

Standing before Love Chapter 722

Heather hadn't been staying in the forest for long, but she deeply felt how lonely the forester must've been. What puzzled her the most was the fact that there wasn't even a TV, and he was probably out of touch with society. She leaned against the window sill while looking at the tiny bit of greens outside the window.

Everything was deathly still in winter, but that little bit of life was enough to warm the heart. Heather was bored stiff, so she would often relieve her boredom in such a way. If it weren't for the deepening dusk and the daybreak, she wouldn't have known how much time had passed. Why isn't there something to check the time inside this house? she thought to herself.

Heather felt increasingly bored; she couldn't find anything interesting, nor did she see anyone. In her mind, she planned to give the forester a TV as a present. After all, every industry was different, and they were equally worthy of respect.

She would get to meet Zayne one day and one night later, whom she hadn't been looking forward to seeing so much. As she lay down on the sofa again, the lazy feeling made her feel a bit relaxed. She was anxious, but she would occasionally space out as she did at this moment. She fell silent just then, not thinking about anything else since she just had to lay quietly on the sofa. Suddenly, she felt as though those grudges and overnight wealth were very far away from her. Not only that, Heather suddenly found it difficult to imagine the days to come if her life continued to be so easy and comfortable. It seemed that she had never enjoyed a life of ease and comfort since she was born. When she had time, she would let a fortune teller read her fortune to see if she was destined to have a tumultuous life.

It'll probably be nice to be here during spring and autumn, Heather thought to herself as she imagined how the ancients withdrew from society and lived in wooded mountains. Such pleasure of roaming happily through the forests and mountains kept inspiring her to write literature.

Surprisingly, she saw a pen and some papers on the small desk beside her. She wondered if she should get up and write a poem since she hadn't written any in such a long time. She even remembered having published an anthology of poems while attending junior high school. However, poets were

mostly down on their luck, and she, a filthy rich businesswoman, didn't quite match the poetic charm.

Suddenly, Heather laughed as it occurred to her that she was down on her luck. She whispered to herself, "It seems like I'm in a lousy situation right now." Indeed, she had never been in such dire straits before, for she was now trying to survive on an inhabited island. Luckily, she had instant noodles to keep her company, or else she would have to go out and search for food by herself. She couldn't find anything to eat in the winter and would starve to death in this log cabin.

The more she thought about it, the more she wanted to laugh, for she was convinced by her imagination. Life is so beautiful, yet I'm so bored, she thought to herself as she stood up quietly. Her whole body was limp as she had lied down for too long on the sofa. As she raised her eyebrows, she felt that such a despondent side of herself was really interesting, but she could only look for some fun in her boredom.

Only on the third day did Zayne set out early in the morning to meet Heather, and it was fortunate that everything went smoothly. In fact, even Zayne himself didn't expect everything to proceed without any hiccups. After all, he had prepared a week's worth of food for Heather since he was worried that three days wouldn't be enough to solve the problem. He showed up at Heather's log cabin at lunchtime and stared at its tightly shut wooden door, wondering if she hadn't come out all this while!

Then, he stepped forward and knocked on the log cabin's door. When Heather heard that, she put down the cup of instant noodles in her hands in surprise. As soon as she happily opened the wooden door, she saw Zayne as well as Jason behind him—it was her first time getting to see Jason's looks clearly. She initially thought that he was only a mute driver, but she didn't expect him to be so tall and sturdy. Meanwhile, she looked at Zayne as if she was looking at her savior, for she couldn't wait to return to modern society.

"Heather, are you moved now that I'm here early in the morning to pick you up?" Zayne's smiling face was very offensive to the eye.

Heather cast him a disdainful look. "Thank you for arranging one hell of a place for me, Zayne," she said angrily. "The most annoying thing is that there isn't even a TV." The more she thought about it, the angrier she was. Her face was ruddy with anger, and she looked pitiful and charming without any

makeup. Jason had been displeased by her attitude at first, but he instantly forgave her inwardly when he saw Heather looking like this.

“Haha! Don’t you hate watching TV the most, Heather?” Zayne had previously dragged Heather along to watch some TV dramas together, but she ruthlessly refused. Therefore, women weren’t the only vengeful ones since men also had such a side to them. This time, Heather truly experienced what it was like to be bored stiff.

“Indeed, watching TV is a waste of time, but does it even matter since I’m already in such a place?” Heather replied in vexation. In short, she was in the right and wouldn’t allow Zayne to refute her.

Since he knew Heather’s temper, he didn’t argue with her anymore. “Okay, you’re right.”

Heather could say nothing else when she saw how sincere Zayne was. After that, her eyes roamed over Jason. She had seen him twice, and it seemed like Zayne trusted him very much, so she was curious about their relationship.

“By the way, Zayne—find time to have a TV delivered over when you go back,” she said while pointing at the door, thinking that it’d be great to have a TV to watch some dramas.

“Huh? Don’t you want to go back? Do you want to stay here for a few days longer?” Zayne teased Heather with a laugh.

“Throughout my time here, I have experienced profoundly how bored the forester must be every single day. We should give him a TV so that he can pass the time.” Heather knew that Zayne wouldn’t speak properly, so she simply made things clear to him.

Zayne laughed. “You really are adorable, Heather. The forester doesn’t like watching TV; he likes listening to the radio instead. I’ll convey your kindness to him, though.”

Heather blinked her eyes as there seemed to be something wrong. “I never came across a radio here, though.”

Zayne didn’t expect Heather to be so lovely when she was dorky. “The forester has a cell phone, and cell phones can receive radio stations’ signal nowadays.”

Heather went red in the face. What did I just say? This is so embarrassing, she thought to herself. As she looked somewhere else, she felt rather ashamed. Hence, she'd better pretend that she didn't know anything.

"Let's go, my lady." Zayne made an inviting gesture to Heather.

Heather walked down the steps and stepped forward directly. Just as she was about to reach the car, Zayne quickly stepped forward and pulled open the car door for her.

Jason knew Zayne was a proud person, but he didn't expect that the latter would be willing to humble himself in front of this woman. It seems that Heather really isn't a simple woman, he thought to himself.

Heather and Zayne discussed the matters about Bradford City in the car, and she looked like a completely different person as her face emanated a frosty aura. "Have you done what you've promised me?" She looked at Zayne as if she would immediately teach him a lesson if he uttered the word 'no.'

"This isn't the first time we're working together, Miss Langston," Zayne replied in a cheeky tone, looking just like a ruffian with a grin.

"Has the order to kill me been lifted?" From Heather's perspective, she had to care about her personal safety first.

"Yeah, so you don't have to be worried. No one will plot against you in secret anymore," Zayne replied proudly. Even he was surprised that this matter had been solved with such ease.

"In that case, how about Grandpa?" Compared to her personal safety, Heather was more concerned about Robert's illness.

"This is your cell phone. Check it yourself." Zayne handed Heather's cell phone to her with the corner of his lips turned up.

Heather took her cell phone skeptically as she didn't know what Zayne was keeping her guessing. Can such a tricky problem be solved using my cell phone? she thought to herself. When she unlocked her cell phone, her Messenger interface popped up directly. After catching sight of the chat room that was pinned to the top of her inbox, she immediately tapped it open. Zayne had used her Messenger to chat with someone else, and the person he

chatted with was the old man who had given her the cross necklace as a present.

Heather finished reading the chat history in disbelief. It was a small world, for the old man who previously gave her cross necklace was actually on good terms with Dr. Turner. This time, not only had the old man given her the cross necklace he treasured in his possession, he even did her a favor. She thought that no one could ask Dr. Turner out, but she didn't expect that this inconspicuous old man would be able to do it. "This is a miracle." She didn't know how to comment on this matter, for Zayne simply opened her eyes.

"Sometimes, the ones who can help you are by your side. You might search high and low before finding the person when you least expect to." Zayne laughed with the intention of claiming full credit.

"Why would they be involved with each other?" Heather asked in disbelief.

"This world is small, and I discovered his relationship with Dr. Turner while investigating him," Zayne said proudly.

Heather's face was no longer frosty at last, and she smiled a smile that looked as beautiful as a melting iceberg. She laughed while shaking her head. "I suddenly admire you a little, Zayne." Of course, she had to praise him at this moment. After all, few people could solve such a tricky thing without just a small effort.

"Haven't you always admired me?" Zayne continued to brag after having gained an advantage.

Meanwhile, Jason drove steadily in the front seat and listened as the two people chatted happily behind him. He was also glad for Zayne—after all, it was rare for a woman to make him so happy.

"Yeah, you're the best. You solved two big problems of mine in one fell swoop." I'll let Zayne be pleased with himself at this moment, Heather thought to herself.

There were cheers and laughter inside the car as Heather became more and more earthly. Zayne stared at her before his eyes and recalled the fight he once had with her. At this moment, he actually envied Matthias. Love could change a person, and the current Heather was much different from the Heather he remembered. For some reason, when he thought of what Matthias

had done recently, he was somewhat worried about the love-hate relationship between the two. He couldn't even figure out why Matthias wanted to get close to such a woman since Heather and that woman couldn't be mentioned in the same breath at all. It was a popular belief that a woman's heart was fickle and difficult to understand, but perhaps a man's mind was even harder to fathom. Zayne only hoped that Heather wouldn't raise merry hell with Matthias because of his recent immoderate behavior when she got back to Bradford City.

Zayne had spent a lot of thought and care on Matthias, who was his rival in love, so he knew that the man really loved Heather. Since that was the case, Zayne could help him fulfill his wish, but these two people had caused a lot of worries since they insisted on doing things that made each other feel uncomfortable. Still, Zayne wasn't generous enough to assist his enemy. If Heather misunderstood Matthias, Zayne would do nothing more than watch the excitement; he wouldn't step forward and defend him.

His thoughts were interrupted when Heather suddenly spoke. "What are you thinking about? Why are you smiling so slyly?"

Zayne smiled like a fox. "I'm thinking that the scene will definitely be lively when you show up in Bradford City."

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Suddenly, the term 'Bradford City' felt so distant. Heather looked at Zayne while he stood next to her, but she didn't know what to say. It seemed as though he had seen through her helplessness, so he turned to the other side as things were getting rather awkward and there was nothing that could be said to alleviate it.

When she was leaving, she turned around and took a last look at the grove. To her, everything that had happened felt so much like a dream as she would soon have to face the reality back in Bradford City. As she pondered on that, she recollected her thoughts and emotions. Unlike how she typically welcomed disputes before, she now feared that what was coming her way might be too enormous for her, and she grew afraid that she couldn't overcome it like she always did.

“It seems like you haven’t been resting well. If you’re tired, you can grab a quick nap in the car,” Zayne chivalrously advised when he saw the dark circles under her eyes. Perhaps even the hut was a challenge for her!

Somehow, Jason’s ears got very sensitive and when he heard Zayne saying those words, and he couldn’t help but sense some kind of affection the latter held toward Heather.

Since it was rare for Zayne to fall for anyone, Jason didn’t know whether to be happy or sad for him. After all, he saw how Heather didn’t share the same feelings toward his mate.

While intimacy filled the air, he suddenly cringed at himself for being so petty and worrying about Zayne’s private affairs.

Soon, Heather fell asleep in the car. With her eyes shut, she looked so much more beguiling when she stayed silent compared to when she spoke.

As he stared at her charming slumber look, Zayne revealed a serene smile when he strangely noticed how youthful her face was.

Just as he was about to caress her face, he was worried that she might not like it. Hence, he ultimately withdrew his arm while thinking that he was such a beta.

Whenever he was with Heather, he couldn’t bring himself to take any advantage of her; he also questioned himself what it was that he had been sticking his neck out for. When the thought of Heather being in danger popped up in his mind, he would risk himself even more.

Zayne felt rather conscious that his life was being grasped in the woman’s hand, and he felt unjust for not knowing what it was about her that bewitched him.

Upon thinking about this, he smirked bitterly and wondered what the unpredictable future held. Despite his feelings, since he was never one to participate in such extravagant clan feuds, and he hoped that he would be able to pull himself out of the drama. After all, given the complexities within the feud, involving himself would be just trouble.

Now that he had made an exception for Heather, he would have to live his future days on the tip of an iceberg. Plus, with the bounties going on, he wouldn't be able to guarantee his own safety.

As such, he could only take it one step at a time. Zayne looked out of the windshield in a depressed manner, and he suddenly felt that Bradford City was so far away for some reason. Even after traveling for so long, it was still nowhere in sight.

On the other hand, Heather was sound asleep, and Zayne couldn't bear to interrupt her. Visibly, it hadn't been long since she last had a good rest. He furrowed his brows, and he was at a loss for words. He was only here to toy around in the beginning, but now he realized that he shouldn't have treated her in such a way.

What a persistent woman! He thought to himself helplessly. Since the first day, Heather probably didn't even touch the bed. Little did she know that the bed was brand new, and it was only designed to appear used.

She might not have even looked at the bed carefully, for the sheets were newly acquired as well. When he thought of this, Zayne was utterly speechless.

Considering how she always nitpicked things, he wondered if she had learned her lesson after the last three days. Nonetheless, given how she was still behaving so overbearingly, perhaps she was still the old her.

Thanks to Jason, the heater in the car was rather warm, though Zayne was the only one that felt hot. While Jason was focused on driving, it seemed as though he was merely an innocent driver. In fact, no one in the world would suspect that he was a killer.

They were blessed by today's weather, and Zayne revealed a contented beam as he looked out the window. Since he was a scenery enthusiast, he was satisfied by the beautiful day.

On the way back to Bradford City, he felt a sense of comfort that he hadn't felt since long ago as he admired the passing scenery. Although there was no telling what the future held, he figured he should at least cherish what he had now.

All of a sudden, Jason spoke from the front of the vehicle. “We’ll be reaching town in another 30 minutes.”

In response, Zayne simply replied, “Okay.”

Soon, 30 minutes passed by quickly as they approached Bradford City. Zayne turned to the side and looked at Heather, and the latter was still in her dreams without any idea that they were closing in on their destination.

In truth, Zayne was a little reluctant to return to Bradford City. If he were able to live on, he would never return to that place. Unlike before when he needed only to solve cases, he now had so much more to do. After all, for him to throw everything he had learned his entire life on the table was indeed exhausting.

As they traveled through the busy town, it was nothing like the peaceful suburbs. Just then, Zayne hesitated if he should wake Heather up. If he didn’t do so, she would have to rush her departure as they were nearing his temporary shelter.

Given everything that’s happened, I wonder who she would want to meet once we arrive. I think it might be Matthias, Zayne thought to himself.

As he assumed that, he predicted that she would return to the Langston Residence at once because she was deeply concerned with her grandfather’s health.

Eventually, he couldn’t bring himself to wake her up. Even when the car had stopped, Heather was still fast asleep—it was Zayne’s first time seeing her look so inelegant.

The man thought about how he should wake her up, and he furrowed his brow since he didn’t really have the heart to do so. Hey, why don’t I...

Since he couldn’t find a better way, he simply lifted her up. As he carried her in her arms, he had an adrenaline rush after smelling her thick fragrance emitting from her body. Since when did she put on such a heavy perfume?

With that, he vaguely remembered how he had sensed the aroma back in the cabin. After being reminded of that, he presumed that she must have hated the scent in the cabin and dipped herself in cologne, taking the perfume as an air freshener.

When he thought about this, Zayne let out a suppressed laugh, for he was intrigued by how adorable she was. After lifting her up horizontally, he resembled a kidnapper when he carried her from the vehicle to his unit.

Along the way, he entirely disregarded the weird faces and gazes from the bystanders as he remained a stern face that intimidated them from voicing any judgments.

Moreover, with Jason beside him, the others could only quietly stare as none dared to say a word. In fact, it was Zayne's first time performing such high-profile movements, exposing himself to the risk of his whereabouts being tracked.

"Your actions are rather... special with her, Zayne," Jason blurted upon entering the door.

When he heard that, Zayne immediately felt awkward. Although it was obvious even to ordinary people that he had some sort of adoration for Heather, he would lose his ego if he were to openly admit it.

"Customers are gods, and I'm only fulfilling my responsibilities," he tactfully defended. To be fair, it wasn't much of a defense.

Meanwhile, Jason chuckled at once. He seldom laughed and always maintained a thug-like poker face, but he appeared significantly amiable when he chuckled, emitting the aura of a gentleman.

"Excuses, excuses!" he replied straightforwardly.

"No, no, no! That's not an excuse. I'm merely demonstrating the right way to treat a customer. You, on the other hand, should learn a thing or two." Zayne successfully deflected his mockery.

Instead of arguing any further, Jason pursed his lips and said nothing more as he got on the couch. Meanwhile, Zayne carried his sleeping beauty into the room and placed her on the soft bed, allowing her a restful slumber.

After gently shutting the door, he disrupted Jason when he joined him on the couch. While they stupidly peered at each other, none of them had any intention to speak.

Ever since they were kids, they rarely had any interactions nor did they share any blood relations with each other, but there had always been an unspoken connection between the two of them. In Zayne's heart, Jason stood a place no lower than Heather. After all, she was but an incomplete dream while Jason was as real as the stars.

Although there's no solid future with Heather, he intended to bring one for Jason and himself as they both needed a chance at redemption.

As the clock ticked, both of them fell asleep while snuggled against each other. Perhaps it was because the other two had fallen asleep, a contagious, lethargy-invoking atmosphere surged throughout the unit. Naturally, Zayne grew lethargic and gradually drowsed off as well.

When he finally woke up later on, he found Jason gazing into space with his eyes open as big as the moon, and it looked as though something bad had happened. Since he had been awakened by Jason's movements, he looked at the latter sternly and was clueless to what had happened.

"Go check on Heather," Jason ordered Zayne as it wasn't appropriate for him to do so.

Upon hearing his words, the latter grew wide awake. Since he was very much concerned about the woman in his room, he hastily rushed over.

He then pushed the door open and was relieved to find Heather sleeping calmly on his bed. Given how Jason's tone was somewhat frightening, he thought that the man outside must have been anxious.

Well, as long as she's okay, he thought to himself before closing the door. Perhaps it was because of the loud door-opening noise, when Zayne shut the door, Heather's eyes immediately opened as she gawked at the ceiling, feeling as though she had been kidnapped.

"Where is this place?" She pulled open the door and quizzed drowsily. Since she had just woken up, her hoarse voice sounded rather endearing.

When she saw both Zayne and Jason in sight, she rubbed her eyes and was assured of her safety. She then pointed at Jason while still half-asleep and interrogated, "You haven't told me about his identity, Zayne."

Jason was surprised when he heard his name being mentioned, so he blinked his eyes innocently while Zayne introduced him as he shrugged his shoulders. "This is Jason. He's my brother and currently my bodyguard. He's really good at fighting," he mischievously said.

"I'm great at killing too," said Jason blandly.

Heather was immediately shocked and awake, for she realized that Jason was not one to be messed with. Judging by his tone, he mustn't have been joking about it.

Upon that, Zayne nervously chortled. Why is Jason being so upfront? Is he sick of living right now? Since he was forced to expel the killer's self-consciousness, he gave Jason a piercing leer and was visibly annoyed.

"Just kidding," Jason expressionlessly stated, though there was no power of persuasion in his words.

"Haha. Very funny," she responded with a forced grin.

Awkwardness filled the room instantly, the three of them peered at one another. It seemed like there was nothing else they could talk about.

Since she hadn't gotten sufficient sleep, she waved at the brothers squashed on the couch and uttered, "I should head back to sleep."

"Sleep tight," Zayne answered.

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Not long after, Heather walked out of the bedroom. As he looked at her confused face, Zayne suspected whether she was sleepwalking.

That apparently wasn't the case, for she questioned him after remembering his home didn't look this way, "Where is this place?"

"I bought this new place, and you're paying for it." He felt compelled to remind her that the house wasn't cheap.

As she was baffled by his sudden request for funds, she stared at him and wondered if it was a secret.

“Why did you buy it, though?” Since she was unable to comprehend his decision, Heather continued to gawk at him. Although buying a house wasn’t an issue for her, it certainly didn’t seem necessary for him to do so.

Upon hearing that, Zayne gave her a tender smile as if she had agreed to pay for it. However, he was too lazy to get into the details as to why he had acquired the property at the moment.

Thus, he simply answered, “For safety reasons.” He let her figure out the rest for herself.

Meanwhile, Heather squinted her eyes without pursuing the matter any further and merely nodded. “If so, treat it as my gift to you. Tell me how much it costs and I’ll pay you now.” Without any hesitation, she wanted to reimburse him at once.

“It’s weird for us to suddenly talk about money,” he playfully stated.

“Not really. You’ve been working on my case all this while, and I’m pretty sure the amount I paid you isn’t enough for everything. It’s only right that I do so.” Since she was looking for a way to show her gratitude, there was nothing more suitable and practical than money.

Although he didn’t require money, Heather couldn’t think of any other methods to repay him. Besides, who would ever complain about having too much money?

“If you insist, Miss Langston, I shall accept it. However, the accumulated amount isn’t small. Are you sure you want to pay it all right now?” Zayne clarified because it was indeed a tremendous sum.

She relaxedly answered while looking at him and said, “I have a limit of 10 million per day, so let me transfer that to you for now.” She knew that he was only teasing her, but she felt compelled to flaunt her wealth.

“Jeez, you’re such a wealthy woman, Heather!” Not only did he tease her, he even mocked her straight to her face.

Jason, who had been listening to their entire conversation from the side, only realized how affluent Heather was. He wouldn’t have guessed so given her young age.

Then, she proceeded to dial a number. When the call got through, a woman's timbre could be heard clearly. After giving her a simple order, the fund transfer was finalized.

As he listened to her conversation, he got to know that Heather had stored her assets in a Swiss bank which was professional and highly secure.

After ending the call, she raised her eyebrows at Zayne and said, "It'll be done in 10 minutes. Check your account later."

In response, he smirked helplessly. "You're sending me so much money at once, Heather. That's more than enough." Being the resolute woman she was, she never gave anyone the chance to oppose her decisions.

"There'll definitely be more expenditures in the future, so feel free to use it and notify me when it's insufficient for your spending. Do not pay for anything in my stead next time." Heather felt that it was her negligence that she hadn't considered the budget; by transferring him more than enough money, Zayne would no longer have to ask her for more.

As her friend, it was rather embarrassing for Zayne to even mention money matters. Moreover, there were certain feelings that he had for her, and that made it even more difficult for him to bring it up.

On the other hand, Heather felt sorry that she hadn't initiated it. She was so distraught by everything else that she had forgotten about paying him.

"It feels like I'm being spoiled by a sugar mommy." Of course, he did not miss out on the opportunity to toy with her, thinking that money was only numbers to her.

"I'm nothing like that, okay? What I have isn't even half of what the Langston Family possesses," she replied with a sarcastic claim.

"Well then, has the family paid you your dues?" Zayne smoothly brought the matter up.

Meanwhile, Jason was intrigued by the fact that Heather's wealth bore no relevance to that of the Langstons. Furthermore, he grew even more curious since he had no idea where her source of income was, and there was even a trace of respect in his astonishment.

“Nope. Ever since I proposed my resignation, I haven’t claimed a penny from them. I can sign up for unemployment pensions, can’t I?” Heather innocently uttered as she was now a jobless citizen.

“I’m afraid nobody would be able to afford it,” Zayne continued the satire. Given how she was fooling around with him, she was probably in a good mood.

“What a shame! Everyone pays for insurance, yet I’m not insured? Guess I’ve got to talk with them.” Her sternness was truly staggering.

“Come on, spare the insurance companies,” he advised her. Judging by her expression, it was as if she was going to look for the insurance manager.

“Seriously, I need to talk to them. I want an explanation regarding my car’s destruction.” When she remembered how her favorite car had turned into collateral damage, she couldn’t let the insurance company off easily.

What pained her even more was that it was an international, limited-edition supercar, so it would be a hassle to obtain another one. Even if she were able to get one, she could only acquire it second-hand.

“Perhaps you’re the one who should be doing the explaining.” Looking at how infuriated she was, Zayne wondered what it was that the company had done wrong.

“Whatever.” As she leaned lazily against the wall, she looked rather ravishing.

“Since you’re awake, are you not returning to the Langston Residence?” Zayne interrogated her as he was baffled by her unaffectedness.

“Not yet. I can stay here, can’t I?” Since she wanted to keep her return to Bradford City confidential, she decided to stay at Zayne’s place as it seemed to be a secure spot. Besides, she trusted him with his secrecy.

Not forgetting there was another man in the room, Zayne turned to Jason, and Heather accordingly turned to the latter as well. As they both turned to him almost at the same time, he was slightly intimidated by their gazes and immediately turned around, showing them his broad back instead.

“It’s not appropriate for you to stay with us big men here.” Since he was unable to grab hold of Jason’s thoughts, Zayne could only answer so.

“I ran a rough check on the apartment. The two of you can set up a camp outside the unit while I enjoy the bedroom. What do you guys think?” Despite her innocent smile, the conditions she demanded were rather overbearing.

When he saw how she had returned to her old self, Zayne was rendered speechless. Nonetheless, he would never mistreat himself, so he wasn't exactly enthusiastic toward her stay.

“No way,” Jason immediately refuted.

He did not elaborate on the reasons, and he was apathetic toward the conversation. At once, Zayne hastily explained, “Forget accommodating you, my goddess, the unit can barely contain the two of us.” This time, he refused more directly.

As she leered at the men, Heather was instantly disaffected by the fact that she was being mercilessly rejected.

Since she couldn't think of a place to stay in, she still felt that Zayne's unit was the perfect spot for a hideout after countless considerations. After all, she intended to keep her return to Bradford City a secret from anyone.

“Please? I'll even pay rent,” she pitifully asked.

“You own this place, anyway. You don't have to pay rent.” Seeing how Zayne wasn't willing to give in, she suddenly became enraged.

“Since it's my house, why can't I stay here?” Heather furiously inquired.

“As they say, first come first serve. You should start looking for another place.” Once more, he heartlessly rejected her. In fact, it was the first time that Heather had gotten continuously rejected by Zayne.

“Where else can I go?” she asked discontentedly.

“Don't you own an entire apartment in the city?” He knew thoroughly about her in-and-outs.

Heather waved a hand in denial, for she wanted to lay low for a while. She then said, “There's no privacy in that place. People would instantly recognize that I have returned.”

“Anyway, with how the reporters in the city idolize you, you’d get spotted regardless of where you live. As for me, I don’t want my place exposed.” He rationally broke it down for her.

“In that case, what else can I do?” Heather was equally frustrated by the paparazzi, and she queried helplessly.

Nevertheless, what Zayne said was true; since Heather was often trailed by stalkers, it was indeed unsuitable for them to stay together. Given their current circumstances, and how he had hired himself a bodyguard, it seemed as though he was truly in a tight spot.

When she realized that, Heather found it pointless to prolong the argument. After all, Zayne was also in a risky position himself. Hence, a renowned figure like her should probably keep a distance between him and herself. With that, she found comfort in that thought.

“Have you considered looking for Leon or Matthias?” He provided her with two options.

“If that’s the ultimatum, I’d rather stay in my apartment.” She was still feeling guilty about nearly bringing harm to Leon, so she didn’t want to trouble him anymore.

“If you’re still disturbed by the explosion, I’d suggest going to Matthias.” He saw through her thoughts and gave her another recommendation.

“I’ll be more likely to expose myself to him.” Despite having said that, she didn’t sincerely mean it. As she was still running away from Matthias, it was only natural for her to refuse to see him.

“Nah, I don’t think so. If you wish to conceal yourself, you just need to clarify it with him, and I’m sure he’d come up with great ideas. Matthias doesn’t just have a knack for business,” he beamingly stated, knowing that what Heather understood about Matthias was but the surface.

“You’re saying he’s better than you?” At her mindless question, Zayne’s instinct to protect his manly ego rose.

“We’re of different leagues. You can’t compare us like that,” he helplessly answered, dumbfounded at how childlike she was at times given her unfiltered utterance.

“I won’t look for Matthias. Have you not a clue about the unresolvable feud between me and him?” She felt obliged to inform Zayne about her conflict with the other man.

However, he disagreed. “Regarding that unresolvable feud of yours, you no longer have to worry.” As the tactful detective he was, there was no detail about her and Matthias that he let slip past.

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Right now, Heather somewhat regretted her phrasing. Indeed, the word ‘Incompatible’ had been a little overkill, and it was getting thrown back in her face right now.

Jason stood silently by the side like he was invisible, whereas Heather and Zayne just ignored his existence. Although he heard their conversation, he was a little confused about the relationships between everyone involved. One moment they would be talking about Leon, and one moment they would be talking about Matthias; it seemed that those two had ties with Heather.

“I won’t get help from him. If you won’t help, then fine,” Heather said those harsh words quietly.

Zayne took in Heather’s child-like face. Sometimes, he wondered if Heather’s maturity was a misconception instead, for her current stubbornness was just like a rebellious child’s.

“I’ll arrange a place for you to stay. Remember not to go out often.” In the end, Zayne couldn’t ignore her, and he couldn’t leave her alone without helping.

“Thanks, Zayne. I knew that you wouldn’t stand around without giving me a hand.” Heather revealed a cheerful smile. The way she handled Zayne sometimes resembled a child trying to get their way with their parents.

However, the man had to admit that she was right. Now that things had come to this, he would treat this as the price for his crush on Heather. He was well acquainted with Bradford City now, and he knew which places were suited to become hideouts.

Arranging a place for Heather to stay was a quick and easy task. This time, he decided to rent a place for her instead. Someone like Heather couldn’t stand

to sit around twiddling her thumbs, so Zayne decided to find a villa or single-family home for her.

He immediately thought of a good spot. “There’s a bunch of villas by West Avenue, and it’s rather secluded since people don’t usually go there. Of course, there’s nowhere else for you to go from there either.”

“Are you saying that you’re going to buy a villa for me?” Heather wondered whether it would be more realistic to just wait until tomorrow since she had hit her spending limit today. Besides, 10 million didn’t seem to be enough to buy a villa. It looked like she had to adjust her spending limits again.

“You’re dreaming—there’s no need to buy a villa.” Zayne couldn’t stop himself from taking a jab at Heather. Why was buying something the only thing on a woman’s mind?

“You’re going to rent me one?” When she realized that she would be staying alone at a villa, it seemed kind of boring even though it would be great to have so much space to herself.

However, Heather didn’t quite want to be alone right now, especially when she had just stayed on a secluded mountain by herself for some time. She looked at Zayne and wondered if she should invite him to stay with her too.

“Yeah, I’ll get someone to handle everything for you.” He knew some people who worked in real estate.

“Why don’t we all stay together? The villa would be huge enough.” Heather extended an invitation to him.

Meanwhile, the latter eyed Heather oddly. She didn’t seem like that sort of person, so when did her personality change?

Before Zayne could answer, Jason had already cut in. “Sure.”

Zayne looked at Jason in a displeased manner. He had been the one who refused to take Heather in, but now, he was the one agreeing to stay with her in the new villa.

“All right, that’s settled then.” Heather didn’t give Zayne a chance to refuse as she sealed the deal, an innocent smile still hanging from her lips.

“Hey, what do you mean by that?” Zayne hadn’t answered her. Since when did he agree with her idea?

“Hurry up and rent me that villa, or else I’m going to be sleeping on the streets tonight,” Heather said in all seriousness.

“If there’s one thing that Bradford City has an excess of, it’s hotels. You won’t be sleeping on the streets,” Zayne rebutted her. Why was she pretending to be pitiful at this time?

“As a single woman, hotels aren’t exactly a good option,” Heather said while giggling. Lately, he felt that Heather had been acting a lot like a delinquent, and this was giving him a headache.

Zayne didn’t want to continue talking to Heather, so he merely glanced at Jason. Needless to say, he was exasperated; since things had already been decided, he didn’t have any right to complain.

Initially, Zayne had planned on renting a smaller house that was on the plain side for Heather, but now that the three of them were going to stay together, it would be better to find a place with more rooms.

By then, the sky had already darkened since twilight always descended early during winter. Zayne and Heather sat in the back of the car, whereas Jason took the wheel as usual. With that, they began to move elsewhere. The trunk was filled with their belongings, for they heard that the house was completely bare and empty. They probably would have to buy plenty of things for the move, but considering the situation, even making purchases was a difficult task. Fortunately, Zayne knew people from all walks of life, and he got someone to deliver a few sets of bedding to the housing neighborhood’s office.

Zayne didn’t want to leave a trail behind, so after some thought, he decided that it would be safer to have everything delivered to the security office instead. Meanwhile, Jason could retrieve the items later since he was an unfamiliar face. Many people in Bradford City knew Heather, and plenty of people could also pick Zayne out of a crowd as well. However, not a lot of people knew Jason, and he wouldn’t be easily recognized since he was a killer.

By the time they reached the house, it was already 7.00PM. Jason immediately made a beeline for the security office the moment he parked the

car, so Heather and Zayne were the only ones left inside the house. They stared at each other, neither of them intending to make a move first.

Luckily for them, the place had already gotten a cleaning before they arrived, but it was in no shape for people to live in. Jason had been the one to help transport the items in the car's trunk, so until he came back from the security office with the bedding, they couldn't do much.

When Jason got back, he saw Heather and Zayne sitting on the couch. Neither of them seemed like they were getting to work as they both loafed about.

"Figure out which room you want by yourselves." Jason chucked a set of bedding at Zayne's face, and it hurt like hell. If it wasn't for Heather being a girl, Jason would have also tossed the bedding right at her. Heather watched as Zayne got a dressing down, and she withheld her laughter. After all, she didn't want him to hold a grudge against her.

"I'm going upstairs to sort out my room." Then, she simply made her way over to Jason and grabbed two quilts from the pile next to him. She would use one as an actual quilt, and she would temporarily use the other as a mattress topper. Tomorrow, she would get someone to sort out the rest of the house. Although Zayne was angry, he couldn't easily lose his temper at Jason and merely laughed exasperatedly.

"Okay, I'll unpack in my room too," Zayne said through clenched teeth.

Jason smiled coldly as he looked at Zayne, making a chill run down the latter's back. It was no wonder Jason was a killer—that smile was chilling.

As he went upstairs, Zayne reminded him, "Don't get your hopes up. I won't be cleaning your room."

Once he finished speaking, the man quickly went up to the second floor. Jason took in Zayne's somewhat harried figure and recalled how they used to fool around with each other like that when they were children.

Time had passed in a blink of an eye, and many things had changed since then. However, Jason then shook his head since it was futile for him to recall the past. After all, Zayne was currently in a precarious situation. Nonetheless, Jason felt that there was nothing that he wouldn't forgive Zayne for, and he just hoped that they would be able to weather through this period safely.

No matter what, the fate of a killer was to be killed. Jason had long since prepared himself to die at an early age, but ever since Zayne abruptly dragged him back to their homeland, he suddenly felt that living seemed pretty nice.

Perhaps Jason should seriously consider Zayne's words. The latter had been talking his ear off these few days while Jason simply ignored him, but he could tell that he was just concerned for him. Jason's heart was gradually softened, but it wasn't a good thing when a killer's stone-cold heart was melting.

Maybe Jason should stop killing, but did he have the chance to turn back once he began walking down this path? This was a path with no return, and he had seen far too many cases that ended in tragedy.

When Zayne passed by Heather's room, he saw her laying out her quilts in a well-practiced manner. From the looks of it, Heather wasn't a wealthy young lady who had been spoiled by her upbringing.

At the sight of her being absorbed in her work, Zayne decided that he must not lose to her. He had once hit a low point in his life, so he had to rely on himself during that time. However, Zayne had overly enjoyed the materialistic comforts of life in the past few years, and it was to the point where he didn't even do basic daily tasks by himself. Slowly enough, he forgot how it felt to rely on himself.

Meanwhile, Jason carried the rest of the quilts upstairs. The doors to both Heather and Zayne's rooms were ajar, so he curiously peeked inside. Heather had nearly finished setting up her room. Her space looked neat, whereas Zayne's room was a sight for sore eyes.

He recalled that Zayne had been hopeless at housework when they were little. Jason's eyes of disgust met Zayne's, and a mocking smile appeared on his lips.

Zayne never thought that he would earn Jason's scorn while he attempted to pull some bedding on, and it seemed that he had no ounce of talent when it came to housework. At that thought, Zayne haphazardly pulled the creased quilts over the bed.

On the other hand, Jason began to put his bedding on in an orderly fashion. He had been used to taking care of himself all these years, so simple chores were a piece of cake to him.

Once he was done with his room, Jason decided to lend Zayne a hand, but when he arrived at the latter's door, he realized that Zayne had already closed it. Heather had closed hers too, and it was weird that they were both this synchronized. Nonetheless, Jason reached out to knock on Zayne's door.

The man was already lying on his bed when he heard the knocking sounds. He reluctantly rolled off the bed and opened the door to find Jason standing there.

The moment he entered the room, Jason noticed Zayne's bed that was as messy as a pigpen. "You haven't grown at all over the years, Zayne," he mocked.

Meanwhile, the man had no rebuttals for him. He cleared his throat and pretended he didn't hear anything.

"Let me teach you." It was rare for Jason to display such kindness. He walked straight to the bed and noticed that the quilt cover hadn't been properly pulled on over the quilt itself. Jason had no idea where he should begin to direct his scorn.

"Can you even sleep in a bed like that?" Jason asked in disdain.

Meanwhile, Zayne had an odd feeling as he helplessly looked at Jason. He was getting scoffed at for being unable to make his bed, and he felt hurt by that.

"When you put the quilt cover on, you have to pay attention to the corners. Watch and learn now." Jason never thought that he would one day have to teach Zayne such a simple thing.

As such, Zayne carefully observed from the side. Housework seemed simple, but doing them was torturous. He had to admit that he was terrible at this aspect.

"I see," Zayne answered from behind.

As he watched Jason breezily set everything into place, Zayne felt even more disgusted at his failure. He glanced at Jason, for he hadn't thought that there would be so many tricks for chores.

Although some people were smart, they were useless at maintaining a house. Indeed, Zayne had no idea how he should distribute the chores at all.

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With that, they spent the night in the villa. Zayne kept tossing and turning in the darkness, unable to sleep no matter how he tried. He thought about how Heather was to his left and Jason was to his right.

The two most important people were in the rooms next to his, and Zayne felt that it was surreal. The nicer things were, the easier it was to shatter it. For some reason, he thought of Murphy's Law as his mind tangled itself into a ball of chargs. Although he was great at handling cases, he was never good at figuring out his feelings.

Jason had been chatty recently, and Zayne had no idea whether he was thinking over the suggestion he gave earlier. With that, he turned over and continued to think about it.

Likewise, Heather couldn't sleep as well; she wondered whether it was because she had slept during the day or if it was because she had been constantly sleeping on the couch. Now that she was on a bed, she couldn't fall asleep whatsoever.

This was a sleepless night, and the only one who could actually sleep was Jason. It had been ages since he got to lay in a bed, so he immediately fell asleep the moment he plopped down. However, his senses were still on high alert despite his slumber. The moment there was a sound or any slight motion, he was awake.

The night sheltered the killer, and likewise, it also gave the killer a good night's rest. Jason had already gotten used to having his circadian rhythm flipped. When he was overseas, Jason didn't need to think too much, for he seemingly just picked one of two choices each day—he either killed a target or protected one from being killed.

In the middle of the night, Jason woke up from his deep sleep. He still wasn't able to sleep peacefully, so he got out of bed and stood by the window before pulling the curtains open. A cold breeze swept inside.

The heating in the house was on. As Jason listened to the sound of the wind as the breeze chilled his bones, he thought this feeling amazing. How long

had he been away from his homeland? It had been such a long time that he couldn't even remember anymore.

The cold wind continued to blow, sweeping over Jason's face and burrowing under his pajamas. It was a little chilly and cold, but it quickly cleared his mind.

Jason didn't know what his current adversary looked like, for that adversary still hadn't shown themselves even until now. The longer this went on, the more dangerous it would be. Moreover, he was worried about the safety of those around Zayne. In other words, no one could guarantee that they would be able to make it out of this situation completely unscathed.

Jason thought that Zayne would be in an even more precarious state if he continued to drag things out further. Everything looked normal on the surface, but in reality, there were waves threatening to rise.

There were quite a few times when Jason wanted to plead for Zayne's life when he had met that old man, but he wasn't able to speak up in the end.

He didn't want to do something that would upset Zayne. Since he was willing to give this chance to Heather, that meant that Zayne cared deeply for her, and at the same time, it showed Zayne's inherent trust in Jason.

The man had brought this up several times when he was off on one of his tangents, and he would always say that nothing could go wrong as long as Jason was there in such an assured tone.

Nonetheless, this mission was far more difficult than any of the previous ones—it was the first time Jason ever felt pressured. Back when the target he was supposed to be protecting got killed, the most that would happen was a blow to Jason's reputation. This time, however, was different.

Jason could not allow himself to make a mistake, for if he did, then Zayne would be assassinated. He would live with the pain and trauma for the rest of his life, and that would be even more awful than death.

The howling wind blew Jason's thoughts into a mess. As the days passed, his worries grew. He had always kept his emotions hidden, not wanting Zayne to know about his concerns. After all, he didn't want the latter to shoulder these burdens with him.

However, could he really hide everything from Zayne? Jason felt that the man had seemingly caught wind of something in recent days. He wondered if Zayne was naturally self-sacrificing or something, for he hadn't let anything slip on the surface.

Jason waited for the sun to rise as he stood by the window. He pulled his pajamas closer to his body, feeling as though half his body was still warm from the heating while the other half experienced the chilling wind.

This oscillation between warm and cold cleared Jason's mind exceptionally well. He looked out the window, and he could see the greenery in the distance with his excellent night vision.

This neighborhood was so quiet that it was a little frightening. There was no one outside at all—not even a single patrolling security guard. West Avenue wasn't out in the countryside either, yet the house was so silent. Jason didn't know why, but perhaps Zayne knew something about it. After all, he wouldn't have chosen this place to stay otherwise.

Indeed, Zayne always could get whatever information he wanted out of others, and he was a genius in that aspect. Jason smiled faintly, his smile warm and gentle.

A night like this was nice, and it was a pity to sleep it away. Jason listened for any signs of motion from the room next to his, not knowing whether Zayne had fallen asleep.

Meanwhile, the latter hadn't wanted Jason to worry about him, so he pretended to be asleep even though he couldn't. He did his best not to make any sound, and he was even quieter than if he had actually been asleep.

The two of them clearly thought of the other as important, and they were still concerned for each other. Yet, neither of them could take the plunge and admit their feelings verbally.

The next morning, Jason squinted as he watched the fiery sun rise; the red of the clouds during dawns in winter had always been a welcome sight. He liked to watch the sun rise as well as when sundown came. With the coming and going of the sun, the day would pass by just like that.

It was yet another peaceful night as nothing happened, and even Jason was suspicious. Was there really someone who wanted Zayne's life? Was this only an elaborate trap that Zayne had set instead?

He heard a sound from the room next door, and it seemed that Zayne had already woken up. It was rather early for him to be awake, though. In reality, the man hadn't slept the whole night.

Meanwhile, in the other room next to Zayne's, Heather was currently fast asleep ever since drifting off to slumberland during the latter half of the night. In fact, she was already asleep before Jason had woken up.

She continued to remain asleep at this hour, for it had been a long while since she was able to sleep so comfortably. In fact, it seemed like Heather would only wake up at lunchtime.

When Zayne woke up, he regretted suggesting that they rent a villa. A villa was such a huge ambition, and it was a pain to do anything. If they called for delivery or anything of that sort, there was the danger of the workers leaking their location. Hence, even getting food delivered was a bother.

He had only been thinking about arranging a place for Heather herself to stay yesterday, so he hadn't thought about it too carefully. After last night's maelstrom of thoughts, however, Zayne deeply regretted it.

Truth be told, Zayne thought that staying at the apartment he bought would have been better, and it would also be a good place to hide their identities. Now that they were in this arrangement, there was nothing to be done. As such, Zayne wasn't that worried about being exposed because it was something inevitable. Otherwise, he wouldn't have actually come along with Heather and stayed with her.

Now, their enemy was lying in wait in the dark. Regardless of how Zayne tried to hide his identity, he figured that he would not be able to escape this foe's eyes.

Mornings weren't a great time to be thinking such negative thoughts, so Zayne clambered out of bed, wondering if he could still catch the sunrise outside. He poked his head out of the window, and although he didn't manage to see the morning sun as it rose, he did see Jason's own head poking out of his window. He then called out to him, "Morning."

When Jason saw how comical Zayne looked, he retreated to his room with a hint of a smile hanging from his lips. Often, Zayne had this child-like innocence to him. How did someone like him manage to navigate this complicated society?

Better yet, how did he even become a renowned detective?

Jason thought that Zayne was a miracle, and he envied the latter for always being able to keep that pure heart of his despite his experiences.

Just then, someone knocked on the door. Zayne had come looking for Jason, and the former heard a quick reply from inside the room. "Just come in."

Without preamble, Zayne pushed the door open and entered. Then, he saw Jason giving him a pure and innocent smile. "How should we deal with breakfast?"

Heather was still asleep at this hour, but Zayne's stomach was already rumbling. Having no other choice, all he could do was seek help from Jason and his excellent housework skills.

"I'll make some fried eggs." Jason wasn't exactly a skilled cook, and he usually fried just a few eggs for his meals.

Zayne followed Jason downstairs, for he wanted to watch him as he cooked. Back at his apartment, Zayne usually got takeout.

The kitchen in the villa was only kitted out with the basics, but that was enough. When Jason opened the refrigerator, however, it was completely empty. Hence, it seemed that he would have to nix the idea of making fried eggs.

"Looks like we'll have to go hungry." Jason didn't feel one way or another about hunger, for he didn't fear it.

"What? Let's just go out and eat then!" Zayne didn't want to go hungry. He worked to eat better food, after all. In fact, he had been rather particular about his food all this while. His time in Bradford City was probably when he was at his least pickiest.

Jason shook his head. "We can't leave whenever we want to. It'll be easy to leave a trail."

Zayne stared at Jason, speechless. “We can drive out to some restaurant far away from here for breakfast.” Zayne thought that the pain of exposing their location could not be compared to the pain of hunger.

“Where do you want to go?” Seeing how Zayne was insistent, Jason couldn’t continue to refuse. After all, he knew that Zayne always had a plan.

“To the best restaurant out there.” Zayne remembered that he still hadn’t brought Jason out for a nice meal even though the latter had been in Bradford City for a long time now.

“Sure,” Jason agreed.

Zayne gave a radiant smile, for it moved him to no end to be able to eat delicious food. However, Jason’s words proceeded to interrupt Zayne’s daydream.

“Aren’t you going to wake Heather up?” Jason had to remind Zayne that Heather was still there.

“Nah, I can’t get her to wake up. We’ll just bring some food back for her.” Zayne thought that it would be better to bring breakfast back for the woman instead of wasting time trying to get her out of bed.

Jason shrugged, for it seemed that Zayne would pick food in a heartbeat if given a choice between food and Heather. Indeed, that was how he rolled.

“Let’s head out then,” the man exclaimed eagerly.

Jason watched as Zayne behaved like a cat who ate the canary, and his mood took a turn for the better. Zayne’s smile had a soothing quality to it.

They went down to the garage to get their car, and Jason slid straight into the driver’s seat. However, Zayne tapped on the glass and said to him, “I’ll drive today. I’m better when it comes to sniffing out great food.”

At that, Jason shifted himself over to the passenger’s side. Jason wasn’t a talkative person, and he generally just did things instead of announcing that he was going to do it beforehand.

“Jason, I’ve checked your expenses and it looks like you don’t spend much.” Zayne changed the subject and suddenly began talking about an unrelated topic with him.

Standing before Love Chapter 727

Typically, people felt embarrassed while talking about money matters. When Jason heard Zayne bringing that up all of a sudden, his heart clenched since he didn’t quite know how to respond.

“I don’t really have any hobbies, and I don’t have anything else to spend my money on,” Jason said, having forced an answer out. After all, he wasn’t used to talking about this with anyone.

Zayne also thought that he was overstepping boundaries, so he smiled and said, “Just asking. Don’t think too much about it.” It hadn’t been easy improving his relationship with Jason, and he didn’t want to make a misstep.

Awkward moments occurred frequently between the two brothers, and when they did, the awkwardness would linger for more than just a day or two. Jason didn’t look like he minded, though, for he wouldn’t hold a grudge over it. At any rate, he just felt odd about it.

The pair looked at each other tacitly before turning away again, and Zayne regretted his words. Meanwhile, Jason calmed himself down and pretended that nothing happened.

After that, he leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes. He had been the driver over the past few days, and he needed to be alert while on the road. Since he didn’t have to take the wheel today, he could finally get some rest.

Meanwhile, Zayne was so hungry that his stomach kept growling. Although the car sped up, Jason continued to close his eyes. Zayne had no idea whether he had actually fallen asleep, for he knew that Jason was born with an alertness that was extraordinary. People like him found it difficult to sleep peacefully.

The weather today was actually nice, and the heat inside the car was cranked up to a comfortable temperature. Jason drifted in and out of consciousness; this swaying sensation had made him actually think about just falling asleep several times. However, it clearly wouldn’t do to sleep in the car. The

restaurant might be just around the corner, and likewise, the assassin might be lying in wait for a chance to strike.

Jason still had enough energy to pay attention to the changes in his surroundings. Sometimes, he thought that being a killer wasn't all that great of an occupation.

Over the years, he felt that he had aged quickly. Although Zayne was his elder brother, Jason clearly looked older than him. If Zayne hadn't insisted on keeping that moustache of his that mature-looking men usually had, he might still look like a young lad.

Zayne glanced at Jason to his side, his lips curving up into a big smile. It was a simple and everyday moment in life, but sometimes, just trying to enjoy a simple moment like this was hard.

He turned his gaze back to the road, his eyes narrowing slightly. There were many things that he wanted to eat because hunger made people less picky about their food. They would think of eating everything, and anything would taste delicious to them.

The windows of the car were rolled up securely. Maybe if he rolled the windows down, they would be able to smell the scent of breakfast foods wafting around the city. However, since the weather was on the cold side, Zayne felt that it was better to keep the windows rolled up. After all, the sunlight streaming in still brought him joy.

It was rare to see such bright sunlight during a winter morning, and it felt like he was at the beach. Zayne looked out of the gleaming window, realizing that the world outside the vehicle had brightened up considerably.

Everyone looked forward to having a carefree life, but not many were able to achieve it. Since he had managed to snatch a moment to just relax, Zayne treasured it dearly. In fact, no one had better interrupt this moment. He simply hoped that his phone wouldn't ring, for as long as it didn't, his calm heart would relax even more.

To him, every phone call was torturous. Zayne's phone had been modified; no regular person could call him, so he would pick up every call without any hesitation. Not only that, people would only call him if they had something important to tell him.

Right now, he was most worried about receiving a call from Heather. As Zayne thought about her, he wondered if she had gotten up yet. At any rate, he just wanted to rush back before the woman woke up. When he thought that he would most likely have to live like a recluse for the near future, Zayne immediately felt that his future was bleak.

They were about to reach the restaurant after their current street. Zayne slowed down the car, and Jason cracked his eyes open alertedly. As he looked ahead warily, it turned out that they had reached their destination. Meanwhile, he was here thinking that something had happened.

“It’s great that you don’t need me to wake you up. Is it because you smelled the delicious scent of food?” Zayne teased. Whether Jason humored him or not, Zayne had to poke fun at the former.

Meanwhile, Jason had also gradually gotten used to Zayne’s antics. When Zayne got all gloomy at times, he didn’t feel used to it.

“You were driving too fast.” Jason had even heard the car’s system reminding Zayne to watch out for his speed.

Zayne answered nonchalantly, “As long as we don’t get caught, it’s all good.” Since he was unable to get rid of his frustration, he occasionally needed to do some rule-breaking.

“Are we getting out a little up ahead?” Jason asked as he took in the restaurant before him. It looked huge, so it probably was a high-end restaurant.

Soon, Zayne parked the car at the plaza. The plaza outside the restaurant was filled with luxury cars, and it seemed that the restaurant was very popular.

When they got out of the car, Jason said to Zayne calmly, “You probably shouldn’t have come to a place like this.” He glanced at the luxury cars around them.

“Are you worried that someone will recognize me because of all the rich people around here?” Zayne knew what Jason was implying.

Jason shook his head. “I’m worried that your wallet will shrivel up.” It was rare for Jason to crack a joke.

“Relax, I have some money in my pocket. I can still afford a meal,” Zayne said, following up on Jason’s joke.

They entered the restaurant as they talked, and Jason smelled the heavy scent of food drifting around inside. It immediately made him work up an appetite. He hadn’t been hungry earlier, but he was famished all of a sudden.

“The food here smells really good,” Jason promptly said to Zayne.

A smug look came over Zayne’s face. “I chose this place—of course it’d be great.”

Jason ignored him and walked straight ahead, whereas Zayne followed him. They had emerged in the very center of the seating area, so finding a table became their first priority. Jason searched for his target while Zayne continued to follow behind him.

The latter couldn’t be bothered to ask Jason what he was doing when it came to things like this. In truth, with his clever mind, he could already figure out which table was theirs without even looking at the table number.

However, since Jason was being so focused, Zayne didn’t say anything else. He used to think that Jason was the one who was hopeless at daily life, but Zayne now realized that he was the actual hopeless one.

Jason soon found a table for them, and it seemed as though he had just relied on his instincts. In fact, his instincts were quicker and sharper than anyone else’s calculations. Zayne took his seat after Jason had sat down, and they were both seated across from each other.

“What do you want to order?” Zayne first asked Jason for his opinion.

Jason immediately pushed the menu over to him. “I’ll take whatever you’re ordering.” It seemed like he had full trust in Zayne’s tastes.

“Are you sure that we have similar tastes?” Zayne asked, his tone filled with skepticism.

“Not really, but whatever you order probably won’t be terrible.” Jason had low standards. As long as it didn’t taste awful, he would eat it.

“Would you believe me if I say that I’m going to order some unholy-tasting abomination for you?” said Zayne jokingly. Jason really didn’t care, and this left the former worried.

“I’d believe that.” Naturally, he believed that Zayne would do such a thing.

“In that case, it looks like you’re giving me the green light to get you something awful.” Zayne was like a wicked scoundrel who teased women for no reason as he poked fun at Jason.

Meanwhile, the latter was unfazed as he stared at Zayne coldly. He even crossed his arms over his chest, watching to see what the man would do.

Since Zayne didn’t get a response, the atmosphere naturally turned awkward. He lowered his head and continued to look through the menu. As expected, Jason was someone with no sense of humor, and he couldn’t get anywhere with Jason in a joking conversation.

Zayne soon ordered their breakfast. Of course, he couldn’t wait to share some good dishes with Jason. He loved the food here, so he naturally hoped that someone he was close to would also like the food.

After all, sharing meals brought joy to people. Zayne wanted to see a pleased expression on Jason’s face later when they ate. At the thought that he would soon be able to see that, he became even happier.

“Do they have red wine?” Jason suddenly asked, for he suddenly had a craving for some. Typically, he showed some self-restraint. Whenever he had a mission, he would rarely imbibe any alcohol. Besides, he was acting as their driver here now, so it was more imperative that he didn’t drink.

When he heard Jason bring this up unprompted, Zayne said to a waiter, “Bring me a bottle of your most expensive red wine.”

Jason raised an eyebrow. He knew that Zayne lived a luxurious life, and he always ate the most expensive food and used the most expensive goods. Just then, Jason recalled the amount of money sitting in his own bank account. He himself couldn’t quite remember how much money he had in there. At any rate, it was enough for him to live a life of leisure.

Unfortunately, Jason hadn't tried to enjoy life. Money had turned into numbers that just kept increasing, and in the end, it would most likely just rot in the bank.

"Just this for now," Zayne said to the waiter, having already placed his order.

Jason glanced at him. Once the waiter walked away, he said to Zayne, "You ordered enough for three."

Zayne grinned brightly. "We still need to bring some food back for Heather." He knew that Jason wanted to say that he was being frivolous, for he had long since noticed that Jason had words to say about his loose spending habits.

However, Jason was not embarrassed by this, for he simply looked at Zayne without speaking. A victorious smile appeared on the latter's face.

Jason looked absolutely adorable when he admitted defeat, and Zayne felt that he would be in a great mood for the rest of the day.

Soon, the food they ordered gradually arrived. Zayne immediately picked up his cutlery, unable to resist when there was delicious food before him. While he gobbled down his food, Jason ate with better manners than him.

Jason watched as the former ate with no decorum, clearly remembering that Zayne was polite and gentlemanly when he was with Heather. It was only now did Jason think that the other person had a more manly air to him; the Zayne that he remembered was straightforward and carefree like this, and it was as though he had found some old memory.

"Aren't you hungry?" Zayne was surprised by Jason's appetite. After all, Jason hadn't eaten as much as him despite being taller.

"I nearly forgot about my hunger when I saw how engrossed you were with your food." Jason was polite and cultured. Under his hulking appearance was the heart of a scholarly young man.

Jason had been a weak and frail boy when they were children. Back then, he loved reading poetry. It was hard to believe that he would grow up to be a killer when one took into account how he was as a young boy.

"I'm worried that I'll eat your share too." It didn't seem that Zayne was joking either. In reality, he actually could eat two servings of food.

“If you like the food, then have some more.” Jason recalled their time together as children. Zayne had a huge appetite then, so Jason would always give half of his food to Zayne.

“We might need to order more food. I’m hungrier than I thought I was.” Zayne smiled faintly at Jason, for the both of them had inadvertently thought of their childhood.

Standing before Love Chapter 728

When they were leaving, Jason hastily climbed into the passenger seat, so Zayne naturally became their driver. Nevertheless, he was in a very good mood after a satisfying meal, so he paid no mind to such a small inconvenience.

He pulled open the car door and entered the driver’s seat before promptly starting the engine. Meanwhile, back in the villa, Heather had already woken up. She came out of her room and looked around the empty house, noticing that there was not a single person around.

Heather’s mouth twitched at the realization that Zayne had left without a word first thing in the morning. Didn’t he tell her that it was important to stay hidden for the time being? In the end, he was the one who had gone out instead.

Since there was no one at home, Heather decided to head downstairs to the living room; this villa was truly an empty shell to live in. Right now, she was starving, so she went straight to the kitchen. After pulling open the fridge, she found that it was also as empty as a robbed room.

All of a sudden, she felt like she had come to an abandoned city, and she was instantly reminded of her days in the forest. However, she had her phone and a TV in the villa, so it wasn’t as boring as living in the wild.

A wave of hunger hit her just then, and Heather rubbed her stomach helplessly. At the end of the day, this beautiful villa was still incomparable to the cabin in the woods; there were at least instant noodles there, so she didn’t need to starve.

Since she was left with no other choice, Heather unlocked her phone, but she didn’t have any food delivery apps installed on it. She quickly tapped on the app store platform to download one of those. Food delivery was the most

practical choice for her right now even though she was in no mood to order takeout.

After spending a long time surviving on instant noodles, Heather wanted to eat something fancy since she was back in Bradford City. She stared reluctantly at her screen, deliberating if she should install the app or not.

The next minute, a rumbling noise came from outside the villa. Heather looked toward the sound and saw Zayne and Jason coming inside together. She slumped against the sofa weakly, for she was so hungry that she could pass out any time.

Meanwhile, Zayne's lips curved into a sly smile as he watched Heather's disheartened state. "Are you awake, Heather?"

The woman's eyes darted lifelessly toward him. "What nonsense." Her scornful response was troubling yet amusing to him.

"Are you starving, Heather?" Zayne quickened his steps and went up to her.

Heather shook her head in response; she wasn't in the mood to chatter and simply turned to look at him glumly. As Zayne stared at the dejected woman, he wondered if he should say something to cheer her up.

Jason walked up to them immediately after noticing what was going on, and he was holding a bag of food in his hand. He placed it onto the table and said to her, "You should eat it while it's hot."

Heather glanced at the container of food before eyeing Zayne again. "Did you guys eat out?"

The man smiled and replied, "Yeah, but we didn't forget to pack you some food."

Heather wasn't too happy with his words, though. She simply pursed her lips slightly. "You're the one who told me not to leave this place. How can you go out to eat instead?" Her tone carried a slight hint of mockery to it.

On the other hand, Zayne returned her eyes with a helpless look on his face. "Heather, how can one possibly live without the pleasures of eating and drinking? This is nothing but human nature."

Heather rolled her eyes, for he wasn't even putting any effort to come up with an excuse. However, it wasn't the time to linger on that—at this point, Heather was more eager to fill her stomach. She proceeded to ignore Zayne and opened the container at the table. The smell of food instantly hit her nose and she couldn't help but take a few big sniffs.

"It smells pretty good." Heather smiled. With a container of mouth-watering food in front of her, her mood naturally improved.

Zayne quickly passed her a pair of cutlery and gazed at her affectionately. He really liked the way Heather was right now, for she looked like an innocent little girl with no worries at all.

Heather took the fork and spoon from his hand and started to enjoy her late lunch. Meanwhile, Jason had gone upstairs in a jiffy. Naturally, he understood at once what was going on downstairs. He could tell that Zayne was unimaginably patient toward Heather, and Jason's face darkened slightly at the observation. He didn't know if he should pity the man or be happy for him.

Loving someone was a blessing, but it was bound to be painful if the other person didn't feel the same way. Since Jason had to deal with such a painful experience in the past, he wondered how Zayne was feeling right now. Nevertheless, Jason eventually tossed away the ridiculous thoughts in his mind and decided to take a nap in his room; after all, getting enough sleep was of utmost importance to him.

Recently, he would wake up in the middle of the night every day as he was worried that he would wake up to Zayne being in trouble the next morning. After all, Jason could always tell when danger was approaching, for it was like a bomb inside of him that could go off at any minute.

Despite all of that, Zayne didn't seem to care about anything at all. Jason watched his radiant smile from afar, and it'd be great if that guy was really as innocent and naive as this. In the end, Jason turned away, not wanting to watch them anymore. He knew that Zayne had his own plans, so he wouldn't be able to manipulate his judgement.

Meanwhile, Heather was probably famished as she gobbled down all the food in one go. Zayne felt quite accomplished as he watched her by the side. He loved to see her like this, for she was so full of life and vigor.

After a while, Heather couldn't find a garbage can to throw away the container after she was done eating, and Zayne looked around at the empty house as well. Needless to say, he found it near impossible to live in a place like this.

"Tell me, Zayne—since we're not allowed to hire door-to-door services or go out, may I know how we're expected to live under such stringent conditions?" Heather wasn't worried about the quality of life in this villa. Instead, it was a matter of staying alive.

Zayne rubbed his chin as he replied, "I've already thought about this problem. The most practical solution is to get help from a trusted and reliable companion."

Heather didn't see the point of him saying that. What did he mean by someone who was reliable and trusted? It was such a complicated way to define a person.

"There aren't many who can be trusted." Heather couldn't think of anyone who fitted that criteria; she even figured that it was much less for Zayne who had just arrived in Bradford City not too long ago.

"Don't you worry, for I've already found someone for the job," Zayne said confidently.

In response, Heather asked curiously, "Since when do you have reliable friends in Bradford?" Heather clearly remembered he didn't have many friends in the city.

"Judging by the time, he should be on his way now," Zayne simply said mysteriously. Along with that, the look in his eyes became mischievous as he stared at Heather.

The woman stared back at him warily. It seemed that the situation was complicated, for there was definitely more to it than he let on. Right then, Zayne's phone started ringing. Both pairs of eyes instantly locked onto the phone, and Zayne picked up the call under Heather's gaze.

"You'd better come quick. She's about to get angry." Zayne immediately cut the line after that, giving Heather no chance to make out the caller by their voice.

Even though Zayne had only said one sentence, Heather could gain some information from that simple exchange—in fact, it seemed to be some valuable information.

“I’m guessing this helper of ours is someone I know.” Heather came to that conclusion using the elimination method. As such, she could vaguely guess who their visitor would be after that.

“I think you already know who it is by now.” Zayne chuckled goofily, for he felt like he had just been caught red-handed.

“Weren’t you supposed to keep this a secret? In the end, you exposed our location on your own.” Heather’s tone was one of accusation, for she thought that Zayne was really too lenient to others.

“We had an equal exchange.” Zayne told her the truth.

Meanwhile, Heather was surprised to hear that. She didn’t think there’d be anything for those two to exchange, and she didn’t know what exactly they’d traded on either.

“Did you guys even think about my feelings when you made the deal?” Heather wasn’t fond of being kept in the dark. Then, she rubbed her temples in defeat since the situation was troubling.

“I’m sorry, but his offer was so attractive that I couldn’t reject it,” Zayne said truthfully. In fact, this exchange was way too unfair for the other side.

“Whatever.” Heather wasn’t too unhappy about it. After all, the other person was indeed someone she trusted fully. Technically speaking, it wasn’t completely a rash decision on Zayne’s end.

In fact, Zayne had already expected Heather to react in such a manner. He could finally relax inside, for he obviously didn’t want to see her lose her temper.

“What are your plans for later, though?” Zayne asked Heather as he tested the waters.

“I’ll wait for him to arrive. We have some things to clear up on anyway.” There were certain things that still needed explanation; they’d been put off for too

long, and Heather was already feeling impatient. Hence, why not take the chance now to make everything clear?

“In that case, I might have to give you two some private space,” Zayne teased her mockingly.

“Stop being sarcastic. He wouldn’t even be coming if it wasn’t for your betrayal.” At the end of the day, Heather was a little angry. As she thought of the things that Zayne had done, discontent filled her chest.

“This isn’t a betrayal; I’m an ally.” Zayne was smiling, but he didn’t feel too good inside.

“Don’t let me hear any excuses.” His smile instantly froze at the sound of her words.

Zayne knew that she was just casually speaking her mind, so he didn’t take it to heart. The two locked eyes in silence for a moment before he said to her, “I’ll head upstairs first, then. Remember to make him feel at home later.”

Heather snapped at Zayne’s leaving figure, “Hey! Why should I do that?” Heather was a little dissatisfied, for she wasn’t fully prepared to meet that person yet. Why did she have to welcome him as well? Wasn’t Zayne being a little too hard on her?

“I know you can do it.” Zayne turned around to give her a smile and a strange knowing look.

Disregarding his usual gentlemanly qualities, Zayne was awfully cunning whenever he acted like this—it was both upsetting and annoying to watch. Heather narrowed her eyes in response and put on an intimidating face, and Zayne hastily turned back around in the end.

With his back facing Heather, Zayne gave his hand a wave. “I know that he’ll give this villa a new look when he comes, Heather.”

She was even more irritated when she heard that, for she really didn’t want to attend to their guest in the living room.

“I’m going upstairs, so you take care of him on your own. You’re the one who contacted him, after all,” Heather said to Zayne’s back.

“I’m so tired these days... I really don’t have the energy to socialize, so I’ll leave it to you, Heather.” Zayne sounded sincere, but in actual fact, he appeared to be in good spirits. There was no sign of fatigue on his face at all.

It looked like Zayne was fully on their helper’s side this time, and Heather had a feeling that she’d been betrayed as she stared angrily at the man’s figure.

Even though she seemed easy-going to the idea, she wasn’t mentally prepared to meet their visitor. She couldn’t possibly ignore him entirely later, so she’d rather head straight to her bedroom and hide there for the time being. However, running away wasn’t her style after all. Zayne probably knew that, and it was the reason he was forcing her to handle the situation.

As Heather was debating with herself, her feet seemed to be glued to the ground; she couldn’t move them at all. Deep inside, she was more eager to face the situation head-on. Nonetheless, the urge to shy away from reality popped up in her mind from time to time, for this was indeed a difficult decision to make.

Standing before Love Chapter 729

When did Zayne even contact that man? Heather felt that Zayne seemed to be keeping a lot of things from her. However, at this rate, that person would show up at any time if they kept on stalling like this.

Heather sunk into the sofa in distress once again. Since that man was able to come to an agreement with Zayne, he had probably made his fair share of sacrifices.

When she put it that way, Heather no longer felt as stressed to meet him. After all, Zayne had always been on her side all this time; to be ‘betrayed’ by him once in a while wasn’t such a bad thing.

Just then, a gust of wind sent the rustling noise of grass into the villa, and Heather was agitated by the slight commotion. From then on, she paid extra attention to pick up any movements from outside while a hint of anticipation tickled her heart. After all, she had been thinking about this person a lot for the past few days.

She had once been in love with him, so how could she erase him from her memory in the blink of an eye? After experiencing that, Heather truly felt that emotions could make a person act in predictable ways. Back then, she was an

outsider to all these conventional patterns of human nature; now, she was a part of them. She'd never imagined for this to happen to her, but the truth was right in front of her eyes.

Meanwhile, the white walls around her seemed like a cage; Heather hugged her knees on the cushion, her eyes clouded with weariness and confusion.

At last, a knock on the door cast away her moment of self-deprecation—it appeared that their guest had arrived. Heather waited in anticipation for him to come in on his own, and she even forgot to speak.

“Is anyone home?” Matthias stood outside the door; he was as nervous and restless as the woman inside. As a result, he went a little heavy on the knock, and the door creaked open under his unintentional force. He realized it wasn't locked to begin with.

It seemed like Zayne had helped them out quite a lot this time. Matthias headed straight inside, for he knew this was an indication that he was welcomed. After entering the living room, he noticed Heather on the sofa right away. Even though her hair was messy and she was wearing a pair of slippers, he still thought that her beauty was unparalleled.

“Hey,” Matthias greeted Heather.

However, she had been looking elsewhere since he entered. She was deliberately avoiding his gaze and wasn't planning to respond to him either.

Instead, Matthias went up to her; as his footsteps approached gradually, Heather's heart sped up steadily as well. He finally came to a stop when he was about three steps away from the sofa.

He stood there and looked down at Heather for a long time, but she wasn't willing to spare him a glance. Hence, he leaned toward her and nudged forward a little, slightly closing the distance between them.

“Are you really going to ignore me, Heather?” Matthias' voice was as soft and soothing as ever, and his expression couldn't be more kind.

“Why are you here?” Heather acted like she didn't know about his visit.

Matthias took another step forward. Heather finally turned to him, and the two shared a moment of silence as they locked eyes. Just then, Heather found her

words stuck in her throat; similarly, Matthias couldn't seem to voice out the sweet talk that he had planned either.

"I missed you, so I came to see you." Matthias wanted to keep staring at Heather like this without a care in the world.

On the other hand, the woman was fully prepared so that she wouldn't be caught off guard. She wasn't planning to keep on conversing with Matthias, nor did she want to have any physical contact with him. Thus, she instinctively scooted to the side.

"I've already made it clear last time," she said firmly. She couldn't bring herself to be with him, after all.

Meanwhile, Matthias promptly sat down next to Heather when she turned away. The moment she felt him beside her, she darted far away in reflex like she was being scalded.

"You always pretend to hate me, but I know how you truly feel." Matthias didn't want to lose her anymore, and he wanted her to understand his feelings.

"Please behave yourself, Matthias." Heather stood up immediately, not being able to do it anymore.

The man reached out and grabbed her by the arm, for both sides were unwilling to give in. Heather struggled to break free from his grip, but she couldn't seem to muster the strength to do so.

"I know that you've been thinking about it for the past few days, Heather." Matthias wanted to take control of the situation this time. In other words, he refused to be on the passive side forever and to be led on by Heather all the time.

"I don't know what you mean by that," Heather said coldly with a scoff as she flung away his hand. Unfortunately, his fingers were so tightly clasped around her arm that she couldn't shrug it off at all.

"Running away isn't going to help us, Heather." Matthias' voice became cold as well.

Heather didn't expect him to be so headstrong today, and she couldn't reject him when he acted this way. At that moment, she was a little regretful that she had decided to wait for him in the living room.

"We're on two opposite sides, Matthias. It wouldn't do us any good to keep hanging onto each other." Heather would rather put everything on the table at this point.

"You seem to be the only one thinking we're on opposite sides," Matthias reminded her.

"Am I wrong, though?" Heather stared condescendingly at him; she was now standing while he was sitting down. Meanwhile, Matthias' calm and collected demeanor made it seem like he had full confidence of winning the woman back.

"I've always been with you, so how could we be on opposite sides?" Sometimes, Matthias felt like he didn't understand Heather at all. Why wouldn't she voice out her doubts? Instead, she was always beating around the bush and blindly making assumptions.

"We're both businesspeople, so you should know how pros and cons work." Heather's eyes were emotionless as they remained fixed on Matthias. In reality, she wanted to hide the panic in them.

"Businesspeople are entitled to be in love too, and they're fully capable of giving up their profits for the one they love." Matthias returned her eyes without any reservation. He was aware that she had her own considerations and doubts.

"Well, I can't do that, so I don't want you to force yourself to either." Heather felt it was quite unfair for Matthias to be stuck in this situation. Moreover, she still couldn't trust him fully.

"Are you a fool, Heather? The world we live in isn't dead—one plus one doesn't always add up to two. No matter what happens, I love you and I'm willing to stand on your side." Matthias was transparent with his words for he no longer wanted to play the guessing game with Heather.

"When the time comes, can you guarantee that you'll be able to do something that could hurt yourself all because of love?" Heather never believed in love;

she was also unconvinced that a slick and cunning man like Matthias would actually offer such a naive compromise out of the blue.

“I can guarantee that, but I’m not sure about you.” Matthias was spot on with his response.

Heather was touched by the sincere look in his eyes, and she was nearly convinced by his words. However, there was a voice inside of her constantly reminding her to not be swayed by Matthias’ honeyed words in the heat of the moment.

“You’re right, I can’t. Compared to love, I’m more willing to put my trust in human nature.” Heather gave him her answer. There was nothing he could do about it, for she didn’t believe in love no matter what.

Matthias chuckled in response; his laugh was candid and radiant even in such a tense atmosphere.

“I’m sorry, I know it’s my fault for not making you feel safe. I’ve never given you a definite answer since the beginning, so it’s only normal for you to feel this way.” Matthias unhesitantly put all the blame on himself.

Heather stared at him suspiciously; the man before her felt like someone she’d never met. More than that, she couldn’t understand how he could see through her thoughts so easily.

Needless to say, Matthias’ words had reached her heart, and it would only take another second for her to give in entirely. However, her rationality pulled her back, stopping her from surrendering and agreeing to it.

“Why can’t you give up on us, Matthias? It’s a path full of obstacles and hardships,” Heather couldn’t help but ask him. After all, she was curious about the reason behind Matthias’ perseverance.

“How is this giving up when we haven’t even gotten together yet?” Matthias saw through her conflict inside, for he knew that she was currently in a dilemma and beating herself up.

“You’re getting harder for me to understand, Matthias,” Heather said in resignation. The look in his eyes were terrifying to watch—his eyes were passionate and warm, and Heather had nowhere to hide in front of them.

“Just don’t leave me. You’ll understand everything about me sooner or later.” Matthias finally let go of her arm. He was confident that she wouldn’t be rushing to head upstairs anymore, for her resolve had already begun to falter.

“I’m afraid I don’t have the time.” Heather felt like time was ticking rapidly. There were still many things waiting to be done, and it wasn’t right for her to be in a relationship now. Thus, she simply couldn’t agree to be with him.

“I have a lifetime ahead of me, so why would you be short on time?” Matthias could easily refute her every claim. He’d been taking control of the situation since the start of it, and Heather found herself unable to counter his unyielding attitude.

“Why do you have to be so stubborn? In this day and age, a lifetime of happiness isn’t possible in a relationship anymore...” Heather was pessimistic all the way.

Matthias didn’t want to hear her carry on, so he interrupted her immediately and said, “I’ll do my best to give you a lifetime of happiness.”

After all, it wasn’t easy to convince Heather with just a few touching words. She glared at Matthias fiercely while hiding the sliver of delight she felt from his words—she didn’t want to let him know that she was feeling that way.

“Do you know the current situation in Bradford, Matthias?” Heather went all business-like all of a sudden.

Her change in attitude told him that she was giving him a chance. He replied calmly, “Yes, I do. In fact, I know everything—I know that Bradford is in a mess right now. I even know that Myra has been kidnapped and that Tony is being threatened.”

Sure enough, Matthias knew everything—it was just as he said, but Heather was surprised. She didn’t expect him to know this much. It turned out that he was only pretending to be oblivious, for he certainly knew more than Heather had imagined.

“Since you know everything, you should also know that we Langstons are the heart of the storm. I can’t promise you that I’ll be able to leave everything behind.” Heather had long since accepted the truth; since she was already being hunted down, there was a huge possibility that her family’s name wasn’t

the only thing on the line this time. Hence, she had to put her life on the line as well.

“I know. I know that you’re in a horrible situation right now, and you must be feeling awful inside too. However, I’m willing to face it all with you even if I have to put my life and the Locke Group at stake,” Matthias said firmly. He gave Heather full confidence that he would protect her at all costs.

“It’s not worth it—I’m not worthy of such kindness from you,” Heather replied miserably. The more Matthias was being kind to her, the more she felt lowly and inferior. How could someone as heartless and impatient as her deserve such compassion and tolerance from him?

“It’s up to me to decide whether or not you’re worth my efforts and not anyone else—that’s including you.” Matthias stood up abruptly. As he used his taller stature to his advantage, he stared down at Heather. Despite that, his eyes remained soft and affectionate.

Heather looked up at him, and she was dumbfounded. Since he had already put it this way, she was now stuck in a dead end with no way out. However, she still couldn’t say yes to him.

Meanwhile, Matthias felt that he was almost there—he knew that he was just one step away from victory, but the final step was a tough one to cross. Nevertheless, he patiently waited for Heather’s response. He was positive that he’d be able to get through to her, for he knew that the woman had a soft heart.

Standing before Love Chapter 730

Heather crossed her arms after having escaped Matthias’ strong grip, and her lips curved into a sardonic smile. She stared at Matthias without a word, and her eyes were emotionless. It seemed like they were trying to bore into his soul.

Matthias no longer wanted to run away, so he stared back at her. The two of them maintained eye contact in utter silence, and the rising tension almost made Zayne panic for them as he watched the show from the floor above.

“Are you still unwilling to give in?” Matthias chuckled helplessly. Heather was much more persistent than he had imagined. As such, he couldn’t think of a better way to go around this matter anymore.

Heather took a step back, wanting to make more distance between them. After all, some things couldn't be solved just by giving in. Since she didn't know how to respond, she simply looked at him quietly, hoping that he'd give her more time to consider.

"A problem like this can't be solved simply by giving in," she finally said. Sure enough, whatever was between them was too complicated; they wouldn't magically be 'happily ever after' the moment they gave in.

They had different ideals, so there would naturally be conflicts between them. Matthias wasn't able to see eye-to-eye with Heather, but he couldn't convince her to agree with his views either. Things often weren't as simple as they seem. Since Matthias wasn't rushing for an answer, he was willing to take things one step at a time if they couldn't resolve their conflict at the moment.

"Perhaps it's because I don't understand women—I really don't know how to make you happy," Matthias said bitterly. He felt like he wouldn't be able to handle her even with a few extra brains.

"Since I'm giving you so much pain, why don't you just give up on me?" Heather really didn't understand what made him so determined to be with her, for the slightest amount of kindness and warmth she had given him in the past couldn't possibly be enough to motivate him for all this while.

At the end of the day, things were back on square one—there was an irreparable disparity between them, and they were separated by the strife between their families. At the thought of that, one wouldn't help but compare their situation to the story of Romeo and Juliet. Nevertheless, Matthias didn't want his story with Heather to end in a tragedy.

An uncomfortable tension hung in the air; under Heather and Matthias' calm composure, a war was going on between them in the loud silence. Matthias didn't know how to control his emotions anymore, for Heather never failed to torment him mentally every time he faced her.

Cold winds were normal in winter. Right then, Heather was attacked by a chilly breeze out of nowhere and she instinctively wrapped her arms around herself. Before she knew it, it was already late winter; the temperature in Bradford City took a tremendous drop all of a sudden, and she almost couldn't get used to it.

“I’m going upstairs.” Heather gestured toward the top of the staircase. The living room was so empty that she always felt like she’d be attacked by the cold wherever she sat.

Matthias nodded. “Just leave the rest to me.” He obviously didn’t forget his mission for coming here.

Heather let out a silent sigh of relief when she saw that Matthias had stopped pressuring her. It’s for the best, she thought to herself. She headed to the staircase and prepared to go upstairs, but she already had one foot on the step when she couldn’t stop herself from taking another look at Matthias.

Their eyes stayed locked for a few moments, and countless unspoken words were hidden in their silence. Matthias’ soft and gentle gaze was mesmerizing, but Heather eventually forced herself to look away. It was getting cold, so she should head upstairs as soon as possible.

Now, Matthias was left alone in the living room. He recalled his meeting with Zayne a few days ago; he had expected the man to reject his terms of negotiation, but to his surprise, the man had agreed to take it.

Matthias was overjoyed, and he felt luckier than winning a lottery. Just then, he recalled Zayne’s shady appearance; he didn’t think a guy like that would turn out to be quite a nice person.

He knew that Zayne had done a lot for Heather’s sake, and he was a little guilty when he compared his contributions for Heather against that man’s. Whoever Zayne was to Matthias, be it a romantic rival or a friend, the former had undoubtedly earned the latter’s respect.

After that, it was time for Matthias to get to work. The villa was basically inhabitable at this stage, so he had to give it a more cozy ambience; he knew that Heather was longing for a place to feel like home to her.

Similarly, Matthias was desperate to be a part of a harmonious family, yet reality was harsh and ruthless. He could only hope to walk hand in hand with Heather once all of this was done and dusted.

With that, he held back the urge to rush upstairs. It wouldn’t help right now even if he stormed into Heather’s bedroom; before resolving their conflict at hand, she would never say yes to him no matter what.

Judging by Heather's ambiguous yet suggestive attitude earlier, Matthias had a feeling that they'd only be able to get out of this awkward relationship after everything was over. Love and conspiracy were quite an incompatible pair, and Matthias couldn't tell if he was foolish or pitiful for trying to make the two work together. However, he had no choice since he had truly fallen in love with the woman.

Matthias asked for help only from his trusted contacts, and he promised Zayne that he'd never expose the location of Heather's temporary home. Even though Matthias knew that the woman's whereabouts in Bradford wouldn't remain a secret for long, he was willing to try his best to prolong it. Therefore, he didn't give out the address to just anyone.

Matthias had used the hidden forces of Bradford as his bargaining chip with Zayne, for these were the details that he had gathered over a long period of time. Nonetheless, he was willing to share it with the other man.

Since he had chosen to love Heather with no regrets, he was clear with his goals this time; he knew that Zayne was Heather's protector, and he only wanted the guy to keep her safe as much as possible.

The role of her protector was supposedly Matthias', but he was unfortunately burdened by many other things at the moment. For example, he couldn't let go of his mother's grudge; even though his mother had told him not to live in hate before she passed, he couldn't do it.

Matthias sunk into the sofa in Heather's seat where her warmth still lingered on the cushion. He was happy to be sitting here; even though she had hurt him badly, she never intended to cut him off entirely.

Because of that, Matthias refused to give up on Heather either—perhaps he would succeed if he waited just a little longer. Whatever the case, he was confident that he would one day be able to conquer the impermeable fortress in her heart. As he reveled in the residual scent of her presence, he felt like this unique smell of hers was even more alluring than any aphrodisiac.

At last, Matthias got up from the sofa and headed straight to the main door of the villa, pulling it open and letting sunlight flood the house through the vast opening. He breathed in the fresh air from outside. Similarly, he wanted to let the light brighten up the entire house and lighten their mood as well.

Naturally, the noise from downstairs was heard by Heather. She came out from her bedroom and peered at Matthias from the top floor. He seemed to be in a much better mood after she went upstairs, and she ended up reflecting on herself after seeing that.

Matthias could never be himself in front of her since he would always have something to worry about or even be wary of. He was so in love with Heather, so he couldn't help but constantly care about her opinion of him.

That was precisely the reason why Matthias had ended up putting himself into a box—he couldn't act freely in front of the woman at all. She didn't want to see this happen to him, and she could already make out the constraint in his eyes. Is love really just a chain after all?

The more Matthias showed outstanding performance of any kind, the more Heather felt like it was unfair for him—she couldn't give him the freedom he deserved. She enjoyed her own freedom, yet she was prone to tying down other people. If the two of them were to get together, one of them had to give up on themselves.

Considering Heather's self-centered personality, how could she ever give up on her lifestyle for Matthias? He was the only one who had been trying to change himself to fit with her.

This was an unfair trade, and it was an investment without any return. Heather couldn't bear to see him making countless sacrifices just for her even though he couldn't be himself.

Similarly, although Heather wasn't very experienced in love, she understood one thing clearly—the upper hand always belonged to the side who contributed the most.

The scale was heavily tilted toward Matthias' end of their relationship; he was endlessly putting weight onto his tray, making it heavier and heavier. However, Heather couldn't afford for him to do that.

If a disagreement ever broke out between the two of them and they were no longer bound by love, Heather wouldn't know how to carry on. She liked to take control of everything, yet the unpredictability of love made her lose her power to make decisions on her own will. This feeling was absolutely terrifying to her.

Meanwhile, Matthias seemed to have felt Heather's gaze on him. He looked up from the sofa in her direction, completely catching her off-guard.

The unnatural look on Heather's face couldn't reach Matthias since he was quite a distance away. However, the way the corners of his lips lifted was so bright and eye-catching.

As such, the woman quickly whirled around and left. She didn't want to see the radiant smile on his face, for she didn't think she could respond to that. If only she could experience love once in her life without any reservations like a moth to a flame—how great would that be?!

At that moment, she hated her rationality more than anything. For her to still act according to her rational self... Did it mean she wasn't truly in love? The answer to that was evident. Since Heather was unable to trick herself, she couldn't blindly accept Matthias' feelings either.

The moment she realized the truth about their relationship, she could no longer accept Matthias as if nothing had happened. She was unsure if things would actually change once the obstacles between them were to clear up.

In short, Heather didn't dare to bet with her own feelings. If she were to put everything on the line and gain something completely out of her expectation in return, she would fall apart for sure. Besides, it wouldn't be fair for Matthias either.

To that, Heather's rationality once again reminded her to stay away from Matthias and to reject his every pursuit. Only when everything had been settled would she be clear of how she felt inside; perhaps they'd have a good ending together by then.

Downstairs, the door was wide open and winds of cold blew freely into the living room. Matthias' heart was warm, so he couldn't feel the chill at all. Right now, he was only less than a hundred steps away from Heather. For a moment, he could even forget all the problematic matters that were going on in the Locke Group—he was willingly running around here in Heather's villa like an errand boy.

If it were for a loved one, Matthias was happy to do anything at all, and he even set his phone on airplane mode. After putting behind the troubles of the outside world, he planned to stay quietly by Heather's side today.

The way Heather had sneaked a peek at him outside of her bedroom earlier clearly meant that her heart was deeply swayed. Matthias found himself constantly comforting himself with the idea that victory was nearby.

In a business setting, a businessman wouldn't rest until the moment a deal was sealed; sometimes, it was the same for love. Matthias had perseverance when it came to every business transaction, so he was no different in the face of love.

Moreover, he almost gave up on her the last time which made them start all over again from zero. Thus, he decided that he wouldn't make the same mistake twice. Matthias had a feeling that the heavens were watching them—he was painstakingly given a second chance, so how could he let it pass so easily?

When he took a look at the time, he realized that it'd probably take a few more minutes for his people to arrive. Matthias wanted to prove that his love for Heather had infiltrated into every single part of his daily life.

To love was to never back away, and their love story was just about to begin. A triumphant smile tugged on Matthias' lips as those thoughts filled his mind. As he breathed in the same air as her, he could almost feel Heather's heart beating alongside his.

However, little did Matthias know that the Locke Group was in total chaos at this very moment. A mysterious figure had just landed out of nowhere, bringing turmoil to the company. The company's higher-ups were in total distress due to Matthias' absence, but unfortunately, no one could find him anywhere.

Standing before Love Chapter 731

At the Locke Group, the higher-ups of the company gathered in a cramped room while a benevolent and kind elderly man was seated right in its center. The seniors studied the elder warily, their eyes filled with fear and respect. The elder's every move seemed to have the power to cause them anxiety.

Not only that, the old man's amiable tone of speech was overwhelming in their ears; the more he acted this way, the more the higher-ups' hands were tied.

"Is Matthias not present in the company today?" asked the old man pleasantly.

The higher-ups were precisely most afraid of this question. They had hoped to leave the room unscathed, but it seemed like it was all merely wishful thinking—naturally, the sharp old man wouldn't leave out such an important detail.

He took in the senior management's reaction one by one and his expression shifted slightly. He didn't need their answer to know that Matthias wasn't at the company at the moment.

However, the old man didn't seem upset; his eyes glazed over them coldly and an unreadable smile hung on his lips. Indeed, in the world of business, the elderly weren't often as kind as they seemed. They could easily become another person in the blink of an eye.

The higher-ups noticed the discontentment of the old man's face, so they all looked at him with utmost sincerity and respect in hopes of making him feel more at ease. However, the old man did not loosen up. Right now, there was even an added sense of sharpness in his gaze. The crowd didn't know how to appease him and the entire room was in hushed pandemonium, for nobody was willing to step up.

Outside the closed doors, staff members were frantically dialling Matthias' phone non-stop, but sadly, no one was picking up. Matthias currently had his full attention on decorating Heather's villa with his phone set to airplane mode, so it effectively blocked out all manner of cellular contact.

After hours of hard work, Matthias was finally done with his job as Heather's interior designer before he remembered to switch off the function on his phone. Before he could leave the villa, his phone exploded with never-ending messages as alerts blasted his speakers continuously. All sorts of notifications spammed his screen and he felt like his head would explode soon.

As such, he didn't have the chance to bid Heather farewell before he left; with his phone acting this way the moment he stepped outside, his mood hit rock bottom in an instant.

However, when he realized the content of the messages, he couldn't even process his anger as he rushed to his car immediately. He had to return to the Locke Group at once. What he just learned had surprised him completely—he didn't think the head of the Locke Family would visit Bradford City in person. The old man wasn't in good health; in addition to coming all this way to the city, Matthias didn't know how he was able to arrive safely.

Nonetheless, Matthias didn't have the time to worry about Chester's health since he was in a much more difficult situation himself. He recalled how strict the old man usually was on him, and he knew that he was in deep trouble this time.

He sped off as fast as he could and arrived in Bradford when it was nearly post office hours. He went up to the presidential office with his heart restless and uneasy. Just as he was about to push open the door, he hesitated. He noticed that even the new secretary didn't look so good as she stood outside.

Chester was definitely in the office, and Matthias didn't know what to say once he opened the door. As he thought of the man's stern face, he felt apprehensive about going inside.

Things were bound to get complicated the next moment, and Matthias' mouth twitched as his face was heavy with foreboding. He knew that he would have to face it sooner or later if it was meant to be, for running away wouldn't do him any good.

After swallowing his restlessness and doubt, he pushed open the door and entered the office. Then, he locked eyes with Chester without showing any form of surprise. His gaze was calm and cold, whereas Chester's was emotionless. The two exchanged hard looks in silence, and no one was willing to break it off.

Eventually, Matthias decided to compromise. He lowered his head and slowly went up to the elderly. He knew that the old man was going to interrogate him regarding his absence, and he was quietly thinking up the best countermeasure to save himself.

Meanwhile, Chester's eyes were filled with disappointment for Matthias; the blatant look in his eyes made the latter unsure of how he should explain himself. Matthias suddenly lost the power to take control of the situation, and he could only wait for Chester to pass his judgement.

However, Chester simply remained silent and unfazed. As a result, Matthias didn't know how to start, and the two maintained their stand in the meantime. He knew what the older man was expecting, but he couldn't bring himself to admit his faults.

Meanwhile, Chester felt greatly defeated by Matthias' current behavior, for he didn't think the man would be unwilling to apologize even in front of him.

Naturally, Chester was curious as to why Matthias was so bold all of a sudden.

The two kept quiet in the office, and none of them was planning to back down as they played the staring game. Chester waited patiently for Matthias to give in. The Locke Group wasn't fully in Matthias' hands yet, and he was certain that the young man was aware of this.

"Is there a reason you're here for me, Sir?" Matthias asked nonchalantly. After the long silence, his first words were of such indifference.

At that moment, Chester was even more disappointed when he heard those words—how could Matthias act like this in front of him? The way he had addressed Chester also sent a pang to the latter's heart.

"Shouldn't you give me an explanation for not being in the office at a time like this, Matthias?" Chester lost his temper all of a sudden. Since Matthias refused to give him a sincere apology, he didn't feel the need to be polite.

Matthias looked at Chester calmly, completely unbothered. He didn't have anything to say at this point. So what if he knew how much power the old man had over this company? After all, he was already planning to get to the bottom of the Locke Group's forces from the beginning.

"Sir, where would our company be if I don't make time to meet our clients?" Matthias said casually. He remembered how Chester used to teach him—one shouldn't hold back when it was time to fight.

Chester's sudden visit this time was probably to investigate Matthias' act of disloyalty. Indeed, Matthias was none other than an unpredictable time bomb in the Locke Group, so he already knew that this day would come sooner or later.

Since he had thought about how he would deal with this situation, he was now handling it in a steady manner; it was as though he had been practicing it over and over again in his head. In the end, those words simply rolled off his tongue smoothly without a second thought.

"Have the Lockes ever wronged you, Matthias?" Chester questioned him angrily.

Matthias chuckled as he said, "Have I ever wronged the Lockes, Sir?" He enjoyed seeing Chester being angry, for it made him feel like the head of the family was just a normal human being.

As the old man stared straight at Matthias, he couldn't see even the slightest guilt in his eyes. He knew that Matthias had long since turned against him, so he could only take away his top position in the company before he could bring any damage that was beyond repairable.

"Matthias, I'm dismissing you as the Locke Group's president as of today," said Chester bluntly. He had made the tough decision in just a split second.

Matthias didn't look too surprised, for he felt like Chester was simply putting on a show in front of him. As he maintained his unconcerned demeanor, he then said, "I'm afraid you can't dismiss me as you wish, Sir. There is a list of procedures to go through before it can be decided."

Chester felt powerless against the wicked smile on Matthias' face, so he stared unblinkingly at Matthias; it was as if by doing that, the latter could feel remorse.

Matthias didn't budge despite that, and his face was still stiff and cold. After all, he was dubbed 'The Smiling Tiger' in the business world. Matthias' smug grin made Chester descend into greater panic, and the latter thought that perhaps he had really made a mistake all those years ago.

"I was the one who gave you everything, Matthias." In the end, Chester decided to use the empathy card.

However, the younger man took a seat in front of the desk before he said, "You were also the one who took everything away from me, Sir." The Lockes had stripped Matthias of his emotions, making him a heartless money-making machine.

"Are you really not grateful for the past, Matthias?" Chester asked in resignation. From the looks of it, Matthias was determined to ruin it all.

"You've already made it clear from what you said just now, Sir. None of you have ever put your trust in me, and I'm nothing more than a pawn that can be replaced at any time." Chester's earlier words had put a stab in his heart, and it was too late for him to turn it around with nostalgia.

“Why can’t you understand, Matthias? That was just my anger talking.” Chester was still trying to turn the tables. He didn’t want to go too far, for he knew that Matthias wouldn’t be able to handle the pain.

“Stop putting on that pitiful face, Sir. We know each other too well, and the empathy card isn’t going to work on either of us.” Matthias could see through his bluff from the beginning; Chester treated the former with great care and concern on the surface with the sole purpose of gaining better control over him.

There were roles to be played in the Locke Family, be it good or bad. Chester had taken all of these into account, and he always had Matthias wrapped around his finger.

“Matthias, I’ve groomed you for years and I even gave you the highest position in the Locke Group. Why are you still unsatisfied?” Chester asked him bitterly. He thought that Matthias wouldn’t show his hand in such an outright manner, but he was wrong—this was the worst case scenario.

“Do you think I wanted any of this?” Matthias pointed at himself as he argued. “Have you ever asked for my opinion? Who am I to all of you? Is it a must for me to endure everything just because I’m a direct descendant of the Lockes? I’m nothing but an illegitimate child; I’m a disgrace to all of you. You had no choice but to give me this. Not only that, I had to take it at the expense of my mother’s life, my first love, and even my humanity!” Matthias blurted it all out in one breath. He felt relieved, for he had been wanting to say these words to Chester for a long time.

Chester stared at Matthias in astonishment, not expecting this man to have felt so wronged all this while. It appeared that money and power were not all that mattered to some people; stubborn people like Matthias who would cling onto the past existed too.

“You’ve never told me about these.” Chester didn’t know what to say. Right now, Matthias seemed so unfamiliar and different as he stood in front of him.

“How was I supposed to tell you? I’m just a nobody to you; do I have the right to say anything?” Matthias let out a cold scoff. This old man was none other than the biggest culprit—he was the one who made Matthias grovel at his feet for years.

Chester shook his head in dismay. Little did he expect to arrive at such an ending after years of painstaking effort. At the end of the day, Matthias was right—it was them who had robbed him of everything he had.

“I’m sorry. If you need to hold a grudge, just hate me alone. Don’t take it out on the Locke Group.” Chester didn’t want to argue anymore, so he bit back his pride and apologized for the first time.

However, Matthias didn’t accept his apology as it wasn’t what he was looking for. “I’m sorry, Sir. Your apology means nothing to me. What I want is far more than that. I want you to see the Locke Group crumble with your own eyes, and I want you to pay for all the crimes that you’ve done. Be prepared to live in regret for the rest of your life!”

Chester stared at Matthias in terror. So this is what he’s been secretly plotting all this while... The old man had truly underestimated him.

Even though Matthias was still one step away from reaching his goal, he could already see it happening—the Locke Group’s downfall was such a beautiful and rewarding sight to picture.

Chester knew for a fact that the ending was already set in stone. Hence, he lowered his head which was once held high with pride. For the past few years, he had put too much trust in Matthias. In the end, he lost everything to this very same man.

Back then, he probably shouldn’t have agreed to Matthias’ plan of moving all of the Locke Group’s forces to Bradford City—heck, he shouldn’t have trusted Matthias fully. What a cruel punishment it was for him to watch the Locke Group go under in his remaining years. At last, Chester had truly known defeat.