online delivery. Indeed, everything was easier with the use of smartphones these days.

“You weren't like this when you used to cook, Heather. Why does it seem like you can't do anything well today?” Damn it, why is Leon being so honest with his words? Heather was already nervous and jittery at the moment, and she almost exploded in anger upon hearing Leon's frank remark.

“Shut up! Have you finished washing the ingredients?” Heather glared at Leon. Perhaps he shouldn't have let her cook personally; they could've ordered takeout!

“Is there something you're not telling me, Heather?” Just then, Leon leaned in close to her daringly, but he failed to notice the woman's darkening expression as he did so.

How could Leon still have the audacity to make such an outrageous comment in front of her? Heather decided that she could no longer be so lenient to him, for she didn't want him to become too bold.

“Be careful of what you say, Leon,” Heather warned him coldly as she held the chopping knife in her hand—clearly, she wasn't kidding with her words.

Leon, who was still fooling around a moment earlier, went stiff with fright. He swallowed his laughter, for Heather's deadly glare was too terrifying to watch. As a result, he returned Heather's stare with a pleading look in his eyes as he tried to think of a way to soothe the tense atmosphere.

He hadn't expected a simple meal to become so difficult to handle. As Leon rubbed his temples, the water on his fingers wetted his hair slightly.

“Why don't we order some takeout if you don't feel like cooking today, Heather?” Leon turned toward her slowly and warily, afraid of accidentally offending her again.

“No way,” Heather rejected him immediately. “Weren't you begging me to cook for you?”

Leon nodded, but he felt quite dreadful inside. “The food’s burning, Heather.”

With that, he pointed toward the pan next to her. Heather had been so immersed in teaching Leon a lesson that she’d forgotten to stir fry the vegetables.

“Let’s start over.” Heather turned off the heat and tossed the vegetables straight into the trash can. Her gesture was swift and well-practiced, making it seem as though it was something she often did.

“All right.” Leon didn’t have the courage to argue. At this rate, they would have to skip lunch and go straight to dinner if they continued on like this.

In the end, the meal was finally ready after two long hours of preparation. Heather didn’t think it’d take this long either as she told Leon to bring the dishes to the dining table. Meanwhile, she stayed behind as the soup was still cooking on the stove. While she stared at the bubbling liquid in the pot, her mind got lost in a daydream.

Truthfully, Heather felt a little bored staying in a secluded area like this; Leon had always been an outgoing person, so she wasn’t sure how he was able to cope with being cooped up here as well.

She had also found out about the prices for the villas around the area. Since they were pretty overpriced, the occupancy rate was low. For that reason, it was no wonder that the area was so lifeless and quiet. After their meal, Heather and Leon went to the balcony.

The balcony had a European style layout as well, and there was an eye-catching recliner armchair which Heather occupied ahead of him. Hence, Leon reluctantly headed to the sofa by the side—it would’ve been nice to enjoy the sun in the recliner armchair.

“You’re so mean to me, Heather,” Leon grumbled in dissatisfaction. All of a sudden, his head started spinning as soon as he remembered the unwashed dishes in the sink.

Heather was only willing to cook; she had left the cleaning and tidying to Leon, yet she even took away his chance of resting in the comfortable recliner armchair.

“Why did you decide on this place?” Heather peered into the distance. However, there wasn’t much of a view to look at since the balcony was located too close to the ground.

“Sometimes, you just can’t explain it when it comes to love; I knew this was it the moment I laid my eyes on it.” Leon looked around his own villa. He loved it here, but he couldn’t explain why.

“It’s not like you’re looking for a soulmate.” Heather changed her position in her seat; it was rare for her to be so candid in front of others. After all, lounging against an armchair wasn’t an elegant position in her eyes.

“Tell me about Matthias, Heather.” Leon was in the mood to gossip. In fact, he had been wanting to ask about that for a long time, but Heather was always quick to avoid the topic. Hence, he could only go straight to the point this time.

“There’s nothing much to talk about. There isn’t anything interesting between us.” Heather felt no need to bring up their old disputes and rivalry from the past.

“I can see that Matthias is the reason you’ve changed,” Leon suddenly said with an oddly determined tone.

“Yes, partly.” Heather didn’t deny it, and she was rather open-minded with her response.

“I didn’t think you’d admit it so easily.” Leon was quite surprised. He’d thought Heather would brush him off with an excuse, but it seemed like she was planning to openly announce her relationship with Matthias.

“When you like someone, it’s only natural for you to change.” Meanwhile, Heather unhesitantly admitted that she did have feelings for Matthias.

Leon was astonished to hear such words from the latter’s mouth. At that moment, he felt a little unhappy inside. Sure enough, Leon had spent so much time and effort on her back then, but Matthias easily took the win from him.

“Have you really fallen in love with him?” In the end, Leon couldn’t help but ask her.

“Yeah, isn’t this what you wanted?” Leon used to actively create opportunities for the two of them to interact, so shouldn’t he be happy with such an outcome?

“Yeah, I just didn’t think it’d happen so quickly.” Leon assumed that Matthias still had a long way to go before he could pursue her. I guess love is a mystery after all.

“Sometimes, you just can’t explain it when it comes to love. Perhaps I knew he was the one the moment I laid eyes on him.” Heather adopted Leon’s words from a moment ago, and he turned to her in dissatisfaction. Discontent filled his chest.

“Congratulations to you and Matthias, then,” Leon replied stiffly. In fact, he sounded like a spoiled child who was throwing a tantrum.

“Can we stop talking about Matthias?” Heather asked pleadingly. Even though the two of them had just buried the hatchet while she also confirmed her feelings for him, she wasn’t interested in making him the subject of the conversation.

“Sure.” Leon went silent after that. Instead, he gazed at the view outside without a word.

Leon was seldom as quiet as this, so Heather didn’t speak as well. She shifted her gaze into the far distance, wanting to admire the view a little bit more.

The villa was conveniently surrounded by greens, and the beautiful landscape around them was aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Sunlight poured onto the tree leaves, and they projected gently swaying shadows onto the grass. At that moment, Heather found herself falling in love with the tranquility of the villa.

It somehow felt freeing and comfortable to live here—it was peaceful and serene. Undoubtedly, Leon had reliable taste in such things.

Nevertheless, the silence didn’t last long. Just then, Heather’s phone rang with a call from Matthias. She hesitated for a long while, debating if she should pick it up or not.

Since her peace was already disrupted, she didn't have a reason to reject the call. After much thought, Heather picked up under Leon's watchful eyes; he became even more enthusiastic on top of his affinity for gossip.

"Is there anything you need from me?" Heather asked Matthias before he even spoke. She deliberately lowered her voice as she wasn't used to talking to him on the phone in front of Leon.

"I miss you," Matthias said out of the blue, and Heather felt a little uneasy at his sudden remark.

"Just get to the point." Heather continued to speak with a serious tone.

"I've looked all over Bradford City, but I still can't find you. Where are you hiding this time?" Matthias asked curiously. He thought that he could easily identify her location, but the outcome was to his disappointment.

"I'll be back tomorrow, so don't try to track my whereabouts," said Heather patiently. It was already out of the ordinary that she wasn't snapping back at him.

"Is Leon hiding you somewhere?" Matthias asked. He was only guessing, but he couldn't think of anyone else besides the man.

"Is this important?" Heather wasn't entirely sure how Leon was able to keep her so well-hidden here as well.

"Have you been staying with Leon alone for the past few days?" Matthias seemed to be hinting at something else with his question.

Heather could tell that he was jealous, and she didn't expect him to assume the character of a boyfriend so soon. Needless to say, Matthias and Leon were two of a kind—one was even bolder than the other when it came to prying into her business.

"Yes." Heather decided that she wouldn't let him get his way. She knew how to deal with Leon, so she naturally knew how to deal with Matthias as well.

"Do you guys stay together like this very often?" After finding out the strange dynamic between Leon and Heather, Matthias was a little concerned.

He knew that Leon was interested in Heather, but he never took the fact personally simply because he didn't expect the two to have such a history together.

The two of them used to collaborate frequently; one could even say that they had experienced life and death together. Their close relationship was admirable, but it was also unsettling to Matthias.

Moreover, Heather even had feelings for Leon some time ago, and they had almost gotten together. Matthias didn't feel right for the two of them to maintain such an intimate relationship, so he couldn't contain his envy at all.

"Yeah." Heather gave him a short and determined answer yet again, and Matthias' heart went cold for a split second.

"What are you trying to say after asking me all of that?" Heather turned her impulse into action. She couldn't let Matthias 'interrogate' her without a reason; she didn't like the feeling of being suspected, yet Matthias was challenging her limit so brazenly.

Mutual attraction between two people didn't always mean suitability. Similarly, Heather and Matthias had countless contradictions in their personalities.

Oftentimes, Matthias wanted to improve their relationship by turning things around, but the situation would end up becoming more ridiculous in the end. Not only that, his efforts wouldn't help at all; it'd make things worse instead.

"I hope that I'll be the first person you think of when you need help one day." Matthias was very jealous of the fact that Heather liked to turn to Leon for help. After all, he was more than capable to help her out as well.

At the end of the day, Heather just wasn't willing to put her trust in Matthias; deep inside, she'd rather rely on Leon. Even though Leon wasn't deliberately threatening Matthias, the latter had a strong possessive personality, so he couldn't ignore it no matter what.

It was awfully difficult to occupy the number one spot in Heather's heart, and something like this could only happen through time. Unfortunately, Matthias, who was usually calm and calculative, made a mistake on his first step in a relationship—he was rushing into it.

“Okay.” Heather didn’t express any dissatisfaction toward Matthias. On the contrary, she simply responded casually.

Throughout the entire time, Leon had been studying Heather’s expression from the side. The way they spoke seemed serious and business-like; from an outsider’s perspective, it even sounded like they were discussing business matters.

However, one’s facial expression would always reflect their heart. Even though Heather tried her best to hide her emotions, the slight shift in her facial expressions exposed her feelings inside.

It seemed like Heather and Matthias were having quite an unhappy exchange on the phone, but their topic of conversation was unknown. Leon was suddenly interested to know what they were talking about when he noticed the emotional look in her eyes.

After she ended the call, Leon gave Heather a knowing smile—he was probably the only person to have such a beautiful grin. Heather thought to herself that she probably didn’t expose anything odd from the conversation earlier. Nonetheless, she’d received a call from Matthias just after admitting that she had feelings for him—that alone was unbelievably awkward for her.

“Looks like you guys are done talking, Heather,” said Leon. His words seemed to carry more meaning than they let on.

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Before long, three days passed by in a flash. When their stay had come to an end, Leon was a little reluctant to leave. He turned to take another look at the villa, unsure of when he’d be visiting again—after all, he had bought this villa to be some sort of a vacation home.

“Head over to Nordico Residence,” Heather said to Leon as he sat in the driver’s seat.

Leon blinked at her blankly, not understanding what she meant by that.

Heather quickly explained at the sight of his confusion. She said, “I recently bought a unit there. Someone as lazy as you should just stay in an apartment.”

When Leo realized that Heather had bought him a place, a brilliant smile appeared on his face. "You treat me so well, Heather."

Later on, Heather finally drove away on her own after making sure that Leon was settled in. Instead of going back to the Langston Residence at once, she went to visit Myra instead.

When she knocked on Myra's door, a hint of nervousness filled her heart; it made her recall all those years ago when she would clutch her exam papers in her hands after failing to achieve the highest grade.

Finally, the door opened. This time, the housekeeper's face was an unfamiliar one. She studied Heather from head to toe slowly and carefully, probably unaware of the latter's identity.

"May I know if Mrs. Hart is home?" Heather asked her gently. Ever since returning from Iceland, Heather had lost the cockiness and arrogance she once had. Now, she had a much softer and milder temperament.

"May I know who you are?" The housekeeper's eyes had a slight wariness in them. After all, she had just started working here not too long ago, so she'd rather keep an eye out whenever possible.

"Heather Langston. I'm a friend of Mrs. Hart's," Heather told her truthfully.

"Mrs. Hart isn't home." The housekeeper tried to dodge the question with a lie, and she sounded a little nervous when she spoke.

Heather already had a feeling that Myra wasn't going to let her in, and she wasn't surprised either. She told the housekeeper politely, "In that case, let me wait for her inside. I think she should be back very soon."

The housekeeper was even more nervous at the sound of that, for she didn't expect Heather to reply in such a way. She hung her head and occasionally stole a look at Heather. Then, she finally said after a long time, "That would be quite inappropriate."

"In what way would that be inappropriate? I'll just sit in the living room, so I won't be disturbing anyone." Heather stepped forward and tried to go inside as she spoke.

The housekeeper looked up at Heather in a panic. She instinctively closed the door, but Heather's hand was already placed against it; when it came to force, an ordinary woman wouldn't be able to go up against Heather.

"Mrs. Hart has been out for a few days, so she won't be back for some time. There's no need to wait for her, Miss," the housekeeper said shakily. Her eyes were begging for Heather to stop putting her in such a difficult situation.

This new housekeeper seemed to look quite frail and pitiful. Unfortunately, the sympathy card didn't work on Heather since she wasn't a man.

"Is that so?" Heather said sarcastically as the look in her eyes became sharp.

The little housekeeper felt suffocated under Heather's overbearing pressure, so she didn't know how to handle the situation. Myra had informed her precisely to not let a 'Heather Langston' into the house under any circumstances, and she was told to do whatever she could to make the woman leave.

Myra still hadn't fully calmed down at the moment, so she wasn't ready to meet Heather. However, the latter's personality was no secret to her; Myra had a feeling that she would definitely visit her upon returning from Iceland.

While the housekeeper was having trouble with Heather, Myra was already aware of the situation outside as she stayed in the bedroom. She frowned slightly and contemplated whether or not to let Heather in.

Growing up, Heather had never experienced any cold shoulder treatment from someone else. Right now, Myra was still mulling over her decision for the sake of Heather's pride—she knew that the woman highly prioritized her self-regard and dignity.

She had already given Heather a heavy blow before this, so she was worried that the woman might feel hurt again if she didn't give her a chance this time. Right now, it was simply too soon for Myra to get over what happened; deep inside, she still cared for Heather. After all, Myra was awfully soft-hearted, so she couldn't truly hate Heather no matter what.

However, Myra didn't wish for their conflict to grow bigger—if they really were to meet today, perhaps a bigger problem might arise if they weren't able to come to an agreement.

While Myra was debating with her thoughts, Heather was getting more and more persistent outside. In truth, she could have forced her way in with just a little push, but since she had come to apologize and not rob the house, it wouldn't be suitable to resort to force.

Just then, Heather took in the determination on the housekeeper's face. The fact that the housekeeper could be so relentless in keeping her stand with her small and weak stature was quite an applauding feat—she was extremely competent as a housekeeper.

The housekeeper seemed different from the usual stereotypical ones, so Heather had a feeling that she was a college student working part-time.

“Are you still in school?” Heather's tone of speech changed all of a sudden as she started showing concern for the housekeeper.

Other housekeepers wouldn't have bothered to respond if someone asked them personal questions, but the younger girl was naturally more than happy to see Heather change the subject on her own.

“Yeah,” the housekeeper replied truthfully.

“Are you working here part-time?” Heather continued to ask.

The housekeeper nodded and said, “Yeah, it's to cover my allowance.” She didn't think working part-time to support her expenses was anything embarrassing at all. In fact, to live on her own hard-earned money was something to be proud of.

“Interesting.” Heather smiled. She thought to herself that it was unfortunate for the housekeeper to have met her today. If she were some promising, handsome young man at the door, the situation would've probably played out differently—perhaps a beautiful romance between an arrogant CEO and an ordinary girl might have unfolded.

“I really can't let you in right now, Miss Langston. I'll let you know when Mrs. Hart comes back.” The housekeeper took advantage of Heather's slightly better mood and quickly brought up the main subject again.

Heather put on a sweet smile and said, “Okay.”

Once she finally let go, the housekeeper quickly closed the door. However, Heather hadn't moved her foot that was wedged in between the door, so the former couldn't shut it at all.

As such, the housekeeper looked at Heather with a confused expression, not knowing why she was doing this. The next moment, Heather swiftly retrieved a name card from her handbag—she had the habit of bringing them around. “You can contact me here.”

When the housekeeper accepted the namecard, Heather was finally able to see the anticipated surprise in her eyes. Needless to say, the housekeeper probably had no clue that the visitor had such a renowned status.

“Also, this might be off topic, but what's your college major?” Heather decided to achieve her goal by taking a detour.

“Finance,” the housekeeper said timidly. She finally recalled that Heather was none other than a genius in business; she had looked up the woman's information and achievements before, but they were already long forgotten since it was quite some time ago. Nonetheless, she didn't expect Heather to be standing in front of her right now.

In truth, Heather wasn't that amazing to the extreme. However, in a place like Bradford City where the corporate world was dominated by the male population, she was the most outstanding one amongst women in business. Hence, it was only natural for her to be looked up to, for diamonds were only sought after for its rarity.

“I believe you're quite capable in a professional setting. You should work for me if there's a chance.” Heather offered her an opportunity in hopes to seal the deal.

The housekeeper lowered her flushed face. Indeed, it would be great to work under Heather. However, it did feel odd that Heather would offer her such an opportunity out of the blue. She can't be doing this just to enter the house, right?

“May I know if there's anything you need in exchange for me to secure this offer?” The housekeeper was familiar with such tactics, for she didn't believe in free lunches.

Heather chuckled. Ironically, she saw her younger self in the housekeeper's eyes just for a brief moment. Eventually, she shook her head and said, "I simply admire your talent."

Heather promptly left after that, wondering how Myra had found someone like this to work for her. There was a period of time in the past when Heather used to disguise herself behind a tough facade as well.

Back then, she looked fragile and weak with her delicate and naive appearance, but the look in her eyes was tougher than anyone else's, just like the housekeeper from earlier.

Perhaps Myra was the only one who remembered how she was back then; even Heather had almost forgotten who she used to be herself. Sure enough, as the years had gone by, the past was long forgotten.

Meanwhile, Heather didn't have a choice but to return to the Langston Residence after leaving Myra's house. Sadly, she didn't have the chance to see the latter. However, since she was only there to offer her sincere apologies, she didn't mind visiting a few more times if she had failed on the first attempt. Third time's the charm, after all.

It was pretty common for couples to have fights, and it was no different for best friends. Heather came to realize that she had always treated Myra like family, so she couldn't bear to lose that friend of hers no matter what.

She had to find a way to save their sibling-like relationship; at the same time, she believed that Myra felt the same toward her as well. One way or another, the conflict between them was sure to be resolved in time.

When Heather arrived at the Langston Residence, the entire house was empty; there was no one in the living room. This wasn't unusual since it was still office and schooling hours, whereas the others were probably enjoying their day out at a mall. Right now, Robert was probably the only one at home.

As such, Heather went straight to the study to look for Robert. She knocked on the door gently and his voice could be heard from inside at once.

After she pushed the door open, her mouth curved into an affectionate yet spoiled smile as she stared straight at Robert.

“Hey, little girl,” Robert said gently. It had been some time since Heather last heard him call her that.

“Grandpa.” Heather went up to him.

“You were gone for a long while again this time,” Robert said with a sigh. These days, he seldom meddled in her affairs since he had already put his full trust in her.

Even though Robert was old, his mind was still sharp as ever—he was aware of everything that was happening in the Langston Family, so he understood Heather’s pain as well.

“I’m not leaving anymore, Grandpa. I’ll settle down in Bradford City for good.” Heather used to think of making a living somewhere far away from home where there were better opportunities, but she just couldn’t leave Bradford City behind. Thus, she’d rather stay here—she was more than capable to be successful in this city itself, after all.

“I know your ambitions, little girl. I shouldn’t have kept you here in the Langston Residence.” Robert understood all of Heather’s recent struggles, and he knew that she was facing a lot of pressure from many parties.

“I don’t want to see our family fall either, and the Langston Family is my responsibility too. I understand now, Grandpa. I used to be too self-centered, and I should’ve cared more about the people around me.” Indeed, when she recalled her past, Heather did used to over-prioritize her own feelings. She wasn’t willing to let herself get hurt even a little, whereas Robert had already tried to give her the best there was.

“Why do you suddenly think so, little girl?” Robert looked at Heather with a surprised expression. At that moment, he felt like she had really grown up. She was different now, and there was an added sense of gentleness to her as well.

“Do you not like how I’ve changed, Grandpa?” Heather smiled slightly and tilted her head to the side. She looked pure and innocent, and it seemed as though she had gone back 10 years in time.

“That’s not it, but I don’t want you to push yourself too much.” Even though Robert was happy with how she changed, he still felt unbelievably sorry for her. Just then, he was once again reminded of his sister who had died young.

“You don’t need to feel guilty for my sake too, Grandpa. Look carefully—I’m your granddaughter,” Heather said, her words carrying another underlying meaning to them. She knew that her grandfather had been treating her as Claris all this time, for he was always guilty when he faced her. Moreover, he treated her with a sense of pity and regret that came from the longstanding knot in his heart throughout all these years.

Robert still couldn’t get over his sister’s death. He blamed himself for it, and he couldn’t forgive himself; he had always believed that he and the Langston Family were the ones who killed Claris. Since he didn’t have anyone to take his guilt out on, he could only give Heather all the kindness he could offer.

Now, Heather no longer wanted to rely on such kindness; she wanted to help Robert untie the knot in his heart once and for all.

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Robert pushed his glasses on the bridge of his nose and a frown appeared between his brows as he stared at Heather intently; he couldn’t tell if her change was for the good or bad.

“I’ve come to realize something recently, Grandpa—the past shouldn’t affect the present,” said Heather with utmost sincerity. She had learned some valuable lessons from Myra, so she hoped that Robert could understand them as well.

“Are you talking about what happened between you and Myra?” In truth, Robert was aware of everything. Heather’s unusual behavior was probably sparked by Myra.

In actual fact, she owed some of the enlightenment to Matthias as well. Without knowing it, her lips curled upward at the thought of the man. She knew that Matthias wanted nothing more than for her to resolve the long line of conflict with Myra. The matter had become very much complicated since it involved the three of them.

“More accurately, it’s what happened between me, Myra, and Matthias.” Heather intentionally emphasized the importance of the third person.

Robert stared at Heather with a meaningful look in his eyes. “Have you fallen for that fella from the Locke Family?” Robert wasn’t too happy inside when he

finally realized that she had fallen in love with Matthias. After, Matthias had stolen his precious granddaughter's heart.

"Don't try to change the topic, Grandpa." Heather didn't admit it straight away, but the way she replied sounded like an indirect confession.

Robert put on a smile which had a hint of resignation. "I don't feel like talking about this, Heather." Since he couldn't avoid the subject, he thought it'd be better to admit his intention right away. Robert truly didn't want to discuss the matter with Heather; he would feel troubled whenever it was brought up.

"I'm sure you're wise enough to know that running away isn't going to solve the problem, Grandpa." Heather wasn't willing to let Robert brush it off just like that; she wanted to make sure that he understood her point.

"I know what you're trying to say, Heather. I'm not hanging onto the past; I just want to make up for all that the Langstons owed you."

If things were as simple as that, Heather wouldn't have received such special treatment from him. Was making up for her the only reason behind it? Nevertheless, Heather didn't think the Langstons were guilty to that extent.

"You wouldn't be living like this with such a mindset if you've really let go of the past, Grandpa," Heather insisted. She believed that Robert was running away from the problem.

Since they were now stuck in an endless loop, Robert decided to lower his head and continue doing what he was doing before—he carried on scribbling on some papers. Meanwhile, Heather was still unwilling to surrender and continued to express her opinions openly.

"You don't need to worry about me, Heather," Robert reassured her; he wasn't sure why Heather was so persistent to talk him out of this issue.

"There are a lot more things that I'm worried about which concern you, Grandpa." Heather teased him half-jokingly, but she was partly serious.

"I'm worried about you as well." Robert wasn't planning to back down. How could he let his granddaughter worry about him? Moreover, he didn't have the slightest interest to revisit the topic from earlier.

“Since you don’t want to talk about it, Grandpa, I’ll drop it.” Heather could tell that Robert didn’t want to delve deeper into the subject; if she insisted, he would only bring her round and round in a circle. In the end, she wouldn’t be able to get anything out of it.

Hence, she returned to her bedroom. Heather stared at the familiar arrangement of her room—home sweet home, indeed. Heather used to be reluctant to make the Langston Residence her home, but now that she had painstakingly found her sense of belonging here, she felt that she had achieved more than enough in life compared to many others.

When she was young, Heather used to be constantly unsettled due to her parents. In fact, she found herself unable to let it go even now. In truth, it was pretty funny now that she thought about it; why did she have to put the blame on two people who didn’t matter at all?

The more her parents neglected her existence, the more she was desperate to perform well. When she was little, she did it because she wanted her parents to notice her; by the time she had grown up, it was purely out of spite.

In the end, she was nothing but a pathetic clown who endlessly begged for their slightest attention. Heather had seen past all of that now, for she knew she was as good as anyone else. Even though her parents were uncaring, she had a grandfather who spoiled her to the core. Was that not enough?

Moreover, she didn’t lack love from her family and friends; although her circle was small, Myra and Leon treated her with unconditional kindness. However, she didn’t seem to appreciate them enough back then.

She even had Matthias to shower her with love right now, and Heather felt extremely blessed at this moment. Why did she have to be controlled by external factors which didn’t matter? Wasn’t it enough to have these simple blessings by her side?

Needless to say, humans were creatures of greed—they never cared about how much they owned, and they could only see what they lacked. Heather didn’t wish to become someone like that; she didn’t want to keep on hating her life, so she completely changed her perspective on things.

What will the weather be like tomorrow, I wonder? Heather’s mind wandered aimlessly on random thoughts even though the day had yet to end. Right now,

she could think about whatever she wanted to as she lay on that bed of hers—she loved this feeling of being free.

Just then, a knock sounded on her door and instantly disrupted her train of thought. Once she gave the person permission to come in, the butler entered her room while Heather was already seated on the sofa by then.

“It’s time for lunch, Miss Heather.” The butler was quite happy to see Heather.

She nodded and said, “All right. I’ll head downstairs in a minute.”

The butler left after hearing her response. With that, Heather was back to her old life—simple yet pleasant. When she met Everly on the way downstairs, she even took the initiative to greet her cousin.

Meanwhile, Everly turned to Heather in surprise, not expecting the latter’s sudden kindness. There was a slight smile on Heather’s lips, and it was rare for her to be so friendly.

“You’re graduating soon, right?” Heather asked casually, wanting to make small talk with her cousin.

Everly nodded and replied in a slightly nervous manner, “I still have more than a year to go, but there isn’t much to do in school anymore.” Everly didn’t fall short to Heather when it came to intelligence; she had already completed a lot of her courses ahead of time, so she was deciding whether or not to take a double degree.

“Your third year should be the busiest,” Heather replied lightheartedly. She didn’t think much of it, but her words made Everly even more nervous. In any case, the latter always felt jittery whenever Heather was around, but she couldn’t do anything about it either.

“You don’t have to be so nervous around me. I’m your cousin, so just take it easy.” Heather tried to soothe Everly’s nerves. Naturally, her younger cousin’s edgy and wary behavior made her feel uneasy to even share a light conversation with her.

Everly gave Heather an embarrassed smile and said, “I’ve already completed all my courses ahead of time.” She didn’t feel the need to mention something like that to Heather, for such achievements were nothing compared to the latter’s.

“That’s great,” Heather praised. It seemed that Everly was far smarter than she’d imagined, and someone like her should work for the Langston Group.

Heather pondered the question of when to recruit Everly into the company. I’ll need to have a discussion with Grandpa soon.

With that, the two of them descended the stairs together. There used to be a huge gap in between them at all times, and nobody dared to stay too close to Heather. When Robert saw Heather walking downstairs together with Everly, a proud and satisfied smile appeared on his face.

Heather seemed to be a lot more mature now, and it was good to see that. After all, Robert always hoped for her to find the warmth of a family with the Langstons.

Today, there weren’t many people at home in the Langston Residence; only three of them were at the dining table. Meanwhile, Everly was exceptionally nervous under the rare silence of the house. She was already quite uneasy in front of Robert, but with Heather around as well, Everly felt a lump in her throat with both of their eyes on her at the same time.

In truth, Everly hated her timid personality. She was undoubtedly skilled in a lot of things, but she lacked severely in terms of courage—she was afraid to present herself.

“I see that you’re getting along with Everly these days, Heather.” Robert brought it up on purpose to pull them closer.

“I like Everly very much.” Heather affirmed his statement right away. She felt that Everly needed more encouragement, so there was no harm in giving her more support to boost her self-esteem.

Everly blushed all of a sudden, and she became a little embarrassed after hearing those words from Heather. Then, she stole a glance at the other. Since when did her cousin become as gentle as this? As she stared at the placid smile on Heather’s face, a faint hint of guilt spread in her heart.

“I’m very glad to see that you two are getting along like sisters,” Robert commended. After all, it wasn’t easy for Heather to take the first step on her own.

The family had a harmonious time together at lunch, and this was probably Everly's most relaxed day throughout her time in the Langston Residence. In fact, she couldn't believe that such a scenario had actually happened.

"You probably don't have any lectures to attend for now—right, Everly?" Robert had realized this for quite some time, but he naturally wanted Everly to help out in the Langston Group earlier than planned once he heard Heather's remarks.

"Yes, Grandpa." Everly still hadn't recovered from the sudden kindness she was showered with, so her guard was still up inside.

"Since you have nothing going on at school, you should come and help out in the Langston Group as soon as possible," Robert said solemnly. After all, business matters were meant to be said seriously.

A look of joy came over Everly at once. "Are you sure, Grandpa?" Aside from Heather who had joined Langston Group while she was still a student, everyone else had only been recruited after they graduated. Everly never thought that she'd have the privilege to join the Langston Group ahead as well.

"Yeah, I have confidence in her talent as well," Heather agreed from the side with an encouraging smile.

"Thank you, Grandpa and Heather," Everly said enthusiastically. She could finally showcase her abilities, and she didn't want to be looked down upon.

"Do your best. I believe in you, Everly." Robert was also supportive toward Everly with his speech.

Heather loved the atmosphere around them. Why didn't she pay more attention back then? With just a reassuring and warm look, she could easily change anyone's mood for the better.

She used to be so oblivious as to how others felt. Heather finally understood one thing—to offer happiness to another person was a way of receiving happiness herself.

After all, they were her family; even though she would never forgive her own parents, she figured that she should at least be compassionate toward her peers in the family.

The Langston Family was already chaotic on its own, so Heather hoped that she could unite her family members in the perilous situation that they were in. Heather didn't want the Langstons to be destroyed in the hands of Blake, and she wanted to do her best to protect her family for the rest of Robert's life.

Meanwhile, Everly was beginning to feel that Heather simply had a tough mouth with a soft heart—she liked that about Heather very much. Now, she knew that Heather wasn't as horrible as she seemed on the surface.

“Which position do you think suits Everly, Heather?” Robert asked his granddaughter for her opinion since she had a great judgement for people.

“My position has been empty ever since I left the Langston Group, so Everly should take my place!” Heather said generously. Her place in the Langston Group was an important one, but she easily gave it to Everly without a second thought.

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The two people shared silent looks at the table, for Heather's answer came as a total shock to both Robert and Everly. Heather had spent many years getting to where she was today, and they were surprised that she would give away her precious position in the company just like that.

“This can't be right, Grandpa!” Everly shirked away from the responsibility at once.

How could Everly possibly accept that offer? Heather's position was only one step away from the highest authority, and there were thousands of employees under her management. Everly couldn't take it from her no matter what.

“Are you doubting yourself, Everly?” The smile on Heather's face carried a hint of provocation. It was as though she was challenging Everly to take her offer.

“I... I...” Everly stuttered. She didn't know what to say; after all, Heather's unconditional confidence in her made her feel a little ashamed. She felt that she wasn't worthy of such trust.

“I know that you've gained a deep understanding of the Langston Group from your time here, and you've been secretly finding out about the company's operational procedures. Technically speaking, you already have plenty of

theoretical knowledge; now, the only thing you lack is experience. Why are you doubting yourself? You should believe in yourself—you can definitely do it,” Heather reassured Everly. She didn’t know what her cousin was worried about, so she hoped that she could give her some confidence through her words.

“I really don’t think I can cope with such an important position, Heather.” Everly still couldn’t accept it. Robert, who had something to say, decided to sit back and watch the two of them instead.

“You need to learn to be more courageous. You’re not suited to work from the bottom, and I believe in your ability as a leader,” Heather said casually.

Robert had always trusted Heather’s extraordinary eye for judgement, so he swallowed his initial disagreement toward the proposal. Furthermore, he also knew that Everly was quite a timid person; right now, what she needed was moral support and encouragement. In fact, he might just shatter her confidence if he said something against it at a time like this.

Since he believed in Heather’s judgement, he also believed that she would never make a decision that could bring risk to the company. Thus, Robert silently accepted Everly as Heather’s successor to her position.

In truth, Heather’s decision had an underlying motive to it; if Everly were to take up such an important role, Blake would be sure to let his guard down. With that, things would definitely be easier to handle in the future.

Each of them bore different thoughts and opinions at the dining table. After the meal, Robert quickly left with a random excuse, giving the cousins all the space in the living room.

Heather looked around at the empty hall; it was now a great time to talk about more discreet things. Thus, she turned to the butler and instructed, “Don’t let anyone in.” With that, the living room instantly became their meeting hall. In the meantime, Heather planned to have a thorough discussion with Everly.

“Why have you decided to give me such an important role, Heather?” Everly was clueless about Heather’s thoughts, for this didn’t make sense at all.

“Do you think you can do it?” It was what mattered most to Heather. After all, she wanted her cousin to show her determination to do well in the company.

Everly stared back at Heather with hesitant eyes. At last, she nodded under the latter's unbending gaze and replied, "I'll try my best."

"I believe in your strength. You're young, so be brave. There's nothing to be afraid of." With that, Heather nudged her chair closer to Everly's. She wanted to talk to her about something else.

"Do you have other plans in mind since you're giving me your position in the company, Heather?" Although Everly was faint-hearted, it didn't necessarily mean that she was stupid; she speculated that Heather must've had other plans by doing so.

"Yes." Heather admitted it unhesitatingly.

"It's about Blake." She was still unsure about how things were between Everly and Blake, but she had to make her intentions clear.

"Oh, Blake." Everly became even more nervous. Why is she mentioning Blake all of a sudden? Don't tell me she knows about the things that I've done with him behind the scenes?

"I'm worried about Langston Group's future should it fall into his hands. He's very assertive; even though he's quite capable, he never listens to anyone." Heather bluntly told Everly the truth without twisting her words.

"I don't really get it." Everly didn't dare to side with her, but she didn't want to say much either.

"You just need to know one thing—the reason you're joining Langston Group is to keep Blake in check." Heather made her point clear. However, it did seem crazy to use Everly to keep Blake under control. After all, the gap between the two of them was monumental in terms of abilities.

Nevertheless, Heather believed that her decision would bring about an unexpected positive outcome. She had a feeling that she had made the right choice.

Meanwhile, Everly was mulling things over. She was currently against Heather on one matter. In other words, she was on Blake's side. Now that Heather was asking her to keep an eye on Blake in the company, Everly was still worried that she wouldn't be able to cope with it despite the fact that those two matters were completely different and unrelated.

“Are you having trouble with your decision?” Heather was studying Everly’s expression intently, and it seemed like the latter did have certain ties with Blake. However, Heather had yet to find out the truth behind it.

As such, she was quite unhappy to come to such a conclusion; she never once expected that there might even be a connection between Everly and Blake. Was there really no one who could be of help to her in the entire Langston Family? Blake was engaged in matters which could bring harm to the Langston Group, so she had to arrange for someone to keep an eye on him.

All of a sudden, she felt guilty for leaving the Langston Group—after all, she was no longer as passionate as before when it came to starting her own business. Now, she’d rather aid her family’s company to survive this horrible predicament ahead.

“I don’t have the power to control Blake, Heather.” After much thought, Everly felt that she would definitely be hated by many in the company for occupying the top position out of nowhere, and it’d be difficult for her to be supported by the majority. In that case, how could she be of any use against Blake?

“Just follow my instructions and you’ll be fine.” Heather wanted to form a team with Everly. Even though it was obvious that her cousin might have something to do with Blake, it didn’t mean that she was completely on his side.

Meanwhile, Everly stared at Heather with an innocent look in her eyes; she trusted Heather a lot despite not knowing what the latter was up to. However, she was still doubtful—not only was she worried about her own abilities, she feared the possibility of exposing her other deed if she were forced to raise a conflict against Blake.

Because of that, Everly was troubled. On one hand, Heather was so persistent for her help, yet she couldn’t tell her the truth in all honesty. At the same time, Everly felt horrible to keep it inside as well.

Everly simply couldn’t reject Heather’s offer under her earnest gaze. Moreover, this was a great opportunity for her—she didn’t know when she’d have another chance to showcase herself if she failed to grab this golden opportunity. If she missed this chance, she would probably be a nobody for the rest of her life.

“Can I think about it for a few days?” In the end, Everly decided to take some time to decide, for it wasn’t wise to agree to it without thorough consideration.

“Sure.” Heather nodded. After all, now wasn’t the time to push Everly too hard.

When they were heading upstairs, Heather requested to pay Everly’s room a visit since the latter had been to the former’s room before this. Now that she thought about it, Heather had never been to another person’s bedroom before, so she was suddenly interested in doing so.

Even though Heather frequented Robert’s room, no one else had ever invited her to visit theirs. It was as though everyone in the Langston Family was ganging up on her.

Heather and Everly went up the stairs one after another, and it was a rare, harmonious sight to see. Everly thought that it’d cause no harm for Heather to see her room since it was quite clean and tidy. In truth, there weren’t many who would visit Everly’s room besides her parents. When she opened the door, Heather was a little surprised at the view.

So this is how Everly decorates her room, she thought to herself. Everly’s room had a minimalistic aesthetic theme—from the looks of it, the girl’s inner world seemed to be an interesting one.

“Quick, come and sit on the sofa, Heather.” Everly was a little nervous, and it felt as though a teacher was here to visit her home.

As such, Heather entered her room. Minimalism, huh... It looks like she’s pretty self aware in reality. Heather eyed Everly thoroughly, and a faint smile tugged at the corner of her lips.

It seemed like Everly was precisely the person she was looking for. Heather didn’t care about her relationship with Blake behind closed doors; even if she was closer to him than she was to Heather, it didn’t matter at all.

After all, Heather had other plans in mind. Besides, Everly would never turn a blind eye to the wellbeing of the Langston Group, so Heather believed that she would make the right choice in the end.

“Why do you put so much trust in me, Heather?” It was as though Everly was more confident in her own room. Moreover, the question was something she was extremely curious about.

Heather gave her a brief glance, knowing that Everly was still nervous at the moment. Indeed, her younger cousin needed some training to overcome this anxious trait of hers.

“I trust you because of your abilities.” Heather endlessly emphasized on Everly’s skills; her response was perfectly logical and she wasn’t letting anything slip, so Everly didn’t know how to respond.

“Thanks for believing in me, Heather.” Everly expressed her thanks again. No doubt, she was feeling grateful. Finally, there was someone who trusted her to such an extent, and that someone was Heather no less—even Everly couldn’t believe it herself. An inexplicable warmth filled her heart at the thought of that.

“Your room is pretty decent, and the decoration looks great. Did you design it yourself?” Heather brought up a light-hearted topic to soothe Everly’s jitters.

“Yeah,” she answered truthfully.

With that, Heather was even more pleased. She could see that Everly had quite a strong sense of design. However, she wasn’t as skilled as Myra in this particular field; if Myra was here, she would be able to gauge Everly’s level at once.

“You shouldn’t downplay your talents, so I hope that you’ll appreciate the opportunity this time.” Heather turned around all of a sudden and looked at Everly, her eyes filled with sincerity. Soon after, she then added, “The Langston Group is going through troubled times right now. I believe you’ll be able to contribute many fresh ideas if you join the company.”

Those were none other than typical words of encouragement, yet they were slowly but surely breaking down Everly’s tough defense. Since Heather was able to tell her something like that, Everly knew that her cousin truly acknowledged her skills. She felt like she had just gotten full marks on an exam. At that moment, Everly simply couldn’t express the sense of accomplishment that she was feeling. She stared blankly at Heather, not knowing what to say.

“I believe you already have an answer.” Heather put on a sweet smile.

“How did it feel like on your first day at the Langston Group, Heather?” Everly had always been curious about this. Since they were on the topic, the

question escaped her lips without much thought. At this point, she had more or less decided to join the Langston Group.

Heather narrowed her eyes, and she gave out a certain intimidating air at that moment. It seemed like it was something that had happened a long time ago. At the same time, it also felt like she had just experienced it yesterday. “I didn’t think much about it. Back then, I thought that the Langston Group would eventually fall into my hands.” It was her first time saying something like that. When those words left her mouth, it somehow left an unbelievably liberating feeling in her chest.

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After patting Everly on the shoulder, Heather said impassively, “Just be rest assured. I believe that you’re totally capable of dealing with it using your capabilities.” She had stressed this many times; what Everly lacked the most at present was self-confidence, so Heather had to find a way to build it up.

However, Heather’s lips curled into a sneer when she walked out of the woman’s room. She spotted something she shouldn’t have seen inside, and it truly surprised her because she hadn’t expected Everly to be involved with that man. This gave her quite a headache, but she had to let Everly join the Langston Group smoothly for now. Right now, Heather had to take three aspects into consideration; she had never expected Everly to become a key figure, but she didn’t think this was a bad thing. Now that things had come to such an extent, she could only take one step at a time and act according to the circumstances.

It was never by chance that Everly had caught Heather’s attention, for the latter had learned some information about Everly while she was at Leon’s villa. There was a trace of worry in Heather’s eyes as she recalled how Leon talked about this in vivid detail; she wasn’t sure whether what Leon said was entirely true, but she was indeed shocked by what Leon had told her. The Everly he described was so different from the Everly in the Langston Family that she even doubted the veracity of his words.

Things were getting increasingly out of control, but Heather liked such a feeling. The loss of control made everything more interesting, and this completely aroused her innermost courage and uprightness.

The Langstons were the least united. On the outside, they seemed to be keeping on good terms with each other. With all members of the family living under the same roof, the Langston Family was unmatched by other families in Bradford City. Unfortunately, the Langstons secretly acted of their own free will, disappointing Heather and leaving Robert heartbroken. If the Langstons continued to rest on their laurels, they would definitely fall apart.

Heather used to be eager for such a day to arrive, but she changed her mind now that she truly saw herself as a member of the Langston Family. The Langston Family mustn't perish, so she had to find a way to help the family pull through this crisis. However, she could only take one step at a time for now. Furthermore, she didn't know how she should deal with this, and she often found herself at a loss for what to do with the Langston Family's current situation.

She returned to her room while wondering if Robert had grown suspicious today. For now, she was only suspicious of Everly, so she didn't want to let Robert know this. Robert's perspicacity was well beyond an ordinary person's imagination, and Heather feared that he would sense her suspicions as she didn't want him and Everly to become estranged from each other.

Speaking of it, Heather hadn't figured out what was the matter with Everly, nor did she know what was the latter's objectives. As such, she couldn't let anyone else grow suspicious of Everly as well since that would be unfair to the woman. After all, wouldn't she be blaming the woman unjustly if Everly had really done nothing to be ashamed of? Still, Heather learned some information via her interactions with the woman. As expected, Everly wasn't who she appeared to be, and it seemed that the entire Langston Family had overlooked her capabilities.

That afternoon, Heather made arrangements to meet Matthias at a cafe since she hadn't enjoyed a good cup of coffee outside for a long time. Heather liked to drink coffee, and she would brew herself some of it at home since it was a rather interesting pastime.

The weather was nice today, but the wind blew so harshly that it made one feel somewhat chilly. Wind and rain were most feared during the winter, but it was pretty fortunate and nice since it wasn't raining that day.

Heather's arrival drew many gazes when she pushed the door open, and Matthias looked at her with a faint smile. The instant their eyes met, everything else seemed to pale into insignificance, for they only had eyes for

each other. Heather walked step by step toward Matthias, but he didn't walk up to her. Instead, he waited for her to walk toward him. His heart was filled with surging emotions when he saw her, but the surging emotions within him were concealed beneath his imperturbable exterior.

Heather had come ahead of time, but she didn't expect Matthias to arrive earlier than she did. "Have you been here for a long time?"

"Nope. I've only been here since lunch," Matthias replied nonchalantly as if several hours of waiting wasn't something worth mentioning.

"Why did you come so early?" Heather looked at him with a helpless expression. Matthias was the Locke Group's chief executive officer. Yet, not only did he skip work in secret to go on a date, he even came so much ahead of time. This made Heather feel rather embarrassed.

"I couldn't stay in my office when the thought of being able to see you soon came into my mind." Matthias was still impulsive whenever Heather was concerned—he was like a reckless young boy blinded by love.

"In that case, you could've just told me that you arrived ahead of time so that you wouldn't have to wait for so long." Heather looked at it from Matthias' perspective. In her opinion, waiting here alone wasn't probably the best experience.

"The process of waiting was also wonderful because I was waiting for you." Matthias kept showering Heather with sweet talk as if his lips were coated with honey.

Upon hearing Matthias' words, Heather felt rather embarrassed. "Let's order some coffee, shall we?" She picked up the menu. This cafe had neither booths nor private rooms, though its lobby was unusually spacious. Despite the lack of private rooms, Heather liked the taste of the coffee here. Since the coffee here tasted good, she could forgive the other lacking aspects of this cafe.

She ordered her usual drink; since Matthias already had a cup of coffee earlier, he didn't want to order another one right now. He merely looked at Heather without doing anything else since he was pleased to see her.

"Has anything been going on in Bradford City lately?" Heather was habituated to talking about work, so she naturally blurted out the question as if by instinct.

However, Matthias evaded her question and took the opportunity to bring the conversation around to himself instead. “Why don’t you ask me if there’s been anything going on in my mind lately?”

“This question is too personal,” replied Heather in a formal tone. Indeed, she never asked such personal questions.

“Don’t you want to know something personal about me?” Matthias asked with feigned disappointment. There were still misunderstandings between him and Heather, so he wanted to eliminate the estrangement between them as soon as possible.

“I do. Well, kind of,” Heather replied reluctantly.

Matthias looked at Heather and stopped talking about this subject as he roughly understood what her reply meant. Heather took a sip of coffee, and it felt warm in her stomach; the wind outside had made her feel somewhat chilly just now.

None of them spoke again out of silent understanding. After all, some matters couldn’t be glossed over no matter how hard they tried. The argument they had at Iceland was still fresh in their minds as if it happened just the day before, and they couldn’t help but sigh when they thought back to it.

As a pleasant aroma filled the air, Heather looked at Matthias one moment and glanced down at the cup of coffee in her hand the next. One would seldom see her behaving in such a manner, and Matthias looked at her with a corner of his mouth turned up in a faint smile; it seemed as though he was trying to soothe the uneasiness within her in such a way. Heather also felt that she was being a bit restless, and this felt very bad.

“Will you be frank with me about some matters, Matthias?”

Matthias’ heart did a complete somersault at Heather’s sudden question. It was difficult to answer this question since he was still pondering how to talk about some matters. Now that Heather brought this up herself, he had no idea how to answer her. Nonetheless, this was indeed a problematic issue between them; not only were there many things that he couldn’t let Heather know, but she also had many little secrets of her own. How should such a relationship last when they each had secrets that they couldn’t tell each other?

The faint aroma in the air grew increasingly strong as time ticked away. After Heather sniffed lightly at it, she noticed that everyone else was leaving one after another. Before long, everyone else in the lobby had left, and even the cafe closed its doors. Seeing her puzzled expression, Matthias then explained, "I like a quiet environment. It's hard not to be overcautious when too many people are around."

His words were puzzling, but Heather looked at the bar with a smirk as she thought about what they implied; it seemed like Matthias was inconvenienced with the presence of so many outsiders when he wanted to tell her about something. Even so, she disliked such a big move. Such theatrics seemed romantic in novels and TV dramas, but they didn't look so in Heather's eyes. After all, she was capable of buying out an entire place herself. One shouldn't try to move her by doing things that money could do. To her, it was meaningless for someone else to do something she was capable of doing herself. "You'd better be frank if you have something to say." She disliked Matthias's antics since it was actually better to be more straightforward.

Now that even the waiters and waitresses had left the lobby, they no longer had to worry about eavesdroppers. "How long do you think the Locke Group can last?"

"How could you ask me this question?" Heather responded in disbelief. "You're the man helming the Locke Group, so how long it will last has a lot to do with you," she answered forthrightly since she didn't know what Matthias' point in asking such a question was.

"That's right. I do have a great influence on the Locke Group's existence," Matthias replied in agreement.

Heather's brow furrowed at Matthias' reply, for she soon realized the hidden meaning behind his words. In fact, she didn't expect him to have such a plan. Since his crazy idea came as a surprise to her, she looked at him with a frown.

"Shh!" Matthias put his forefinger in front of his mouth, signaling for her to keep quiet.

Heather didn't say a word and held back what she wanted to say. However, she was relieved upon hearing him say something like this. There seemed to be a great possibility that Matthias would side with her in the future, so she could set her mind at rest for the time being.

When he saw the natural smile on Heather's face, Matthias sighed inwardly with relief. It's really difficult to please a woman, he thought to himself.

"Did I screw up your plan?" Heather asked. Now that she thought about it, she felt like she had been difficult on purpose.

Matthias didn't seem to care about it, though. "Things never turn out as planned." After all, he cared more about whether he could win the heart of the woman he loved.

"Let's not talk about these depressing subjects, shall we? Let's talk about something lighter," suggested Heather. She was the one who had brought up such depressing questions at the beginning, yet she was changing her tune right now. Needless to say, women were the most complicated beings on earth.

"In that case, let's talk about when you'll be giving me your heart," Matthias suggested as he seized the opportunity to woo Heather. After all, he never missed an opportunity to do so.

Meanwhile, Heather smiled helplessly as Matthias tried to sound her out again. How was she supposed to respond to that? She couldn't think of a good answer to this question no matter how hard she tried.

Matthias didn't give up, though. He continued to ask, "Why do you look so nervous?" His question threw Heather further off balance. "Let's change the subject, shall we?" She didn't want to beat around the bush with Matthias, so she thought she might as well be upfront first.

"Okay." Matthias nodded. He thought he was marvelous enough to throw Heather into such a state, and he had to hold her in check since he mustn't be too soft on her.

"It'll be snowing tomorrow." Heather changed the subject awkwardly by abruptly mentioning the next day's weather.

"Don't you like snow the most?" Matthias raised an eyebrow at her words. She likes it anyhow, he thought to himself.

"I like a heavy fall of snow, not a light one." Heather hated sleet the most. There were several kinds of snow—thick and heavy snow was the most nice-looking one. How pleasant it was to see the earth being covered in white

snow! Heather had a thing for heavy snow, and she was particularly fond of poems about it since these poems would remind her of how snowflakes fell thick and fast back then. Unfortunately, it was difficult to see such a scene in Bradford City right now.

“It seems like I won’t have the opportunity of inviting you to enjoy the view of snow together then,” Matthias responded with feigned dejection.

Heather was natural and poised this time. “You have the opportunity to hide from the snow with me, though.”

Matthias’s heart fluttered at her reply. He felt happy from the bottom of his heart, and he immediately seized the opportunity to ask for more benefits. “Are you inviting me to the Langston Residence?”

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Despite his bantering suggestion, Matthias didn’t think Heather would be willing to let him visit the Langston Residence. He wasn’t hopeful about this, but he had a little bit of anticipation deep down inside after the string of surprises today.

As she stirred the coffee with a spoon in her hand, Heather looked at Matthias while exuding an alluring charm. They looked at each other, but Matthias couldn’t fathom the message in her eyes for a moment.

“Do you like to hide from the snow at the Langston Residence?” Heather’s eyes flickered as an unspeakably seductive charm emanated from her.

“In that case, why don’t we go to my place instead?” Matthias asked suggestively in return. In any case, he just wanted to be with Heather, but he didn’t know whether she understood what he meant.

Heather stopped what she was doing. “I’m not interested.”

Her resolute reply extinguished all Matthias’s fantasies. It seemed that Heather was still who she was, so Matthias shouldn’t cherish any fanciful ideas. However, just when he felt disheartened, she suddenly said, “I like the night view from your villa’s rooftop.” She recalled the previous candlelight dinner as if it had just happened yesterday. Time really flew in a rush, and many things had become history.

They tacitly spoke implicitly and conveyed—by implication—what they really thought. “Well then, may I have the pleasure of inviting you to enjoy the night view from my villa’s rooftop tonight?” Matthias asked.

“I’d like to watch Evan dance.” Heather made a request.

Matthias looked in her direction while feeling rather depressed. It really made people feel helpless that Heather would actually make such a request.

“If he can’t, why don’t you do it instead?” Heather suggested while trying to imagine the scene in her mind, though she truly couldn’t imagine it.

Matthias waved his hand at once. He was bad at dancing, so it would be better to sacrifice Evan instead. Having made a deliberate choice, he hurriedly sent Evan a text message via Messenger while Heather wasn’t paying attention. ‘Is it okay if you dance?’ At this moment, there was nothing that he couldn’t betray.

Evan looked at the text message in bafflement. What is Matthias up to again? How should I reply to this message? It wasn’t difficult for him to dance, but he couldn’t give Matthias a perfunctory reply since the latter had thrown him the question in all seriousness.

Meanwhile, Matthias gave Heather a nod after getting an affirmative answer from Evan. “Evan is a superb dancer.”

When Heather heard this, she knew right away that Matthias was exaggerating. She didn’t believe his words, but she didn’t care about the details since she was only looking for an excuse to go to Matthias’ place. She couldn’t refuse such a kind invitation from him, but the trip would be worthwhile since she could watch Evan dance later.

A trace of a smile played on Heather’s lips. Matthias really used every trick in the book in order to please her, and he would even probably say yes without hesitation if Heather wanted to watch him dance instead. “How long have you bought the entire place out?” she asked him.

“For the entire afternoon.” The corners of Matthias’s lips turned up slightly. He didn’t want to be disturbed by anyone when he was with Heather. In fact, he even wished that they were the only ones left in the entire world.

“Would you mind ending this boring buyout ahead of time?” Heather asked.

Her question was tactful, but Matthias recognized the deeper meaning behind it. This was exactly what he wished for; he couldn't wait to take Heather back to his villa as soon as possible. He gave her a meaningful stare; how could he not feel more than flattered when she repeatedly held out olive branches today?

After leaving the cafe, Heather didn't walk toward her car. Instead, she got straight into Matthias' car.

Heather had been cozying up to Matthias the whole time, and such a test was nearly more than his heart could withstand. He almost wondered if this was a dream, for Heather appeared so unreal beside him. He reached out and touched her cheek, and she didn't dodge his sudden intimate gesture this time. She could even feel the warmth of his fingers.

Heather's skin is still so fine and smooth. I wonder how she takes such good care of it, Matthias thought to himself as he retracted his hand. He unconsciously touched his face, and it was so different from Heather's. After all, a man's skin could never be as fine and smooth as a woman's. Besides, how could Matthias's skin be as supple as Heather's when his entire face was tight?

The pair was in perfect harmony along the way. Heather looked out the car window from time to time, whereas Matthias kept quiet with tacit understanding. It seemed that both of them hadn't recollected themselves after the light touch just now. When Heather glanced at Matthias occasionally, there was a look of tenderness in his eyes.

Just then, a barely perceptible scent assailed Heather's nostrils, and she leaned over and picked up the cigarette beside Matthias. She didn't know when he started smoking, nor had she noticed it before. She looked at him while holding the cigarette. "You smoke too." She was a little surprised. After all, she had never smelled cigarettes on him.

Matthias took the cigarette back from her. "I smoke only once in a while." He smoked only because he had been somewhat distraught earlier. In reality, he seldom smoked on a normal basis since smoking wasn't a pleasure to him.

"The faint smell of tobacco smells good, actually," Heather suddenly remarked. She recalled the faint smell of tobacco on someone; it occurred so long ago that she had almost forgotten the smell of tobacco mixed with the man's perfume. She didn't know why she would think of that person. What

seemed to happen a long time ago came into her mind as if it had just happened.

“Is that so?” Matthias smiled an unnatural smile as he couldn’t help feeling that there was something else behind the meaningful look in Heather’s eyes. Perhaps she wasn’t someone who had never experienced love between man and woman as she appeared to be. After all, she was a mature woman, and women of her age would more or less have scars left on them after having loved someone. At the thought of this, he felt a dull ache in his chest; it really made him feel uncomfortable to think that Heather had been attracted to someone else before. “Do you like the smell of tobacco?” He tossed the cigarette aside as he suddenly hated cigarettes even more.

“Only the faint smell of it,” Heather answered emphatically.

Matthias forced a smile, and his reply sounded forced. “Okay.” It seems that Heather once loved a man who had a faint smell of tobacco on him just as I’ve guessed, he thought to himself.

The topic seemed to be brought up specially to make conversation, and Heather finally understood how awkward Matthias felt back then. Making conversation when there was nothing to talk about was the most tormenting thing ever, and Heather didn’t expect that she would also find herself in such a predicament one day. Before she realized it, she had tried to please Matthias. This was why love was both irresistible and annoying; she was such a proud person, yet she would think of how to please someone else.

Heather’s heart always wavered at such a moment. She would probably think of ending the relationship for good—love was particularly tormenting, and to continue being in a relationship was a journey that brought both pain and joy.

“You’re averting your eyes. What are you worrying about?” Matthias began to learn how to pay attention to Heather’s little gestures since they could reflect her inner thoughts just as they did at this moment. He didn’t know why, but he was surprised that Heather actually wanted to run away. They were about to reach the villa soon; he was going to take her to his home, yet he had a bad feeling about this.

Just then, Heather asked in a self-deprecating manner, “Do you think someone like me is unworthy of love, Matthias?”

Matthias looked at her with determination. "Why are you denying yourself?" He hoped he could give her courage so that she wouldn't escape from their feelings for each other again. "Everyone has the right to love; it's just that some people give up this right," he said in all seriousness as if teaching her how to love.

"Sometimes, I really think that love is very boring, Matthias." Heather talked about what had been troubling her. She wanted to be close to Matthias, but she also wanted to stay away from him at times. Such ambivalence almost tortured her terribly.

"Since when did you start thinking of such nonsense, and since when did you become so unsure of yourself?" Matthias raised an eyebrow at Heather. He would've probably wavered or felt disappointed in the past, but he no longer did so. He had researched this for a long time; even though he lacked practical experience, he had figured out the mental state of a woman in love at the very least. He couldn't think about this from his perspective as a man, so he tried to view this from Heather's perspective. Had there not been so many complicated factors between them, there probably wouldn't have been so many messy situations, nor would Heather have become unsure of herself. After all, she was such a self-assured person.

The car came to a complete stop outside the villa. After getting out of his car, Matthias opened the car door for Heather, who hesitated for a moment before stepping out of the car as well. As they walked toward his villa, they ran into Evan, who happened to walk out of the place and was surprised to see them. "What a surprise it is to see you here, Miss Langston," he said.

"Well, Matthias invited me here," Heather replied before smiling at Evan. "Besides, my being here shouldn't come as a surprise to you. Aren't you going to dance for me?"

Evan was stunned. "Dance?" he asked. "Why would I dance for you?"

Heather frowned. "That's what Matthias has promised me; I wouldn't have been here otherwise," she replied before turning to look at Matthias with a raised eyebrow. "Would you like to explain this, Matthias?"

Upon hearing her question, Evan turned his gaze to Matthias as well.

"Didn't you tell me that it's okay for you to dance?" Matthias asked Evan.

“Yes, you did,” Evan responded. “But you didn’t tell me that I’d be dancing for someone.”

Matthias fell silent for a moment. “Well,” he explained, “Heather said she’d like to watch you dance, and I agreed.”

“That’s right.” Heather nodded. “That’s why I’m here. I’ll be leaving if you’re not going to dance, Evan.”

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Matthias looked at Evan sympathetically. He didn’t know what Heather would do next, but it seemed that he could only trouble Evan for this. In reality, he was looking forward to it deep down inside as well. Even though a dancing man wasn’t worth watching in his opinion, he hadn’t seen Evan dance for a long time.

Obviously, Matthias had sold Evan out to please Heather. Upon realizing what had happened, Evan looked at Matthias furiously. So what if he was an all-around butler? Matthias couldn’t make him do whatever he wanted him to do.

Seeing how the two buddies had fallen out and turned against each other, Heather smiled unapologetically. “Aren’t you two getting inside?” She entered the villa first on her own. Then, she pricked up her ears and listened as Matthias and Evan whispered to each other.

“Why would you want me to dance?” Evan asked in displeasure; even his deliberately lowered voice couldn’t conceal his anger.

Meanwhile, Matthias didn’t know how to explain the matter to Evan. Feeling rather helpless, he said to Evan, “You dance really well.”

Matthias was completely at sea, but when he thought about it, he realized that Evan didn’t like to dance, and he really screwed up this time. Evan had a dancing partner who was particularly in rapport with him when he dominated the dance floor many years ago, and they naturally developed feelings for each other. When they broke up afterward, Evan had never danced since then.

Perhaps it didn’t even occur to Heather that what she mentioned as a joke would remind Evan of a past that he couldn’t bear to look back on. Matthias

had also forgotten this incident for a moment, and it wasn't until he saw Evan being so angry right now that he remembered it.

Matthias was in a dilemma; he had never been courteous to Evan, but the situation was different this time since this incident had crossed Evan's limits. Besides, Matthias couldn't go so far. Still, he found it embarrassing to tell Heather that he had to backtrack on what he had promised her.

Evan had a rough idea of what was going on when he saw how troubled Matthias was, but he had always liked to add fuel to the fire. So, he leaned close to Matthias's ear with a scowl and whispered, "I think Miss Langston wants to watch you dance, so why don't you dance for her instead?" Naturally, he wanted to teach Matthias a lesson when he thought of how the latter had ignored his buddy for the sake of a woman, so he wanted to watch him make a fool of himself. As soon as he finished talking to Matthias, he came up to Heather's side and said to her, "I wonder if you've heard a rumor before, Miss Langston."

Matthias was alarmed at once. It seemed that Evan was going to do something harmful to him, but it was already too late to stop him at this moment.

On the other hand, Heather looked at Evan curiously, wondering what kind of rumor she would hear from him.

When he saw that Heather was interested, Evan immediately struck the iron while it was hot. "Actually, Director Locke is a fabulous dancer. It's more interesting to watch him than to watch me dance."

Matthias hurried up to them as well. He just knew that Evan would get back at him, for Evan was very good at stabbing someone in the back.

Heather turned to look at Matthias beside her with the corners of her mouth turned up slightly; she seemed to be eager to watch him dance. On the other hand, Matthias' scalp tingled when he met Heather's gaze. Instantly, a bad feeling spread all over him.

"It turns out that you're a superb dancer." Heather smiled charmingly. Now, it seemed that Matthias was doomed to dance in front of her.

Evan winked at Matthias as he successfully gave the latter a hard time. He had always sided with Matthias in front of Heather, but it seemed that Heather had successfully turned the two buddies against each other this time.

Luckily, Matthias had quick wits. He immediately suggested, "I like dancing with a partner, but I don't have one right now." Even if he really had to dance, he would get Heather to dance with him. After all, the idea of dancing with Heather seemed nice to him.

However, Heather pointed to them both. "Isn't Evan here?"

Evan and Matthias frowned simultaneously, probably not expecting Heather to say that. As expected, they were outsmarted by the cunning lady. "I can't dance the female part," Evan protested immediately. It was impossible for him to dance in the first place, so it was absolutely impossible for him to dance the female part.

"Haha!" Heather burst into laughter. "Why can't Matthias be the one dancing the female part? As expected, you're a bottom!"

Matthias and Evan were speechless at the same time. Heather had changed so much recently that they couldn't accept it for a moment; it was as though she had changed into a different person.

"You still remember what you've promised me, don't you, Matty?" Heather suddenly addressed Matthias affectionately.

Upon hearing this, Matthias tensed up deep down inside; he had no idea what mischief Heather was up to again. "Well..." He was in a quandary. He had reluctantly agreed to dance in Evan's place, but he didn't expect that Heather was still unwilling to let him off.

As she ignored the troubled look in Matthias' eyes, Heather said on her own, "In that case, it shouldn't be a big deal for you to dance the female part for a while."

Evan couldn't help but laugh when he heard this. Is Heather really not here to pull a prank on Matthias? he thought to himself. On the other hand, Matthias gave Evan a look to remind the latter to unite with him against Heather.

However, Evan turned traitor at the critical moment. He didn't want to dance ever again, but he didn't mind sacrificing himself if he could watch Matthias

dance the female part. “I don’t mind dancing if Director Locke is willing to dance the female part.” He passed the buck to Matthias again.

The latter was surprised that Evan would turn traitor to him. This is really infuriating! he thought to himself.

Heather looked at Evan with satisfaction upon hearing his words. Only then did Matthias realize that she was full of mischief. It seemed that he and Evan really didn’t know much about the other side of her personality, so they had to uncover more of this hidden side in the future.

Now that Evan had left no room for maneuver, Matthias could do nothing at all. At this moment, Heather urged Matthias again, “You see—Evan has agreed to it, Matty.” There was a sly look in her attractive eyes.

Thus, this matter was decided for the time being—it didn’t matter if Matthias agreed to it or not. After all, he couldn’t turn Heather down at all. He stared at her happily smiling face; how could he have the heart to say no to such a good-looking face? Besides, he thought it was worthwhile since he could get the woman he loved to smile, so he couldn’t say anything else regarding the rest of the matter.

Evan then stepped back so that Heather and Matthias walked side by side. Just then, Heather asked to go to the rooftop. She liked the rooftop of Matthias’ villa as the Langston Family’s chateau didn’t have one. Moreover, she liked an open environment where she could look far into the distance. A cold breeze lifted a corner of her dress, and such a natural and refreshing breeze made her feel comfortable.

The sky was already dark in the winter. At this moment, Evan had slipped off quietly, leaving only Matthias by Heather’s side. As there were only the two of them on the large rooftop, Matthias hugged Heather from behind. Smelling the pleasant scent of her hair, he rested his head on her shoulder as they completely let their guard down. “You smell so nice.” He recalled the scene where he met Heather for the first time, and he still remembered the faint fragrance on her to this day.

“Your breath itches me so much.” Matthias’ warm breath caressed Heather’s neck, creating an itchy sensation that made her feel somewhat ill at ease.

“When will you agree to be my woman, Heather?” Matthias asked Heather. He was inwardly tormented by the ambiguous relationship between them.

“When everything is over,” Heather replied meaningfully.

“When everything is over?” Matthias also wished he could put an end to everything sooner, but would everything be over so easily? Apparently, that wasn’t going to happen. Matthias wished he could live a peaceful life with Heather. Each day was torture right now; he was so near, yet so far away from her.

“There are too many problems between us, and I don’t want to be together with you when there are misunderstandings between us,” Heather replied from the bottom of her heart. She wanted a comfortable relationship, not one with a jumble of factors mixed in it.

“I also hope that I can put an end to all of this sooner.” Matthias planted a kiss on Heather’s neck. They were like lovers, but they were also like an unhappy couple.

“I don’t know what you’re planning exactly, Matthias.” Since she felt that the atmosphere was pretty nice, Heather decided to be more forthright. “I just hope that you’ll never betray or hurt me.” She didn’t want to be exploited by the person she loved, and perhaps she was already able to understand what Myra felt upon learning everything.

“You’re the most indeterminate factor, Heather. I’m also afraid of being betrayed and hurt,” Matthias replied while looking visibly moved. Heather seemed to have developed an instinct to take advantage of others. How could he put his mind at rest when she showed such a tendency?

“My interests are closely linked to that of the Langston Family. As long as no one hurts the Langston Family, I won’t do anything over-the-top.” Heather told Matthias clearly that she would safeguard the Langston Family’s interests and forbid anyone from doing anything harmful to her family.

“What if it’s only an expedient measure?” Matthias made an assumption.

“The Langston Family isn’t a pawn in someone else’s expedient measure,” Heather stated resolutely. Whatever the reason was, the action of exploiting and harming the Langston Family was unforgivable.

Matthias grew more worried when he heard how Heather kept stressing that she would protect the Langston Family. She used to focus her attention on the Langston Group, but she had turned her attention to the Langston Family

instead. In other words, Heather seemed to have become more attached to the Langston Family. It was already hard not to hurt the Langston Group, but it was even harder not to hurt the Langston Family. At the thought of this, Matthias became even more unwilling to lift his head from Heather's shoulder. Instead, he tightened his arms around her.

Heather was also aware deep down inside that she had gone a little too far by making such a request to Matthias. After all, Matthias had to use a lot of pawns for his plan, and the Langston Family played a key role. Evidently, she was also worried about what choice Matthias would make. "At times, I wish to be the most ordinary one among all people," she said emotionally. If that was the case, she wouldn't have so many things to worry about.

"Me too." Matthias also wanted to live an ordinary life, but he was doomed to have a life full of ups and downs when he chose to become the head of the Locke Family.

Heather also knew a little about Matthias' past, so she couldn't help but ask, "You had the opportunity to make another choice back then, so why did you make such a choice instead?"

"I had to do that despite myself. There are people and things that you care about, and similarly, there are people and things that I care about too." Matthias thought of his mother, who died young many years ago. Would she want to see him looking like this if she was still alive?

"You and I have both embarked on a path of no return, so we can't turn back," Heather said emphatically.

Matthias turned her around so that they looked at each other. "Why would I have to turn back when you're accompanying me along the journey?"

Heather looked at Matthias unblinkingly. A romantic air surrounded them, and she smelled Matthias' scent even as she breathed.

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Heather could hear their clothes fluttering in the wind. She tried hard to gaze far into the distance as she wanted to look into the nothingness.

However, Matthias blocked her view with his own body. "Why won't you look at me?"

Heather withdrew her gaze and turned to look at Matthias' face again. "When in your life did you feel most confused?"

Matthias curled his lips into a smile. "Right now," he answered honestly. Like Heather, he wouldn't have known there would be such feelings of loss in his life had he not been in an unforgettable relationship.

When Evan came with the fruit platter, Heather and Matthias were still in the same posture. They're just bullying me since I'm still single, Evan thought to himself, and his resentment as a single person was instantly unleashed. "Do you need some fruit, sir?" His voice was neither too loud nor too low, but it interrupted Heather and Matthias.

Heather freed herself from Matthias embrace, upon which the latter turned to look at Evan with a depressed expression. Evan kept making trouble for him all this while simply because he had asked Evan to dance. This is what I get for offending my buddy, he thought to himself. "No, I don't," he said in a grim voice.

On the other hand, Heather looked on as if she was amusing herself by watching them make fools of themselves. She had never seen these two men bickering since the very beginning, but she saw it today. If Matthias and Evan knew this was what Heather thought, they would probably be fuming with rage.

Fearing that Matthias would want to choke him to death, Evan backed down under his stern gaze, but Heather stopped him. "I need the fruit." Seeing that there were fruits that she wanted to eat on the plate, she naturally had to stop Evan from leaving.

Evan's mouth curved in a triumphant smile. After that, he placed the fruit platter onto the round table on the rooftop and looked at Matthias with a smug expression. This proved that Evan was even more petty than women when he wanted to, and such vindictiveness troubled Matthias a lot.

Evan left unhurriedly after doing all of this, whereas Heather sat down in front of the round table. The round table could be dragged freely and seemed convenient to use, so it was just right to drink afternoon tea at the table. As he sat down from across Heather, Matthias looked at the sly smile on her face and wondered what was making her so happy.

Heather handed Matthias an orange that she had just peeled. "Do you eat oranges, Matty?"

Matthias didn't like to eat oranges at all, though. However, Heather peeled the orange for him herself. Naturally, he couldn't turn down her offer, so he immediately took the orange, which wasn't whole, from her.

Meanwhile, Heather added, "Forgive me for stealing a few orange slices."

Matthias couldn't understand why Heather was so polite since he wouldn't mind it if she sneaked the orange whole. He then put the orange into his mouth under her stare, only to frown slightly when he realized how sour the orange was. He tried hard not to lose control of himself. How could there be such a sour fruit in the world? he thought to himself. He was amused and annoyed as Heather gave him the orange simply because it tasted so sour. Looking at the smug smile on Heather's face across from him, he felt really helpless. Since when did Heather become so mischievous?

Heather didn't forget to rub salt into the wound by asking, "Is it delicious?"

"Yes, it is," Matthias answered reluctantly.

Heather then produced another orange in her hand without Matthias noticing. This is bad, Matthias thought to himself as his pupils dilated slightly. As he had expected, she enthusiastically handed the orange to him. "It seems that you like to eat oranges. I'll let you eat this as well."

Feeling as though he had seen the smile of a demon, Matthias tried his best to control his emotions. If it were someone else who did this, he would probably have broken the person's neck. However, it was Heather who did this, so he had no choice other than to indulge her.

There was a trace of hesitation in Matthias' eyes when he took the orange from Heather. This time, he decided to stuff the entire orange in his mouth directly. If it weren't for the fact that the orange was too large, he would have swallowed it whole. However, when he bit into the orange, he was surprised to discover that this orange was unusually sweet.

Matthias's expression eased a lot, and Heather watched the changes in his expression with great interest. This is really interesting, she thought to himself. "Life is like these oranges. One would have no idea whether what happens

next is sweet or not, and whether the road they take in the future is bumpy or smooth.”

“You’re cut out to be a philosopher,” Matthias said to Heather. Heather often exuded the air of an educator unknowingly, so he wondered if she wanted to be a teacher.

However, Heather answered, “A person whose life is full of ups and downs is more cut out to be a philosopher, and I don’t want my life to be full of that.” She just wanted to live her life in peace. Her life felt so long to her that she already felt exhausted, so she hoped that the next path she took in life would be smooth. Even now, she couldn’t trust Matthias wholeheartedly. Matthias had been pledging his loyalty to her and trying to convince her to let her guard down, but the more he did so, the more she kept her guard up.

“So what if all the oranges on this plate are sour? Is there anyone who has such a rough life?” Matthias asked in reply. Was there someone whose life was full of nothing else but misery?

Matthias had heard that one could only enjoy so much happiness in their life. Once all the happiness in one’s life was used up, all that followed would be agony. Therefore, one must slowly enjoy their happiness in life bit by bit.

However, was it true in real life that the highs and lows of everyone’s life were similar? In the eyes of others, a man of position enjoyed unparalleled fame and was immensely enviable, but did those at the top really feel comfortable in their position? For example, Heather and Matthias rarely felt happy, and the rare happiness was like bubbles that would burst upon being touched. Furthermore, they had to be careful when they encountered happiness. They feared that they would carelessly let happiness slip through their fingers and that their happiness was too vulnerable, so they didn’t dare to make big moves. Both Heather and Matthias wondered if this was what life was or if they were the only ones living such lives.

The wind on the rooftop was getting stronger, but none of them was willing to suggest that they leave the rooftop; it was as if they were isolated in a world where there was no one else but them when they were on the rooftop. Even the air between them was filled with the scent of each other, and Heather was eager to put worldly affairs out of her mind as she just wanted to hold Matthias’s gaze. “What do you want to do when everything is over, Matty?” She hadn’t made up her mind on what she would do, so she wanted to hear what Matthias was going to say.

Matthias tapped the round table with his index finger. "How about being a scientist?" He recalled his dream about flying in space. He was always interested in high and new technology, after all.

Heather snorted with laughter. "In that case, I think it's better if you continue to be Director Locke." She couldn't imagine Matthias working in a laboratory while wearing a white uniform.

"Can't I be a scientist with my cleverness?" Matthias asked with a serious expression while pointing at his head. He seemed to be very displeased by Heather's ridicule.

"You lack the air of a mad scientist," Heather replied mercilessly.

Upon hearing Heather's words, Matthias gritted his teeth in anger; only Heather dared to speak to him in such a way. "I'm preparing a laboratory. I'll make what I want to study a reality with my own hard work," he declared solemnly. Actually, he had left himself a way out a long time ago.

"Actually, I wish I didn't mind how big your plan is. I don't want to take advantage of you in every possible way either," Heather suddenly said. Indeed, she approached Matthias previously with the intent of taking advantage of him.

"At last, you admit that you've been taking advantage of me," Matthias replied nonchalantly as if such a thing wasn't a big deal to him. He had long been aware of Heather's tricks; it was just that he didn't want to lose the opportunity to get closer to her, so he wouldn't grudge a thing even though he knew deep down inside that she had been taking advantage of him.

"I've been exploiting you. Do you really not care about it?" Heather looked at Matthias unblinkingly. She really didn't know what his bottom line was and why he was so kind to her.

"I'm willing to act as your stepping stone as long as I can be together with you," Matthias replied stoically. There weren't so many things to fuss over in this world. At the very least, plans were not indispensable between lovers; this was especially the case when one of the lovers was deeply in love while the other was still indecisive. At this moment, there was nothing fair to speak of.

"You don't have to be so humble. I don't want to see you acting this way." Heather felt very ashamed, but she couldn't make any changes. She couldn't

stop herself from taking advantage of Matthias. After all, how could she not take advantage of him when she could even do so to Myra, her closest friend? Heather felt that she was the vilest loser, but she had to do so for the Langston Family's sake; she was only too eager to use everything she had to help the Langston Family. She finally understood what Robert thought—no matter how weak the Langston Family was, she didn't want to see the family wither away with her own eyes.

"I'm not humbling myself. If I thought I was humble when I first saw you, I think I'm worthy enough of you right now." Matthias no longer wanted to hide the truth from Heather. He fell in love with her at first sight and loved her ever since, but he was unwilling to admit it. Not only that, he even kept convincing himself that he loved Myra instead. It was ridiculous that he had actually lied to himself for so many years and even tried to revive an old dream. He tortured Heather in the beginning, only to look for an excuse to get involved with her. If he really loved Myra, he should have striven to win Myra's heart instead of wasting his efforts on Heather. As Matthias recalled his past, he thought that he had been ridiculous enough, so he didn't want to escape from his past anymore. Instead, he wanted to restore the truth about his past. He loved Heather, and he loved no one else but her the whole time.

Heather felt that she had discovered a big secret. She looked at Matthias without moving as if he would say something that he found difficult to talk about.

"I have loved you all along. If there is such a thing as love at first sight, you're the only person who I'd fall in love with the moment I set eyes on you," Matthias said slowly. He understood how his heart beat for Heather and how deeply he loved her.

"Did you fall in love with me right from the beginning?" Heather asked while pointing at herself. She found it hard to believe Matthias' words, for he was deeply hostile to her back then and had tried to steal Myra away from her. Heather didn't have someone whom she could open her heart to back then, and Myra was such a special presence, so how could she allow anyone to steal Myra away from her? At the time, she was like an immature kid who wanted to have all the good stuff to herself, treating her friend as her own property.

"That's right—I love you the whole time. I behaved like that at first only because I felt inferior. I thought I wasn't worthy of you, so I kept hypnotizing

myself into believing that Myra was the woman I loved,” Matthias confessed. Now that he had poured out everything, he felt much more relieved.

Heather’s mind was in turmoil as she recalled Matthias’ thin and frail appearance back then. The unmemorable Matthias back then had now grown up into a dauntless man as if it was a dream!

Standing before Love Chapter 620

Meanwhile, Tony was sitting upright in the living room of another villa in Bradford City. Myra’s head was lowered, and the atmosphere between them was extremely tense. Tony had made a special effort to redecorate the entire living room lately to cheer Myra up. The chic Japanese-style decor was quite different from the previously affordable and luxurious European-style decor, and it gave the house an entirely new look.

There weren’t any servants in the living room. Tony sipped on the tea he held up before his eyes, and its bitter taste instantly overwhelmed his taste buds. On the other hand, Myra, who was lowering her head, had an unfathomable expression on her face. None of them spoke.

“Tony.” Myra looked up with a somber expression on her face.

Tony put down the teacup in his hand and stared at Myra in a daze. There was some distance between them, and this awkward distance seemed to mirror their current situation. A person’s trust could crumble in an instant sometimes.

“Why would you lie to me?” Myra questioned in anguish; she didn’t expect that even Tony would lie to her.

Tony’s mouth curved in a wry smile. He didn’t expect Myra to find out the truth in the end, and he didn’t know how to justify himself. “I really have no idea how I should explain this to you, Myra.” He felt very bad as well. There were too many factors involved, so he didn’t know how to explain this clearly to Myra.

The successive blows sapped Myra’s energy and spirit. How could a pregnant woman stand such a torment? She put her hand on her forehead as her head really hurt. Tony wanted to come up to her worriedly, but she stopped him. “Don’t come over, and don’t get so close to me,” she said angrily.

Tony stood in place as if he was suddenly paralyzed on the spot, and the expression on his face faded bit by bit. This matter dealt a huge blow to Myra, and Tony thought he could keep on hiding it from her. Unfortunately, nothing could be kept absolutely secret in this world. "Myra, forgive me, okay?" He pleaded for Myra's forgiveness. How he wished he could rush to her side right now!

The loving tenderness that he enjoyed in the past had now become something he could only wish for. Tony regretted his actions, but there was no such thing in the world as a medicine for regret, nor could he correct what he had done wrong. Veins stood out on his hands as he clenched his fists and suppressed his emotions. Right now, he couldn't do anything that might startle Myra. For the first time ever, he felt that the living room was so spacious that there was such a long distance between him and Myra.

Myra's voice was neither loud nor low, but it chilled Tony to the bones. "My bottom line is that no cheating is allowed. I don't care whether you did it out of good intentions or anything else, but I can't accept your lies."

Tony wished he could take a step forward, but he stood frozen on the spot since he didn't dare to do anything that would displease Myra. "Can you listen to my explanation?" He had to explain this. Otherwise, Myra wouldn't even want to look at him.

"No, I don't want to. Can you disappear from my sight for the time being?" Myra didn't want to see Tony right now. At the sight of him, she would recall his lies and Heather's betrayal. She didn't expect that the two people closest to her would actually do such a thing to her. She suddenly felt like a failure, and grief was written all over her face.

In the end, Tony stepped beyond the boundary. "Myra." He rushed up to Myra regardless of everything.

Meanwhile, she immediately stood up. With a glum face and an unwelcoming expression, she dodged Tony's outstretched hand unnoticeably and distanced herself away from him. "Don't come over." Her voice was hoarse, and her eyes were full of grief.

Tony couldn't touch Myra at all, and they seemed so near yet far away from each other. He took a few steps back on his own initiative. It seemed almost impossible to seek Myra's forgiveness right now, so he kept his emotions under control as he couldn't act on impulse again.

"I'm tired. I'm going back to my room first," Myra said while going upstairs. As her eyes swept past Tony's cheeks, it was clear from the look in her eyes that she didn't want him to follow her.

Since he knew how to behave, Tony naturally didn't go after her. He bit his lower lip hard as he had never been so disheartened before.

He looked up at Myra, who took each step with great difficulty as she walked upstairs. He was the one who had caused this situation right now. Why did I do such a thing back then? He blamed himself inwardly. He knew that Myra hated being lied to the most, yet he did precisely that. Furthermore, it wasn't long ago that Myra learned what Heather had done to her, so this revelation came as a double whammy to her right now. Because of that, Tony really hated himself.

After leaving his home, he pulled open the car door; he needed to drive at this moment to calm himself down. As he sat in the driver's seat, he felt as though he was cut off from the outside world. Upon hearing the sound of the car engine, he recalled what had happened not long ago.

Myra had been investigating who was trying to drive a wedge between her and Heather while the latter was away from Bradford City. Who the hell was the woman she met at the cemetery?

For a long time afterward, Myra's memory of that encounter had been foggy; she couldn't even remember what the woman looked like. Because of that, she even visited the hospital for a checkup. At first, she suspected that this was because of her pregnancy, and she even wondered if there was something wrong with her brain. Unfortunately, her medical examination yielded no results. The only thing she remembered about the encounter was what the woman had said to her, for she remembered the woman's words so well as if they were imprinted in her memory.

Myra was determined to find that woman again, but she could only provide limited clues. As such, the progress of the investigation had been slow. To her surprise, she saw the woman again amongst the crowd. She wanted to call out to Tony, but she couldn't say his name out loud. Even though there was a man between Tony and that woman, it was apparent that they knew each other. Therefore, Myra left in silence.

Tony didn't see Myra that day, so he didn't know that she had witnessed all of this. There were so many coincidences in this world, after all.

When Tony came home that night, Myra began to ask him difficult questions, but he didn't know that the woman was the one who told Myra the truth. He had heard from Myra that the woman deliberately tried to set her against Heather, but he didn't expect the woman to be the quiet lady beside Caleb.

"Why would you know that woman in person, Tony?" Myra's body froze as sorrow was written all over her face.

Even though Myra had made things clear long ago, Tony still clung to the slight possibility that Myra had probably mistaken the woman for someone else. As he summoned up his courage, he then asked, "You can't remember what the woman looked like, can you? Perhaps you mistook her for someone else, Myra." In reality, Tony already realized that it must've been that woman when Myra raised such a question. Caleb's relationship with the Langston Family was complicated, so it was justifiable for Caleb to do such a thing. Tony only hated himself for not telling Myra about his recent encounters with Caleb.

"You're lying to me." Myra could tell from her understanding of Tony that he was lying.

"Trust me, Myra." Nonetheless, Tony must keep this matter a secret since he couldn't let Myra know anything about this.

This was exactly why Myra couldn't forgive Tony when she discovered everything afterward. Myra didn't expect that he would also lie to her, so how could this not leave her heartbroken? As a result, her relationship with Tony hit rock bottom. Tony had been trying to mend his relationship with Myra these days, but he failed to make any progress.

Myra roughly figured out the story behind this, and it surprised her that Tony had dealings with Caleb, whom she had heard Heather talking about. The Moriarty Family's relations with the Hart Family and the Langston Family weren't considered friendly, so she didn't know why Tony had dealings with Caleb and why he kept this matter secret. However, Tony had his own difficulties, for he couldn't tell anyone the reason behind his dealings with Caleb for the time being.

This was precisely why Myra was even more exasperated. She couldn't forgive Tony whenever it occurred to her that he had been hiding more than one thing from her. Why would he treat her like that?

Tony brought his car to a stop on the expressway. Such a dangerous move could be life-threatening, but he couldn't care less about this since he was about to freak out.

He opened the car door and got out of the car to get some fresh air. No matter how fast he drove, he couldn't soothe the anxiety within him. He took a cigarette out of the car before lighting it up and blew large smoke rings. As he leaned against the car, he watched the sunset while trying to use his surroundings to alleviate his feelings of suffocation. "How should I explain it to you, Myra?" he shouted. He could vent his emotions here without scruple.

No one knew Tony as he stood on the side of the expressway, and he didn't have to care about his status. As he stubbed out his cigarette, a wind lifted up the hair in front of his forehead, and there was chilliness in his gloomy eyes.

The wind blowing from the other side of the river brought over the fresh smell of river water and gently caressed every inch of Tony's skin. He didn't know how long this situation was going to last, for Caleb's arrival had completely disrupted their peace.

Tony no longer took anything into consideration in his mind when he thought of the collaboration Heather had talked to him about. At a time like this, every family would care about their own interests. Tony wanted to preserve the Hart Group amid the unrest, and Heather had the same thing in mind since she wanted to preserve the Langston Group. However, their collaboration would bring them into conflict with each other to a certain degree. As far as the current situation was concerned, it was difficult to say what Caleb was here for.

It wasn't until the setting sun gradually lost its brilliance and the wind blowing gradually became chilly that Tony got back into his car. The feeling of losing control this time was much stronger than before. One must never mix public matters with private ones, but now, the public matters and the private ones were already so deeply mixed that they could no longer be separated from each other.

The Moriarty Family had dealt a destructive blow to several distinguished families in Bradford City many years ago, and Tony didn't want this to happen again many years later today. Times had changed, and Tony didn't think that they necessarily had to fight against the Moriarty Family—perhaps the matter could be solved amicably. This was why he couldn't fundamentally agree to

collaborate with Heather, for the Langston Family's relations with the Moriarty Family were far worse than the Hart Family's relations with the other.

Tony had calmed down a lot when he slowly drove his car on the way back. After all, everyone had to vent their emotions occasionally; even the strongest person had a weak and vulnerable side. With this thought in mind, Tony drove his car forward at a constant speed.

Standing before Love Chapter 621

Meanwhile, as the sky grew increasingly dark, the lights on the rooftop of the Locke Residence lit up one after another. Matthias had made a special effort to install decorative lamps of various colors on the rooftop when he invited Heather for a candlelight dinner last time, and these lamps looked very beautiful when they were all lit up.

Before they realized it, Heather and Matthias had stayed on the rooftop for such a long time. It was already late, and she was wondering when she should head back.

Just then, Matthias said to her, "I just hired a chef from France yesterday. You must try the authentic French cuisine today." He saw through her eagerness to go back.

"I don't like French cuisine," Heather replied unceremoniously. She had never been polite to Matthias anyway.

"I don't like French cuisine either, but this chef is amazingly good at making French delicacies. You must try it," he suggested.

Heather smiled, for she could tell that Matthias was trying to use this excuse to persuade her to stay. However, she was really planning to go home. "It's getting late."

Matthias looked at Heather in disappointment as he didn't want her to go back. They had been together all the time, but he felt that this wasn't enough. Such a strange feeling blurred his concept of time.

"Let's have a simple dinner then," Heather said to Matthias since she didn't want to disappoint him.

Upon hearing her words, Matthias was naturally delighted. He smiled a hearty smile like a kid who finally got their hands on the toy they liked.

“You’re smiling like an idiot.” Heather looked at Matthias with disapproval. In actual fact, it was easy to make Matthias happy—it was for Heather, at the very least.

“I just want to stay a while longer with you.” Matthias had made himself clear previously. Now that he had nothing to be shy of, he simply said whatever he should.

“Would you still fall in love with me if we start all over again?” Heather asked Matthias while resting her chin in her hand. Will we meet if we can start all over again? she thought to herself.

Matthias covered Heather’s eyes with his hand. “I’d profess my love to you sooner if we could start all over again.” Not only would he still fall in love with her, but he would also profess his love to her sooner if they could start all over again.

Heather pushed Matthias’ hand away as she didn’t like other people treating her like this. If it were someone else, she would have knocked them to the ground by now. “Don’t keep sweet-talking me. An overbearing woman like me is never likable in men’s eyes,” she said in self-deprecation. Men might be misled by her appearance at first, but they would normally leave her once they got to know her thoroughly.

“I don’t like women that are too weak. I like domineering women; only such a woman can stand by my side and enjoy the view of the beautiful world with me,” Matthias replied in disapproval. If there were criteria for love, Heather happened to fulfill all of his requirements.

“Don’t keep saying nice things,” Heather said with a frown, though she almost burst with joy upon hearing what Matthias said. Women liked to hear honeyed words, after all.

“I can’t stop saying pickup lines when I look at you.” Matthias had recently become good at saying such cheesy phrases. He said a pickup line after another, making it hard for Heather to defend herself against his advances.

“Do you have liquor?” Heather suddenly changed the subject, and Matthias was rather surprised when she mentioned liquor for no reason. “I drank

normal liquor a few days ago, and only then did I know that good liquor tastes so different,” she explained. She recalled the liquor that she and Leon bought that night and didn’t finish after a night of drinking. She was really averse to the liquor’s taste deep down inside, and she later came around to the idea that some things couldn’t be changed.

“Rumor has it that you only drink good liquor,” Matthias said in surprise. He had opened a liquor bottle worth one million expressly for Heather last time, yet she turned her nose up at it.

“People have to change, after all.” The previous attempt to change herself was unsuccessful, but she had taken a big step in that direction at the very least.

“You can change whatever you want, but you mustn’t do a disservice to your taste buds.” Matthias believed that one could make do with everything else except for what they ate and drank. His belief was similar to Heather’s, for they both insisted on having good food and drinks.

“In that case, do you have good liquor to serve me with?” Heather asked with a smile.

Matthias nodded. “Of course I do. I have whatever kind of liquor you want to drink.” He had gotten a lot of good liquor from Nikolai lately, so he had been brooding about not having someone to drink these with him.

On the other hand, Evan threw Matthias and Heather a disapproving glance from the side. They were a pair of drunkards; Evan didn’t like drinking, nor did he like a partner that was addicted to alcohol. Therefore, he was totally uninterested in what they were talking about.

“Do you have spirits?” Heather raised her eyebrows at Matthias. She hadn’t drunk spirits for a long time, for everyone drank either red wine or imported wine while discussing things overseas.

“I do.” Matthias seldom drank spirits as well, but he kept a few good bottles of spirits at home for decoration.

“Let’s drink something different today,” Heather suggested with great interest. One could tell that she was in high spirits today.

“I’ll drink with you to the very end,” Matthias agreed readily. He was even willing to drink poisonous wine as long as he had Heather keeping him company.

“Let’s get as drunk as a lord then.” Heather wasn’t petty either, so she would drink since she had initiated it.

Not only did Evan fade completely into the background, but he would also be reduced to a liquor-serving waiter later. He thought there was nothing he couldn’t do at Matthias’ place, and he was determined to find time to ask Matthias for a pay raise since it was tiring to work all year long without rest. He looked at Matthias resentfully. Meanwhile, Matthias only had eyes for Heather and wouldn’t even hesitate to sell him out ever since he fell in love with her. It was said that buddies were like one’s arms and legs while women were replaceable, but what happened in Matthias’ case was quite the opposite—he could even use his buddy to please his woman. “Here’s the liquor you want.” Evan tossed the liquor in front of them with a reluctant expression.

Matthias didn’t expect Evan to still be so angry. Now that Heather hadn’t mentioned the subject of dancing again, he thought he had a lucky escape, so why would Evan still take this to heart? However, he had indeed offended Evan today, so he decided to pour the liquor himself instead of arguing with him.

Heather sniffed as the fragrant smell of liquor wafted out from the bottle, and her mouth curved in a charming smile. One should enjoy all the pleasure that life afforded, and liquor was a good thing. She glanced at Matthias from time to time while playing with the wine glass in her hand.

Matthias raised his eyebrows at her as if to challenge her. “Don’t get drunk. This liquor has a high alcohol content.”

“Don’t worry,” Heather replied confidently. “It’s hard to say who will get drunk first.”

It seemed that Heather wouldn’t stop until she got drunk with Matthias, and Matthias was happy with this. It would be great if Heather became so drunk that she couldn’t go back to the Langston Residence. After they toasted each other, Heather finished the liquor in her glass in one gulp, and Matthias couldn’t help but clap his hands. “This is extraordinary.” Then, he finished his drink in one gulp as well.

This liquor was so strong that one could get hospitalized after drinking it, and Evan couldn't sense what was so good about this liquor as he almost got drunk just by sniffing at it. Ancient people described good liquor as the ambrosia of the immortals, but Evan hadn't drunk a bottle of good liquor that could convince him completely of its goodness so far.

Soon, the bottle of liquor was almost emptied. A scarlet blush crept over Heather's face, and Matthias couldn't help but lean toward her. Not only did he try to reach out to touch her alluring face, he even wanted to kiss her.

Heather dodged Matthias, and both of them tottered a little. "This liquor is really good." Heather looked regretfully at the already emptied bottle of liquor. They had drunk too fast and finished the liquor soon after they tasted it.

"It's too bad that we can't enjoy ourselves to our hearts' content since there's only a bottle of it," Matthias agreed.

"In that case, we'll just drink the other liquors." Heather didn't want to stop like this since she was finally in the mood for a drink.

As for the cuisine prepared by the French chef, they only ate a few mouthfuls of it casually. How could they care about whether the dishes were delicious or not when all they could taste was the liquor?

Evan pondered over what to do with these two drunkards later. It was easy to scoop Heather up in his arms and carry her away, but Matthias was very tall, so Evan considered dragging him away instead.

Just then, Matthias ordered Evan, "Get us another bottle of liquor, Evan."

"May I ask what kind of liquor you need, sir?" There was a specialized wine cellar storing all kinds of alcohol in the villa's basement, and Evan didn't know what kind of alcohol Matthias wanted.

"Brandy," Heather answered in Matthias' place.

Evan had to worry about them when they asked for a bottle of spirits. It'd be strange if they didn't get drunk this time, for they had asked for brandy after finishing the spirits stored in the cellar.

Matthias nodded in agreement, though. “Brandy would be nice. Get us some ice as well.” Matthias liked spirits, and it was a great pleasure to drink with Heather.

Heather could hold her liquor as well as a man did. Now that she finally met her match, she naturally had to have a drinking contest with Matthias.

“I’m afraid that you won’t be able to go back to the Langston Residence when you’re this drunk,” Matthias said provocatively. As he was half-drunk and half-sober, he couldn’t help saying what was on his mind.

“Grandpa won’t be worried since I’m at your place.” Heather smiled. She looked extremely charming under the influence of alcohol.

“Would you be worried then?” A scarlet blush crept over Matthias’ fair face as well.

“No, I won’t,” Heather replied boldly. The more she drank, the more outspoken she was.

When Evan came up, Heather and Matthias were talking about Bradford City’s stock market. It seemed that the two of them always had a lot to talk about, and ordinary people couldn’t follow their trains of thought since they jumped from one subject to another.

“Bradford City’s stock market is in a slump this year. I guess it won’t take long before the stock market crashes.” Heather inevitably elaborated a little when she talked about the stock market.

“That depends on how the stock traders will play with the shares.” Matthias wasn’t very interested in the stock market. After all, the Locke Family didn’t care about these since it had bigger ambitions.

“Traders,” Heather repeated with a half-smile. “They can’t pull any tricks. The stock market crash is already destined to happen.” Meanwhile, she was planning to make a fortune from it.

“What are your plans?” Matthias asked curiously.

“I like surfing in the stock market.” Heather liked playing with shares, and this was especially so at such a moment where it was more interesting to play.

“It seems that it won’t be long before the Langston Family shows what they can do in the stock market,” Matthias responded curiously. It was quite interesting when he thought about it.

“No. It’ll be me, not the Langston Family.” This was Heather’s personal hobby, so the Langston Family wouldn’t be involved. Heather had a wide range of hobbies, and she liked to have a hand in many things.

“You’re speaking in such a way that even I’m itching to have a go.” Matthias wanted to play with Heather as well.

“Don’t do that. I like to play alone.” Heather turned down Matthias’ proposal for a collaboration since it was freer to be alone in the stock market.

“All right, it’s fine as long as you’re happy.” Matthias was terribly busy recently because of the Locke Group and the Hart Group’s affairs, so it was difficult for him to find time to invest in the stock market.