

## The Kiss 1171

### Chapter 1171

Byran, looking quite sad, answered. "Chase didn't let you pick up the phone just now, and I was really worried, so I snuck out when my brother wasn't looking to find you. I didn't bring any money, and my phone is about to die... Ida, can you come pick me up?"

Ida suddenly felt irritated. "I'm not picking you up; go home yourself!"

"I'm scared to go home; my brother is in a bad mood today, and he will definitely give me a hard time if I go back! And I don't have any money to take a

cab."

Ida was about to lose her temper. "Where are you now? I'll send someone to find you and give you some cash, so you can find a place to stay and head home tomorrow morning!"

Byran insisted. "I don't want anyone else to pick me up! I want you to do it! If you don't come, I'd rather freeze to death here!"

Ida felt helpless. "Then freeze there!"

After saying that, she hung up the phone.

She felt annoyed. How did she get stuck with a pain in the neck like Byran?!

Byran was warming up in the underground passage of Crescent Society. The weather had been really cold lately, and he forgot to wear his jacket when he ran out of the house, so he was shivering from the cold.

After hearing the busy tone from the phone, Byran got angry, but he redialed anyway. Unfortunately, his phone died before the call connected.

He was totally speechless.

No one was going to care about him now.

He put his phone back in his pocket and began rubbing his arms and hopping around to keep warm.

There was a guy doing a live stream while playing the guitar and singing up ahead. He walked over to listen to the music, hoping to warm up a bit.

He found a clean spot to sit down next to the singer. He hugged his arms as tears streamed down his face.

He didn't know why he was crying; maybe the song was just too beautiful.

The love song was very melancholic, and it really hit him hard.

In his eighteen years of life, Byran had never felt this humiliated, except maybe in front of his brother.

It was that woman, Ida, who showed interest in him first, and now she was ignoring him. How infuriating!

But he just couldn't stop himself from missing her. She was always cold to him, never giving him a chance. He really wanted to see her or at least hear her voice.

What a wuss!

The more Byran thought about it, the more upset and wronged he felt. He lifted his arm to wipe away his tears, trying to keep a straight face to stop the tears from flowing.

He thought no one would see him like this, but little did he know, he was right in the live stream camera angle of the guitar-playing singer. His crying face was captured clearly, and it even brought a lot of traffic to the live stream, making it trend.

In the comment section of the live stream, everyone was no longer paying attention to what song the singer was playing. All their focus was on the handsome young guy crying in the background.

"That young man looks so heartbroken! Did he just go through a breakup?"

"How could such a good-looking guy experience a breakup?"

"Come here, come to me. Let me give you a hug! Stop crying, okay?"

"He's totally my type! Wonder which girl made him this upset?"

Chapter 1172

The singer noticed the sudden change in the comments on his live stream. He stopped singing, turned around, and looked at the young boy crying on the live feed. He put down his guitar, walked over, and asked, "Hey kiddo, what's up?"

Byran didn't want anyone to see him cry. He wiped his eyes with his arm and said, "I'm fine! Just waiting for someone."

The singer was a bit puzzled. "Why would waiting for someone make you cry? Did the person you're waiting for stand you up?"

After hearing this, Byran got annoyed. "What's it to you? Scram! Mind your own business!"

The singer had meant well but ended up being barked at. However, he didn't take it to heart since the boy seemed quite young. He looked almost like a

runaway.

"If you've got nowhere to go, how about you crash at my place for the night? My live stream is almost over."

Byran was freezing, and the offer made him waver. "Where do you live?"

The singer chuckled. "Just close by! Wait for me to pack up, and I'll take you there."

Byran didn't refuse and got up to help him pack.

He thought that anywhere would be warmer than being outside, right? If he had to spend the night on the streets, he'd probably freeze to death!

The singer wrapped up his live stream, packed his stuff, picked up his guitar, turned around, and smiled. "Come with

Byran nodded and followed him towards the underpass. He was freezing and beginning to feel hungry.

"Where are you from, kid?" The singer asked as they walked.

"I'm from Greenhaven." Byran replied truthfully.

"Did you

have a fight with your family and run away?"

"Something like that."

The singer shook his head with a smile. "You young folks don't know how lucky you are. You know, having a family to look after you is something we can only envy. Let off some steam tonight and go back home in the morning."

Byran frowned. "You don't have a family?"

The singer gave a bitter smile. "I do; but they've never looked after me."

Byran was puzzled. "Why not?"

The singer didn't elaborate, and he just pointed at an alley ahead. "My place is just up there; turn left, and we're there!"

-Byran, chilled to the bone, quickened his pace. But before he could enter the alley, a white sports car zoomed up and stopped them.

The speeding car gave Byran and the singer quite a scare.

Byran was already in a bad mood, and this only made him angrier.

"It's me!" Ida got out of the car as she adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses.

Byran was taken aback, but then quickly scowled. "What are you doing here? I thought you said you didn't care?"

Ida didn't answer his question; instead, he eyed the singer warily. "Who is he? Where are you going with him?"

Byran snapped. "He's a good Samaritan who wants to help me. I'm going to stay at his place for the night!"

Ida gave him a cold look. "Do you even know him? And you're just going to go off with a stranger? Get in the car!"

Although Byran was tempted to get in the car, he continued to glare at Ida. "I thought you didn't care? Why are you telling me to get in the car now?"

Ida was running out of patience. "I'm giving you three seconds. If you don't get in, I'm leaving!"

Byran huffed. He turned to the baffled singer and asked, "What's your live stream account name?"

The singer snapped back to reality. "My account name is 'Lonely Singer.'"

Chapter 1173

"Okay, got it! I'll drop by your live stream when I have the time."

With that, Bryan waved nonchalantly to the singer before hopping into Ida's passenger seat.

Ida gave the singer a glance before getting into the car. She buckled up and set off.

On the road.

Byran, sitting in the passenger seat, tilted his head arrogantly and sneered. "Such a hypocritical woman! You said you didn't care about me, yet here you are! Just admit you like me; I won't laugh at you."

Ida was dumbfounded.

This kid was hopeless!

She didn't want to come in the first place, but after Chase saw that guitar-playing singer's live stream and said that Byran was crying in the underpass, she had no choice but to venture out in the middle of the night.

If anything happened to Byran and the Howard family held her responsible, she'd be in big trouble.

Fortunately, her place wasn't far from her company, and Byran was in the underpass near the office. It only took about ten minutes to drive there.

"Hey! Ida, how did you know I was here?" Byran asked.

Ida simply focused on driving and ignored him.

Not getting an answer, Bryan began to speculate. "Did you send people all over the place to look for me, even asking the authorities for satellite positioning?"

Ida smiled. "No, I didn't have time for that."

Byran snorted. "So you won't admit you were worried? Then how did you find me?"

"Because you were trending."

Byran was shocked. "What? You're saying I was trending? I didn't do anything; how could I be trending? Don't lie to me!"

Knowing that his phone was out of battery, Ida handed him hers. "If you don't believe me, see for yourself!"

Byran looked confused as he took Ida's phone and looked at it. His face instantly turned beet red.

"This... this... Who posted this?"

"Your behavior on the live stream was recorded by netizens and posted. You might be going viral; the whole internet is trying to figure out who you are."

-Byran's face darkened. Who would want to become famous this way?

Will my brother see it?" He was mostly worried about that.

"Even if your brother doesn't see it, his subordinates will tell him if they do."

Byran fell silent.

This was bad. If his brother saw it, he would scold him for embarrassing himself.

"Ida, quickly get someone to take down this video from the entire internet!"

Ida drove into the residential area. "Do you know how much it costs to take down a video? Why should I help you with this?"

"I'll pay you back! Just hurry up and get someone to delete those videos!"

Ida didn't respond to him. After driving into the underground garage, she unbuckled her seat belt and got out of the car.

Byran quickly unbuckled his seat belt and followed her. "Ida, answer me! Will you help me or not?"

Ida turned her head to look at him. "Didn't you join a hacker alliance? Can't you handle such a simple thing yourself? Do you still need to spend money?"

#### Chapter 1174

Byran himself felt a bit awkward when talking about his amateur hacker alliance. He scratched his head. "Our alliance is mainly made up of high school students, and I'm still learning a lot of the techniques. If only I had that much ability. Ida, can you give me a hand?"

Ida rubbed her temples. She was really at a loss as to how she ended up dealing with a high school kid.

By the time Theo got home, it was late at night, and almost everyone was asleep, except for a few night-shift servants.

A maid approached and took Theo's coat. Knowing that he had just returned from abroad and might be jet-lagged, she asked, "Mr. Blanchet, have you eaten? Can I prepare something for you?"

Theo looked absolutely beat. He waved his hand and wordlessly went upstairs.

After entering his room, the familiar scent made his mood even worse.

The air was still filled with the faint fragrance of her usual shampoo, indicating that she had taken a shower and blow-dried her hair in this room before she left this morning.

Did she have time to take a shower before leaving? Was all this part of her plan?

Just as he was about to head to the bathroom to take a shower and cool down, he suddenly heard some movement from the bed.

The figure on the bed turned over, seeming to be in a deep sleep, and if he listened closely, he could hear faint breathing.

Theo abruptly stopped, and his eyes fixated on the figure on the bed.

The figure was curled up, hugging a pillow, and wearing the same pajamas that Ellinor often wore.

Was it her? Had she come back?

Forgetting to switch on the light, Theo quickly walked over to the bed and whispered. "Ellinor?"

The person on the bed seemed to hear him, moved a bit, and let out a sleepy sound. "Hmm?"

Theo immediately scooped her up from the bed. "You crazy girl! Do you even know to come back?"

He held her tightly, fearing she would run away again.

So she had taken another shower, and that was why her scent was still in the room.

He couldn't resist that scent.

However, maybe because he was holding her too tightly, the woman in his arms woke up due to lack of breath. "Theo? What are you doing?"

Theo immediately realized something was wrong. He quickly pushed her away and turned on the bedside lamp,

Under the light, Sophia's face appeared before his eyes.

Theo's eyes darkened. He stood up and asked. "Why are you sleeping here?"

Sophia rubbed her eyes, not seeming to think she had done anything wrong. "Your granny initially let me sleep in Veronica's room, but Veronica kept pushing me in her sleep, so I had no choice but to come sleep in this room."

"Get out." Theo's tone was icy. "You can sleep in any room, but not here!"

Sophia shrugged, looking somewhat discontented. "I don't get it; Ellinor's not home, and I'm not sharing a bed with you, so why can't I spend the night here?"

Theo, I recently found a very accurate fortune teller who strongly advised me not to spend the night in someone else's guest room.

If Ellinor was home today, I think she wouldn't mind me spending the night in this bed."

## Chapter 1175

Theo was frowning, and his face was as cold as ice. "She might not mind, but I do. Get off the bed and get out, now!"

Sophia had a deep frown, too. She reluctantly got out of bed, but her nightgown was a bit too small and clung tightly to her full figure.

The nightgown belonged to Ellinor, it was quite loose on her. But for Sophia, who was half-foreign, it was quite small and rather enticing.

Theo's face was dark as he squinted his eyes and coldly asked. "Why are you wearing her clothes?"

Sophia helplessly shrugged while spreading her hands out. "Because my luggage hasn't arrived yet! Have you forgotten? I came here in a rush and didn't have time to pack. I wanted to borrow something from Veronica, but she doesn't seem to like me much, so she wouldn't lend me anything. So I had to scrounge something up from your closet."

Not only had she worn Ellinor's clothes, but she had also taken a shower in this room. Because Veronica wouldn't let her shower in her room.

Ellinor's nightgown was already small for Sophia, and as she spoke, the nightgown slid up a bit, revealing even more enticing parts.

But Theo didn't seem to care. He said coldly. "Take it off."

Sophia was taken aback, and then she laughed. "You sure you want me to take it off right now?"

After saying that, she was about to take off the nightgown. She wasn't wearing anything underneath.

Theo turned around and faced the balcony. "Go get your own clothes and wear them. Return hers!"

Sophia thought he was being ridiculous and went to change.

Theo went out to the balcony and began enjoying the cool breeze. The smell in the room hadn't changed, but it made him uncomfortable. He frowned and lit a cigarette.

Soon, he heard someone walking towards him from behind.

Theo exhaled a puff of smoke and didn't turn around because he knew it was her.

Sophia had changed into her own clothes and came to talk to Theo.

She frowned, pretending to be unhappy. "Theo, we've been good friends for so many years! Do you still need to avoid me? It really hurts."

Theo glanced at her, his tone cold. "No matter how familiar we are, you're still a woman!"

Sophia raised an eyebrow. "Oh, so I'm still a woman in your eyes? After all these years, I thought you saw me as a man."

Theo took a drag. "I'm with Ellinor now; I'm not the old me anymore. I need to maintain a distance from my female friends."

Sophia laughed. "Your Ellinor dumped you today! Whether you keep your distance from the opposite sex or not doesn't matter. She won't see it anyway."

Theo's face darkened instantly, although he thought she was right.

What was the use of keeping his distance from other women now? Did Ellinor even care?

Theo, you just went out to find Ellinor, didn't you? Looks like you came back without finding her." Sophia continued.

Theo silently smoked, not wanting to answer.

Theo, I have a question for you. If you really can't find Ellinor this time, what will you Theo's eyes became deep. "That's impossible! Even if she turns to ashes, I'll find her!"

do?"

Chapter 1176

Sophia leaned on the balcony rail, fluttering her eyelashes playfully. "Just hypothetically speaking, if you never find her, would you consider settling with

another woman?"

Theo responded. "There's no such "if."

Sophia pouted. "You're such a bore! You can't even entertain a hypothetical?"

Theo gave her a stern look. "What exactly are you getting at?"

Sophia smiled coyly. "I'm just saying... if you never do find Ellinor, I could share your life with you. After all, we've been married before overseas. We're not strangers to each other."

Yes, they had indeed been married overseas.

Back when Theo's grandfather was pressuring him to get married and threatening not to have surgery unless Theo tied the knot, he had found a faux wife to put his grandfather at ease.

Sophia was his chosen one.

They had been good friends for many years, understood each other well, and had minimal conflicts, so it was convenient to ask her for this favor.

After they got married overseas, he showed the marriage certificate to his grandfather.

Theo's grandfather was no fool. Worried that his grandson might quietly divorce after his surgery, he insisted that a proper engagement and wedding ceremony be held in their home country, in front of everyone. Not a single ceremony could be skipped!

Theo, left with no other choice, agreed to his grandfather's terms.

However, on the day of the scheduled engagement ceremony, Sophia's flight was forced to turn back due to bad weather, so she couldn't make it to the ceremony on time.

On that day, Theo met Ellinor, who unexpectedly kissed him, and he brought her to complete the ceremony.

Afterwards, his contact with Sophia gradually decreased, and he slowly forgot about their overseas marriage.

Recently, he and Ellinor got back together and planned to spend the rest of their lives together, which naturally required marriage.



However, if he were to apply for a marriage license, the authorities would find out about his previous overseas marriage. He was worried that Ellinor would get angry if she found out, so he wanted to get a divorce from Sophia first and then explain the situation to her.

But Sophia was not willing to cooperate with the divorce. She demanded compensation.

She claimed that he turned her, a single woman, into a divorcee, which affected her greatly and caused a huge loss for her.

He knew this had indeed affected Sophia and agreed to her compensation request.

But what Sophia desired was not money. She demanded that he accompany her in M State for a month, after which she would cooperate with the divorce process.

He happened to have a new project in M state that needed his personal supervision, so he agreed to her terms.

Chapter 1177

Theo said coldly. "Do I look like I'm in the mood for jokes?"

Sophia shrugged. "Why not? Ellinor may be having a blast somewhere right now. Why the long face?"

Theo frowned. "Enough! It's late. Go find a room to sleep in!"

Sophia shook her head. "You won't let me crash here, and your sister won't let me in her room, so where else can I go? Considering my luck, there's no way I'm sleeping in your guestroom!"

Disgust flashed in Theo's eyes. "Only you would believe in that fortune-telling crap!"

"Yes! I do believe in it! That's why I'm not going to the guestroom! I bet you'll be up all night missing Ellinor, so how about you lend me this room? I'll find a hotel tomorrow!"

"Nope."

Sophia glared at him. "Humph! Stingy much? Ellinor wouldn't care if another woman slept in your bed! She dumped you anyway!"

Theo's face had turned quite ugly. He had always given her some respect because they'd been friends for years, and she once did him a huge favor.

But now his face was as black as thunder.

"If you don't leave, don't blame me for kicking you out!"

Sophia shrugged. "Theo, don't try to scare me! I know you! You wouldn't do that to me! But I'm done messing with you for now. I'll just go watch TV on your couch all night! Bye!"

With that, Sophia turned and strutted out.

Theo didn't stop her, nor did he give her a second glance. He looked up at the sky, wondering where Ellinor was and what she was doing

Worrying about her safety was more important than being angry at her now.

Just as Sophia left the room, she ran into Veronica, who was looking for someone.

After seeing Sophia come out of her brother's room, Veronica immediately got upset and placed her hands on her hips. "Hey! What were you doing sneaking into my brother's room in the middle of the night? You're up to no good! The issues between my brother and Ellinor are definitely your fault!"

Sophia didn't care. "Veronica, watch your mouth! I wanted to sleep in your room, but you've dumped me on the floor several times, so I had to leave! I've already said I can't sleep in the guestroom, so I had to crash in Theo's room!"

Veronica didn't buy it. "Can't sleep in the guestroom? I think that's just your excuse! You shameless woman, you just wanted an excuse to sleep in my brother's room! Your excuse is not smart at all! You're leaving our house tomorrow! You're not welcome!"

Sophia retorted. "Whether I stay or not is not up to you! It's up to your brother! And your grandmother seems to like me! She even asked you to clear your room for me, don't you remember? It's just that you didn't cooperate, didn't want to move out, and insisted on squeezing into the same room with me! If I tell your grandmother about this, she will definitely ask you to move out and let me stay in your room. Do you believe me or not?"

Veronica was furious; she couldn't understand why her grandmother wanted to keep this woman she disliked at home. Her brother and Ellinor were already facing a relationship crisis, so why added fuel to the fire?

"I don't believe you! Who knows what shameless tactics you used to deceive my grandmother? My grandmother loves me the most, and as long as I say you bullied me, she will immediately kick you out. Do you believe me or not?"

Sophia chuckled provocatively. "Haha! I really don't believe you! I suggest you go tell your grandmother that I bullied you and see if she believes you!"

Veronica was about to explode. "Ah! Where did you come from, you disgusting woman?! How dare you be so arrogant in front of me?!"

Chapter 1178

"Cut it out!"

The bedroom door swung open, and Theo's irritable voice rang out.

Veronica was startled by her brother's commanding tone. And then it hit her. She blurted out, "Wait, you're back? You... you were in the room too? What on earth were you doing with her while Ellinor wasn't home?"

Theo didn't feel the need to explain himself. "It's late, Veronica. Go to your own room and sleep." He retorted,

"No wonder Ellinor ran away. You're really not helping, bro!" Veronica muttered, shooting Sophia a dirty look before storming off.

Sophia merely shrugged and spread her hands. "See that, Theo? That's how she treats me! That's why I came to your room."

Theo was stone-faced. "You'll have to make do for the night. I'll arrange a hotel for you tomorrow. You won't have to see her anymore."

"Fair enough." Sophia replied nonchalantly and went downstairs to watch TV.

Theo didn't care what Sophia did. He was simply annoyed by Veronica's shouting and had come out to put a stop to it.

He returned to his room and picked up an incoming call from Collin.

Expecting news, he answered promptly.

"Mr. Blanchet, we've checked all the public transport. There's still no sign of Ellinor. We've got people watching the highways too, but there aren't any leads. She's likely still in Greenhaven."

The pit in Theo's stomach sank further. "Keep looking. If she's in Greenhaven, I want you to turn the place upside down until you find her."

"Understood, Mr. Blanchet.

Six months later.

The Blanchet Corporation's new building was complete and had been furnished for some time now.

In three days, all departments of the Blanchet Corporation were set to move into the new office building. A grand ribbon-cutting ceremony was planned, with major media outlets covering it.

However, things weren't going smoothly.

There was an unwritten rule in Greenhaven's architectural scene. The architect must attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony of a completed building. Otherwise, it was believed to bring bad luck to the occupants and even affect the building's safety.

While this was just a rumor, architects generally didn't mind attending the ribbon-cutting of buildings they had designed. It was a proud moment, after all. Over time, it became an accepted practice. If an architect didn't show up, it was considered disrespectful to the client or even a curse.

Especially for large corporations. Their towering buildings demanded high safety standards.

Shareholders cared about this. Whether they believed the rumor or not, who wouldn't want good luck?

Chapter 1179

The new office building of the Blanchet Corporation was contracted for design and construction by the Crescent Society. However, Crescent Society announced that their designer, Moon, had some stuff going on and couldn't attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony. They suggested their president represent Moon instead.

This news got the shareholders of the Blanchet Corporation all riled up. They didn't buy the idea of the president subbing in for the designer, thinking that Crescent Society's arrangement was bringing bad juju to their new office building.

Although Theo didn't buy into these rumors, being the big cheese of the company, he couldn't ignore his shareholders' opinions.

So he personally made a call to the big gun of the Crescent Society, Ida, and dropped the bombshell that if the designer, Moon, didn't show up for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, they wouldn't cough up the final payment.

The final payment was no chicken feed. It could even affect the survival of the Crescent Society.

Ida was pretty peeved at this. "Mr. Blanchet, don't you think you're stepping over the line here? How could you use the final payment as a bargaining chip?"

Theo retorted coolly. "Who's really overstepping here? You know full well what it means for the designer not to attend and how the media will spin the ribbon-cutting ceremony. If you guys still want to do business in Greenhaven, you'd better make sure Moon shows up."

On the other end of the phone, Ida adjusted her glasses. "I thought you didn't believe in rumors. I didn't expect you to be as brainless as those people, who care so much about these trivial things."

Theo snapped back. "Whether I care or not isn't the point. It's about your attitude towards your clients! If you guys keep this up, I doubt any local companies will hire you for their projects in the future."

Ida was left speechless, and the line went dead soon after.

Ida knew they hadn't intentionally screwed over the Blanchet Corporation. It was just that Moon was actually Ellinor. For the past six months, she had been avoiding Theo, so how could she possibly attend the Blanchet Corporation's ribbon-cutting ceremony?

Wouldn't that be like courting disaster by bumping into Theo?

Ida and Chase had thought about having someone impersonate Moon at the ceremony since no pictures of Moon were circulating, meaning no one knew what Moon actually looked like.

Theo had met Moon at their company once, but Moon had been wearing a mask, so he hadn't seen her real face.

What they were worried about was that Theo, with his extensive business experience and sharp wits, had shown curiosity about designer Moon. If he had a few words with the faux designer at the ceremony, he might smell a rat.

That could complicate things even more.

What should they do now? They couldn't actually have Ellinor show up, could they?

Theo stepped out of the Blanchet Corporation building, ready to attend an important business banquet.

Once he got into the car, he habitually rubbed his forehead, showing signs of fatigue. His eyes were complicated and filled with worry.

For the past six months, Ellinor seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. No one had seen her, and there were no records of her leaving the country or making any purchases. She was MIA.

He had suspected that Ida and Chase of the Crescent Society were hiding her since they were close and had been friends for many years. Even if Ellinor didn't need him anymore, she wouldn't just ditch her friends like that, right?

So for the past six months, he had been keeping tabs on Ida and Chase's activities but didn't find any fishy behavior or anything about her whereabouts.

Chapter 1180

Chase and Ida had people out scouring everywhere for Ellinor, but they found a big fat nothing.

Where in the world was she hiding?

"Mr. Blanchet, we're here."

Theo snapped back to reality as he peered out the window. They'd arrived at the hotel where the business banquet was being held.

He murmured an acknowledgment, then hopped out of the car.

With a cool swagger, he stepped into the banquet hall.

A curvaceous woman dolled up in a fancy dress was making a beeline for him.

Sophia, with a flirty smile, cooed. "Theo, what took you so long? We've been waiting for ages!"

Theo maintained his personal bubble, responding indifferently. "It's not like this is some big-deal event; there's no need for me to rush."

"But it is a big-deal event, Theo." Sophia retorted. "It's a business banquet! Everyone's here to exchange the latest news and resources, both domestic and international. You're a businessman; how can you have no interest in this?"

The truth was that Theo was entirely uninterested. He already had access to the most cutting-edge global news and resources, so he didn't need to waste time at such a gathering.

But Jonah and the others had been badgering him over the phone to show up. He'd been constantly blowing off their invites, and it wouldn't be cool to keep ducking them.

The other parties Jonah invited him to were way too rowdy. This business banquet was comparatively chill, which was why he agreed to come.

Sophia giggled. "Alright, alright. If you don't feel like mingling, let's go find Mr. Wyton and Mr. Larios. They're on the terrace!"

Theo gave a nod and trailed after her.

As Theo followed Sophia upstairs, he crossed paths with Balfour coming downstairs. The tension was thick as they locked eyes, but they brushed past each other without a word.

Once upon a time, due to the feud between the Blanchet and Howard families, even if they weren't on good terms, they'd still exchange pleasantries.

But ever since the Ellinor incident, the fact that Balfour hadn't taken a shot at Theo was him showing restraint. Exchange pleasantries? Fat chance!

Six months ago, after a fight over the Ellinor matter, they cut all ties.

Theo couldn't be bothered with Balfour, so he headed to the terrace.

Upon seeing Theo, Jonah immediately rose with a drink in hand and slung an arm over Theo's shoulder as he began making jokes. "Theo, you're a rare sight these days! You planning on becoming a monk or something?"

Theo shot him a cold glare and shoved him away impatiently. "Buzz off!"

Jonah stumbled away, feigning innocence, and darted over to Kemp. "Did you see that? I was just showing some concern, and he tells me to buzz off! What kind of friend does that?"

Kemp was lounging on the terrace sofa, sipping his drink, and watching Jonah. "Serves you right!"

With that, he picked up a glass of liquor from the table in front of him and casually handed it to Theo, who'd just sat down next to him. "How have you been lately? Any news of her?"

Theo accepted the glass, clinked it against Kemp's in a toast, then shook his head slightly with a mix of indifference and despair on his face.