

Too Much to Bear, My Love Chapter 151

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After Tiffany ended the call, Amelia asked, “Was that Shannon?”

Tiffany nodded.

Then, Amelia remarked, “It seems like those working as an editor are all but night owls. They work tirelessly just to get a book published.”

Tiffany stood up and stretched lazily. “Editor is a high-risk profession. They are at a higher risk of sudden cardiac death as they always need to work off-the-clock.”

Amelia shook her head in disagreement. She thought Tiffany was exaggerating it.

“Babe, go take your shower and then go to bed. It’s late now, and the baby needs some rest.”

Amelia complied as she entered Tiffany’s bedroom and took a new set of pajamas. Then, she took a warm shower in the washroom.

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It was already half-past-three in the morning after their shower. As it was past their usual bedtime, they found it difficult to fall asleep.

Lying on the bed, Tiffany asked, “Babe, I’m not sleepy at all. What now?”

Amelia said, “I’m not sleepy as well.”

Tiffany turned to face Amelia. “Why don’t we have a chat?”

“About what?”

“Well, tell me what you think about Oscar. How do you feel about him?”

Amelia blinked her eyes, feeling confused. “What do I think about him?”

Tiffany asked cautiously, “Babe, I don’t mean to pry into your personal affairs nor was it my intention to rain on your parade. It’s just that Oscar is

indecisive between you and Cassie. If—only if—he chooses Cassie in the end, what are you going to do?”

The smile on Amelia’s face gradually faded while her face grew serious as she mulled over Tiffany’s words.

Tiffany felt bad bringing up such a heavy topic in the middle of the night.

Without waiting for Amelia’s response, she shrugged her shoulders and decided to end the topic. “Babe, I’m feeling tired. Let’s sleep now.”

Amelia flashed her a relieved smile. “Tiff, I’m okay. We can talk about it. Well, I’ve actually thought of the worst that can happen between Oscar and me. Yet, I don’t want to be so pessimistic about our relationship because the future is full of uncertainty. After all, he has indirectly promised me that he will genuinely treat me as his wife.”

Tiffany couldn’t help feeling guilty for spoiling the mood. “Babe, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to dishearten you. I hope more than anyone else that you and Oscar can have a happy ending. Trust me! I really wish you, Oscar, and the baby can live happily together.”

Amelia found her reaction amusing. “Tiff, I know you’re just concerned about me. We are besties, after all. How can I not know what’s on your mind?”

She paused for a while before she continued, “Tiff, to be honest, I need to thank you for waking me up when I almost lost myself in his sweet words and small favors.”

Tiffany hugged her friend while she spoke under her breath, “Babe, I’m sorry. I know you’ve been through a rough time over the years. Actually, I feel complicated seeing you morphed into a stunner, from a carefree little girl. It’s like witnessing an innocent little girl being forced to grow into an adult who has a lot to worry about in life.”

Amelia sat up. She called out to stop Tiffany from being sentimental, “Stop! Tiff, you’re treating me like one of your female protagonists. I’ll just let nature take its course. It’s best if Oscar and I can end up being together. If our relationship breaks up, I still have Sweetheart with me. I suffer no loss at all in sacrificing five years in exchange for my precious baby. If we end up divorcing each other, that means we are not fated to be together.”

Tiffany scrutinized Amelia’s expression. “Babe, is that your genuine thought?”

Amelia lay down beside Tiffany. Then, she replied, "Of course, that's my genuine thought. For me, it's too much to ask for love. As you know, the marriage between Oscar and I is a contract marriage. The two of us come from two totally different worlds; our families have a huge social gap. Hence, our marriage is not going to be easy. Initially, I thought our marriage would only last for a year. I never thought we would still be together after five years, and we will even be expecting a baby soon. I think it's already a bonus for me."

Her words made Tiffany's heart ached.

The next moment, she heard Amelia's low voice, saying, "It's late now. Let's sleep."

She nodded and turned off the bedside lamp. As for Amelia, she kept her eyes open, staring into the darkness. After a while, she suddenly let out a sigh.

"Babe, are you not asleep yet?" Tiffany asked softly.

Amelia murmured, "Almost."

Tiffany sighed after Amelia. Once again, she apologized, "Babe, I'm really sorry. I should've thought twice before I ask something. Don't take it to heart. You know I didn't mean to upset you."

Amelia chuckled. "Don't be silly! We've known each other for so many years; no one knows you better than I do. I will really be mad if you keep apologizing."

Feeling relieved, Tiffany broke into a smile.

Within five minutes, the two ladies were sound asleep.

At ten in the morning, the two of them were awakened by the ringing phone. With her eyes half-open, Tiffany groped for the phone and answered it.

An unfamiliar voice of a man was heard over the phone, "Are you still sleeping?"

Since the voice didn't ring a bell with her, Tiffany said harshly, "Mr. whoever-it-is, you've got the wrong number. Just so you know, it's an offense to disturb a woman trying to get her beauty sleep. That's it. Goodbye!"

With that, she hung up.

It was not even a minute after she lay down on the bed when the phone rang again. This time, it was Amelia's phone that was ringing.

Amelia nudged Tiffany and muttered, "Tiff, help me answer the phone. I'm too tired."

Tiffany had always been the grumpy type in the morning. One could imagine how terrible her mood was when her sleep was disturbed twice.

She picked up the phone and then gave the person on the line a roasting. "I don't care whoever you are, but you'd better be calling because you have an emergency. Or else, I will chop you into pieces. I'll let you know what a terrible mistake you've made in disturbing my sleep. Now shoot!"

For a long time, she received no response as if the person on the line was frightened.

Tiffany then took a look at the screen. The number seemed familiar, yet she didn't think too much since it was an anonymous caller. Growing impatient, she raised her voice as she asked, "Who the hell are you? I only slept at three in the morning, and I'm tired. If you got the wrong number, end the call, will you?"

Gary hesitated for a second before he spoke, "Tiffany, I'm Gary, Gary Laird. We met yesterday. Do you still remember?"

Instantly, Tiffany was wide awake. She said with a hint of uncertainty, "Gary?"

"Yes, it's me. Do you recognize me?"

Tiffany hopped out of bed and found Gary's name card from her purse. It turned out that the number of the caller matched with the ones on the name card. At that instant, she couldn't help feeling sorry for her harsh attitude.

"Oh, Gary, I'm really sorry. It was late when we got home yesterday, and we didn't get to save your number. Amelia is still sleeping, so I answered her phone for her. I'm sorry, I'm usually a little grumpy in the morning. I hope I didn't scare you or did I?"

"No. Well, your morning grumpiness is indeed one of a kind."

Tiffany could feel her cheeks burning. "I'm sorry about that." She quickly switched the topic. "So, why are you calling early in the morning?"

“Didn’t you say yesterday that you wanted to visit my security firm to choose your own bodyguards? I’m free today, and I can introduce them to you.”

“Gary, you’re sure a man of action! I’ll go wake Amelia up now. See you in two hours!”

“You guys can take your time and have breakfast before you come. I’ll be at the firm for the day. You can come wherever you want.” After a short pause, he added, “Let Amelia sleep if she’s tired. There’s no rush.”

To some extent, Gary was a rather insensitive person. He was not even curious about the pregnant Amelia living with her bestie instead of her husband.

Meanwhile, Tiffany was slightly bewildered. She felt that Gary’s concern for Amelia had exceeded the norm. Not to mention, they had only met once. She started to worry if Gary had fallen in love with Amelia at first sight.

Like what Gary said yesterday, Amelia was indeed a woman full of tremendous charisma. Most women would stay away from her because of jealousy. In contrast, men would easily be attracted by her charisma and soon fall for her.

Tiffany shook her head to get rid of the undesirable thoughts. Then, she made her way to the bed and gently pushed Amelia to wake her up. “Babe, it’s time to wake up now,” she said softly.

Amelia stirred and slowly opened her eyes. She looked alluring in her half-asleep state while lazily stretching like a cute kitten.

Tiffany felt her heart flutter. “Wake up now! Oh, Amelia, you have no idea how sexy you look right now. If there was a man in the room, he would’ve lost control of himself.”

Amelia glanced sideways at her and asked, “What’s the time now?”

Tiffany answered, “It’s almost ten. Gary called just now. He asked us to go to his security firm to choose your bodyguards. We’ll go in the afternoon if you’re free because I need to work on my script tonight when we come back.”

Amelia nodded in response.

The two of them then washed up and prepared themselves. Tiffany grabbed two dresses from her wardrobe and handed the pale yellow one to Amelia. "Babe, I bought this for you a couple of days ago. Try it on."

Amelia held the dress in front of her body and then went to get changed. Tiffany looked at her from head to toe when she came out of the fitting room in the dress. Finally, with a snap of her fingers, she commented, "Wow! Babe, no wonder a man would say you're addictive and deadly like an opium poppy. That's the highest form of flattery! Your charisma can easily drive a man crazy. If I were a man, I would definitely fall head over heels in love with you."

Amelia was amused at her exaggerating manner. "You're talking nonsense again."

Then, she urged, "Now hurry and go get changed. We'll grab something on our way there."

"There's no hurry. Gary's security firm will be open the whole day. We can go there a bit later."

"Oh, Tiff, he has called us personally. It's impolite to keep him waiting. Go get changed now."

Tiffany pouted, yet she complied eventually.

Soon, the two drove to a restaurant nearby and had their breakfast there. After that, they headed straight to Gary's security firm.

The name of Gary's security firm—Gary's Security Firm was clear-cut, which suited perfectly with the style of its owner. It was located on the eighty-ninth floor of a building in the city center. Being a medium-sized company with more than two hundred employees, it was considered one of the largest security firms in the city.

Both Amelia and Tiffany never thought the hardy and rugged-looking Gary would own such a large company.

It really resonated with the saying that one should never judge a book by its cover!

Tiffany uttered, "Gary already owns such a huge company at the age of thirty-one. Yet he doesn't even look or dress like an elite."

Amelia nodded in agreement. "Tiff, we should give him a call and tell him we have arrived."

The call got through in no time, and Gary's voice was heard, "Hello."

"Gary, are you at the office now? Amelia and I have arrived."

"Where are you? I'll go down and pick you up."

"We're in front of your office. You can come out and meet us."

"Alright. I'll be there in a moment."

Amelia and Tiffany's arrival had caught all the male employees' attention. Initially, they intended to act undemonstrative and reserved in front of the ladies. Yet, it was not long before they showed their true colors, rushing up to the ladies.

A tall and young-looking man beat the others to it as he asked, "Ladies, are you looking for someone?"

Tiffany looked up at him and said, "We're looking for your boss."

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Chapter 152 Special Treatment

"Ah, you're our boss' friends. Please come on in!" Those in the security firm were welcoming as they led Amelia and Tiffany into the firm and brought them chairs. "Zach, fetch the ladies some tea. Make sure it's not too hot."

Zach quickly headed to the pantry. In no time, he was back with two cups of tea.

Within a minute, the coffee table was full of snacks and drinks. Amelia and Tiffany were overwhelmed by their hospitality.

The latter stuttered, "T-The p-people here are very welcoming."

One of the employees said, "Well, this is a special treatment for beautiful ladies." In other words, they wouldn't treat them with such hospitality if they weren't beautiful.

Tiffany let out a dry laugh.

Amelia was confused when the guys had their eyes fixated on her curiously. One of them spoke up, "Hi, you must be Gary's wife. You're so beautiful; no wonder Gary never let us meet you. He always tells us that he is not married, but everyone could tell that it's a lie. Otherwise, he wouldn't leave the office on time every day. We even teased him, saying that he is secretly married. Now we know why he hides you from us; you're gorgeous even when you're pregnant."

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Amelia felt a little awkward by their overwhelming hospitality. Unlike any other dreary office setting, a loving and harmonious atmosphere surrounded Gary's security firm. The employees felt like a big family.

With a polite smile, Amelia responded, "Actually, I only met your boss yesterday. We are here looking to hiring bodyguards."

Tiffany shielded Amelia while she jokingly said, "Gentlemen, Amelia is seven months pregnant now. I'll call the cops if you guys scare this pregnant lady with your overwhelming hospitality."

The guys were visibly disappointed. "So, you're not Gary's wife?"

Amelia shook her head.

Seeing that, the guys howled in disappointment. "Aw, we thought Gary has finally acquired a good taste in women that he found herself a beautiful wife. It turns out you're someone else's wife."

Knowing that Amelia was not Gary's wife, they shifted their gaze to Tiffany. "Do you know Gary? Are you his girlfriend? You look pretty. We will be more than happy if you are to marry our boss."

This time, it was Tiffany feeling awkward. "Gary and I are just friends. I'm afraid I will have to disappoint you."

"You're married?"

"Do you already have a boyfriend?"

"Do you mind if I ask how old are you?"

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When Gary showed up, he saw his male employees surrounding the ladies, bombarding them with questions.

Although he was an airy person with a casual attitude, he couldn't help feeling embarrassed by his employers' silly behavior.

He roared, "Hey, shouldn't you guys be working? All of you are a member of the security firm, not bandits."

The employees instantly made way for Gary. Then, they bowed ninety degrees at him comically and greeted, "Good day, Mr. Laird!"

Gary was seething as he scolded, "You cheeky rascals! Stop fooling around in the office. No one will hire bodyguards from our company if they see you guys behaving like this."

One of the employees reminded, "Gary, may I remind you that the ladies are still here. You wouldn't want to scare them off with your loud voice."

That was when Gary remembered that Amelia and Tiffany were in the office.

His face flushed in embarrassment upon realizing that his glorious image was ruined in front of the ladies. At that moment, he couldn't help but feel self-conscious.

It was the first time the employers saw their boss behaving like a demure young lady. They teased, "Gary, are you feeling shy? What a shocker! Come everyone, have a look at the shy Gary."

Gary shot them a fierce stare and dismissed them. "That's it. Now, return to your work. Those who are hungry can order some food. After the lunch break, please gather around in the meeting room. Ms. Amelia and Ms. Tiffany are looking to hire one or two bodyguards. For those who are chosen, do your best to protect them, or all of you will not get your year-end bonuses. Don't embarrass me or ruin the reputation of our firm!"

With a teasing smile, the guys made an equivocal remark, "We won't embarrass you in front of the ladies, Mr. Laird." To them, Gary was self-conscious in front of the ladies because he had a crush on Tiffany.

Once again, Gary's face flushed. He was enraged at their teasing. "Get back to work. You have ruined the firm's image. If you guys continue horsing around, I will reduce your perfect-attendance rewards."

Yet, the employees were not deterred. "Gary, you're blushing! Since Ms. Amelia is married, it looks like Ms. Tiffany is the one who is going to be our boss' potential wife. Gary, go for it! We will laugh at you if you can't make Ms. Tiffany your girlfriend." With that, they reflexively dodged a kick sent by their boss.

Gary gave them the final warning. "That's it! Stop messing around! Or else, not only will I cancel your perfect attendance rewards, but your year-end bonuses as well."

The employees called out, "Gary is angry, and he is trying to hide his shyness!" The next moment, they unanimously fled the scene before their boss gave them a good beating.

Gary rubbed the back of his head awkwardly. He managed to placate a calm facade as he turned to face the ladies. "The boys didn't scare you, did they?"

Both Amelia and Tiffany shook their heads.

With a gentle smile, Amelia said, "The working culture in your firm is great. There's a positive and happy vibe in the office. I can tell that you're a great boss."

Gary felt nervous when Amelia was talking to him. She looked even more beautiful in the bright office compared to when he saw her yesterday night.

His heart was thumping wildly in his chest. Yesterday night, he could still grip his composure when talking with her. Yet, at that moment, he felt as if all his inner thoughts were laid bare.

The adrenaline rush caused the man to start gabbling, "When I first started this company, I didn't really treat it as a job; it was more like a pastime. As we put in more effort, energy, and time into running the company, I started to take it more seriously. As the company developed, we hired more and more employees. Well, most of our employees are male employees and the minority, female. Regardless of gender, they get along with each other very well. The female employees became unladylike after spending much time with the boys, in the sense that they would joke and curse with them. The boys haven't met such beautiful ladies in a long time, and that's the reason for their overwhelming hospitality. I hope they didn't scare you."

Tiffany gazed at him quizzically while asking, "Gary, are you nervous?"

Gary flushed scarlet. Fortunately, it wasn't obvious on his tanned skin.

"No. Why would I be nervous?" He chuckled dryly and dared not to look in Amelia's direction. "It's almost half-past eleven now. Let me treat you guys to lunch. We can come back and choose your bodyguards after that."

Tiffany asked Amelia, "Babe, are you hungry yet?" She was not hungry since they had just had their breakfast an hour ago.

Amelia thought about it for a while and eventually agreed with Gary's proposal out of courtesy.

Gary couldn't help curling his lips into a smile. He stood up, unconsciously casting his eyes at Amelia as he asked, "Amelia, do you like spicy food?"

Amelia was slightly bewildered. As a woman, her sixth sense told her that Gary's care for her had exceeded ordinary bounds.

As if he, too, had realized that his question was rather bizarre, Gary quickly explained, "Well, I'm only asking to see if you can eat spicy food. If yes, then we can eat Thymions food. If you can't eat spicy food, then perhaps we can eat something else."

Amelia was still holding a smile, yet her gaze grew aloof and distant.

Just then, Tiffany chimed in eagerly, "Gary, you're playing favorites! Why didn't you ask me whether I can eat spicy food?"

Gary was relieved when Tiffany took the heat off him. He let out a hearty laugh and explained himself, "Amelia is pregnant, so it's normal for me to ask her first. As you know, we need to be extremely careful when it comes to the diet of a pregnant lady."

Hearing that, the aloofness in Amelia's eyes faded.

Tiffany gave the man a thumbs up. "Gary, you're indeed a good husband material. Whoever gets to marry you is definitely the luckiest woman on earth."

Subconsciously, Gary once again glanced at Amelia.

Having noticed that, Tiffany jokingly said on purpose, "Gary, I know our dear Amelia is beautiful and that she's your type, but she's taken. You can retrieve your gaze now."

Gary awkwardly rustled his hair. Then, he cleared his throat and said, "If you guys can eat spicy food, I know an authentic Thymions restaurant. I can call the restaurant owner now."

Tiffany halted him. "Amelia had an upset stomach for the past few days, and she can't eat spicy food. Gary, perhaps we can eat something light?"

Hearing that, Gary asked worriedly, "An upset stomach? I know a few gastroenterologists. Do you need me to make an appointment for you?"

Both Amelia and Tiffany simultaneously raised their brow, looking at him strangely.

As usual, Gary used his customary hearty laugh to hide his genuine thoughts. "Well, isn't Amelia pregnant right now? I'm worried that it might affect the baby."

Amelia said smilingly, "It's nothing serious. The doctor said I will be fine as long as I take a healthy diet and prevent eating spicy food."

"We'll eat something light then. I'll call to reserve a table."

The three of them left the office in Gary's car. Sitting behind the wheels, Gary called and reserved them a private room. Half an hour later, they arrived at their destination—a restaurant with vintage decoration.

After unbuckling his seat belt, Gary uttered, "This is my friend's restaurant. If you guys want to eat here in the future, you can drop my name and have your bills waived."

Hearing that, Tiffany playfully said, "I'm afraid your friend might go bankrupt."

Gary generously reassured them, "Well, I'm one of the shareholders of the restaurant. I have enough money to treat you guys."

Tiffany's eyes grew wide upon hearing that. "Gary, you sure know how to keep a low profile. Not only do you own a huge security firm, but you've even invested in the food and beverage industry. I never thought I would encounter a wealthy man while having supper. If I were a gold digger, I would throw myself at you and secure myself a sugar daddy."

Gary said nothing but smiled in response.

As soon as they entered the restaurant, a hostess came up and bowed at them. "Gary, please come with me. The private room is ready, and we have had the chefs prepare a nutritious meal for the pregnant woman."

Gary nodded as the hostess conducted them to the private room.

In the private room, he asked, "Where's your boss?"

The hostess politely replied, "Our boss traveled to Saspiuburg yesterday, and he will return in two or three days. You can give him a call if it's something urgent."

Gary nodded in response.

Then, he handed the menus to the ladies. "Amelia, Tiffany, feel free to order anything you like. I don't need to pay when I eat here."

Tiffany ordered three dishes while Amelia randomly picked one from the menu that looked appetizing. It would be a waste if they ordered too much. Also, they were not that hungry since they had just had breakfast.

Gary, on the other hand, ordered two dishes. He handed over the menus to the hostess and ordered, "Please get the chefs to hurry with the food for the pregnant woman."

"All right. The dishes will be served soon." With that, the hostess left the private room.

Meanwhile, Gary discreetly glanced at Amelia before he asked, "So, who is the one hiring the bodyguards?"

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Chapter 153 Choosing Bodyguards 3

"It's me. Hiring a bodyguard is also a last-minute plan," Amelia said, her tone slightly distant and perfunctory. She was naturally guarded against strangers and tended to give off an aloof vibe. Only after truly getting to know her would they find out her real personality was actually rather adorable.

Gary Laird was in the business of security services. Though he looked intimidating on the outside, he had a keen eye for details. It was pretty apparent to him that Amelia was deliberately distancing herself from him.

"I'm guessing your husband's family should be quite well-off?" Gary held back on his admiration. He and Amelia weren't close enough yet. Besides, she was also a married woman. If he were to express his true feelings for her, he was afraid they wouldn't even be able to be friends then.

Amelia smiled faintly. "I suppose it's not bad. At the very least, there's no need to worry about my next meal."

Tiffany chimed in, "Gary, is it necessary to check on our backgrounds when choosing a bodyguard?"

Gary chuckled. "Please don't misunderstand. I wasn't checking on your backgrounds per se. It's just that ordinary families wouldn't usually hire a bodyguard nor have the means to do so. Since you're looking to hire one, I assumed your family must be rather well-off. Amelia's husband is likely either a businessman or a government official. Only people with power would deem this amount of money insignificant. To ordinary families, it is almost equivalent to daylight robbery."

Tiffany made a thumbs-up gesture and praised, "You're indeed an accomplished businessman. Your insight is superb."

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"This is merely basic evaluation. Moreover, your dressing style alone says a lot about you. You exude an aura that ordinary people don't usually have. It only takes one glance to tell the difference," he explained.

A flash of admiration flickered in Tiffany's gaze. She could sense that the man before her wasn't as intimidating as he seemed. Perhaps in certain aspects of life, he could be aggressive. But when it came to working, he was very detailed and prudent. It was no wonder his security firm was renowned. It wouldn't have been possible without an equally capable owner.

As the famous quote went—Do not judge a book by its cover.

Gary continued, "Are you encountering any difficulties, Amelia? Although we've only met twice and are merely acquaintances, I'm a man who values friendship. As long as I've acknowledged someone, I'd give my all to that person should they require my help."

"It isn't that serious. My husband's side of the family is prominent in the business industry. Tiff was just concerned that there would be people who'd be blinded by greed. That's why we thought of hiring a couple of bodyguards as a safety measure. After all, I'm heavily pregnant. I can't afford to get into any accidents."

Gary nodded. "I will pick three suitable candidates based on your criteria. If you're satisfied with them, then we can sign the contract."

Tiffany's fingers were tapping a rhythm on the table. "Gary, you said not to talk about payment, but we're not freeloaders either. What is the market rate for bodyguards? We'll pay the same price as what every other customer does. We may be easy-going folks, but if you're insincere, then we can forget about this cooperation."

"Tiffany, I must say, I've never met a woman like you. People who try to get close to me are more or less hoping to gain some advantage for

themselves. You, on the other hand, are so insistent for me not to offer you a discount." He laughed. "It seems I made a good judgment in friends indeed. Rest assured. The price will be reasonable."

Lifting her glass in the air, Tiffany said, "Then I'll thank you on behalf of Amelia."

Gary took a glimpse of Amelia. The latter raised her glass as well and said, "Here's to you, Gary."

The trio clinked their glasses against one another, toasting with water instead of alcohol.

Soon after, their food arrived. There were a total of seven dishes, a soup, and a specially brewed broth for pregnancy. The sheer amount of food laid out on the table resembled a delicious buffet spread.

Gary pointed at the broth he specifically requested the chef to make and said, "Amelia, I told the chef to prepare this. It's very beneficial for the baby. You have to drink more of it. Your arms and legs are way too thin. If it weren't for your bulging belly, nobody would believe you're carrying a baby." Gary's earnest tone sounded more like a loving husband.

The women found it odd.

Tiffany hastily interrupted, "You're such a considerate man, Gary. It's a total contrast from your appearance. Whoever gets to be your wife will be living in bliss. Amelia, drink more of the broth. Gary's so kind to you. You mustn't let him down."

Amelia merely nodded, maintaining her neutral stance.

With Tiffany leading most of the chats during the meal, Gary's chatters gradually lessened.

When they left the restaurant and got in the car, Gary asked, "Amelia, Tiffany, how was the meal?"

Amelia nodded and smiled. "It was delectable. It wasn't too greasy and was suitable for my palate. The soup was thick and creamy. I've lived here for so many years and have never discovered this hidden treasure."

Tiffany couldn't help but compliment, "The food was indeed out-of-this-world. We just had breakfast at half-past ten and weren't hungry at first. However, the food in the restaurant was simply too mouth-watering. One bite and you'll be addicted to it. I'm now so bloated from it."

Gary chuckled. "I'm glad to hear that. If you guys would like to dine there in the future, simply mention my name and you'll be able to dine free of charge."

"You're a generous man, but as I said earlier, we're not freeloaders," Tiffany said.

Gary merely smiled in response.

When they returned to the company, Gary led Amelia and Tiffany to his office. He picked up the telephone and dialed a number. "Queenie, tell Howard, Riley, and Xander to come in." Without waiting for a reply, he put down the receiver.

There was a knocking on the door in less than a minute. "Come in," Gary called out.

When the door pushed open, two men and a woman entered the room. Both men were tall and lean with relatively good looks, wearing short-sleeved T-shirts. Although they looked thin, their arms were rather muscular. As for the woman, she stood at approximately 168cm. Her features were delicate and pretty—her dimples especially eye-catching whenever she smiled. It made her feel approachable.

"Gary," all three of them greeted respectfully.

Gary nodded slightly. He pointed at Amelia and Tiffany and said, "They are the clients—both with the last name Winters. If they're satisfied with the three of you, you'll work under them from today onward. You are all here to get to know one another."

They were surprised because Gary hardly attended to clients personally. That was the job of the company's manager. After all, the security firm was merely one of Gary's many businesses. He wouldn't have turned up unless the employer was of VIP status.

Ignoring the bewildered expressions on the trio, Gary continued, "Amelia, Tiffany, let me introduce you. They are Howard Powell, Riley Hope, and Xander Erikson."

Amelia stretched out a hand and said, "My name is Amelia Winters. It's nice to meet all of you."

Howard and Xander both stretched out their hands at the same time. They felt rather flattered as she was a beautiful woman. "Ms. Winters, nice to meet you."

On the other side, the woman named Riley Hope was seemingly sizing up Amelia with a guarded look in her gaze. She questioned, "Ms. Winters, don't mind me asking, what's your relationship with Gary? He typically never personally receives a client, unless they are his close friends or of VIP status."

Amelia could clearly sense the blatant hostility from the young lady. She could more or less guess why that was so. "I'm married. Your boss and I are ordinary friends," she clarified.

It was then that Riley noticed Amelia's bulging stomach. Her face flushed in shame. She had only been focused on Amelia's face earlier. As she had worked with Gary for several years, she naturally knew what sort of woman he was attracted to—a pretty face, voluptuous body but never skimpily dressed—all of which fitted Amelia. That was why she behaved rather defensively.

But when she realized Amelia was pregnant, she gradually let down her walls.

Riley clutched onto Amelia's hand enthusiastically and said, "So, you're Gary's friend. I rarely see him bring a female friend to the company. You must be a very important friend to him."

Amelia shook her head on the inside. She's indeed a young lady who wears her emotions on her face. With her delicate looks, who will believe she's a bodyguard?

Gary coughed twice to interrupt. "Riley, don't be cheeky. When you're at the company, you ought to behave austerely. Otherwise, who will want to employ you?"

Riley stuck out her tongue childishly. The next second, her face changed as if she could perform magic and turned stern. She said in a serious tone, "I'm sorry. I forgot my manners earlier."

Gary waved a hand at her. "You won't be excused the next time. You're one of the company's employees. Every action of yours reflects our professionalism. Should you behave inappropriately and leave a bad impression on the client, then our company might as well shut down our business."

With her gaze unchanging, Riley replied seriously, "I'm sorry, Gary. There won't be a next time."

Tiffany could no longer stand to watch. "Gary, we're not outsiders. There's no need for you to be this strict with the young lady," she interrupted. "Aren't you afraid she'll cry if you lecture her this way?"

“Young? She’s already twenty-five,” Gary said, shaking his head.

Tiffany chuckled. “I knew it! She’s a millennial. You could tell she’s a girl in her youth based on her appearance alone. I can’t help but feel old.”

Looking at Tiffany, Riley felt guarded once again. After all, Tiffany was another attractive woman. Although she didn’t give off the alluring vibe, her shapely figure and good looks were relatively close to Gary’s taste.

“Gary, may I know which one is the client?” Riley asked. “Or are the both of them hiring?”

“Amelia is your employer. That is if she’s satisfied with the three of you. We may sign the contract on the spot,” Gary said.

After hesitating a little, he turned to Amelia and said, “Amelia, even though they look like pretty faces and aren’t sculpted like bodybuilders, they are skilled in martial arts. Riley is proficient in kickboxing, close combat, and shooting. Howard is proficient in reconnaissance, shooting, and mixed martial arts. As for Xander, he’s proficient in his protection skills, shooting, and close combat. They’ve learned almost every type of martial art in the world. These three are the ones I’m most proud of. They have all undergone professional training and will certainly make good bodyguards for you.”

Amelia and Tiffany exchanged glances for a while, their gazes filled with doubt.

“If they’re that extraordinary, isn’t it a pity for them to be my bodyguards?” Amelia asked.

“Even if I don’t assign them to you, they’ll have to go on other missions regardless. But since they’re so outstanding, their prices are slightly higher on the chart too. Of course, I trust that you’ll be able to afford them. I know it’s hard to believe me without proof. How about witnessing it for yourself?” Gary suggested.

Amelia was feeling eager. After all, it was her first time witnessing someone fire a gun. Even though she was a woman, shooting was one of her interests.

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Chapter 154 It Is Her Then

“Sure,” Amelia and Tiffany said in unison.

The six of them moved to another venue. Riley, Howard, and Xander had also changed into their training uniform. “Riley and Howard, shoot,” Gary commanded.

“Roger.”

Standing on two sides with a gun in their hand, Riley and Howard readied themselves. Within ten seconds, the loud bang of a gun being fired sounded.

Riley and Howard had both shot bullseye on their target. Amelia and Tiffany clapped and cheered enthusiastically on the side.

As they were shooting indoors, they had a lot less space to perform.

“Howard, Xander. MMA sparring. Keep in mind—you must display everything you know. I’m asking for the best of your abilities,” Gary urged.

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Howard and Xander nodded and answered sternly, “Gary, rest assured. There isn’t a single mission that we didn’t give our best for. Besides, Ms. Winters is an important friend of yours. We’ll risk our lives to protect her.”

Gary nodded. “Good that you’re both aware.” He turned to Amelia and said, “Amelia, what do you think of the three of them?”

“They’re impressive,” Amelia replied. “Their skills are remarkable. However, I’m normally a homebody. Hiring a bodyguard is only a preventative measure. To hire three at once seems like a waste of talent for them. Why don’t I pick just one?”

Gary thought about it and agreed. “Of course. It’s your decision.”

Amelia smiled. “I’m a woman. Having a man follow me around is a little inconvenient. Besides, my husband would be suspicious as well. Therefore, I’ll pick Riley. Howard and Xander are talents. They should be where they are needed most. For three of them to protect me alone sounds like too much of a waste of their potential.”

Gary turned to look at Riley and said, “Riley, Amelia will be your employer from now onward. Remember our company’s objective—Give the right protection, at the right time, for every side.”

“Yes,” Riley answered seriously.

Tiffany clapped her hands and said, “Gary, you don’t have to make the atmosphere so tense. Relax. You made us sound as if we’re ferocious shrews when we’re actually nice people. Let’s not make Riley misunderstand us.”

Everyone laughed.

Riley took a glance at Tiffany, her hostility lessening as well.

“So, can we sign the contract yet?” Amelia questioned.

“Of course,” Gary answered. “Riley, Howard, Xander, you’re dismissed for now.”

The three of them silently nodded their heads and turned around to leave.

“Amelia, Tiffany, let’s go to my office,” Gary suggested. The two women nodded and followed after him.

Entering the office, Gary instructed his secretary to deliver two cups of coffee and a glass of warm milk.

Tiffany sat on the couch and said unreservedly, “Gary, there are truly many talented people in your company.”

Gary waved a hand in response, candidly saying, “They’re all a bunch of uneducated punks who are only skilled in fighting. How could they be compared to you? You’re both university graduates—educated. After all, you are a best-selling author. The people I admire most in my life are the novelists who can write over ten thousand, even hundred thousands of words. I will never know how their brains are capable of piecing together so much eloquent words.”

Tiffany was nonplussed. “You make the novelists sound as if they’re divine.”

“Isn’t that so? Their brains are vastly different from that of ordinary people. We ordinary people only think about what to eat three times a day, whereas you novelists think about plotlines day and night. I even wonder if you get lost in the fictional world sometimes and forget which is reality.”

Tiffany waved her hand in the air. “When you put it that way, I’ll have to redress on behalf of the other freelance writers. We may be writing novels, but we also pay attention to reality. The materials of all novels are derived

from reality. When we're done with one novel, we'll usually take a break for a period of time. We'll go backpacking, hiking, and if we're mad enough, we may even explore the deep mountains alone. They actually do a lot more than what people think, for writing depends on a large part of experiencing life. Otherwise, novelists wouldn't gain the reputation of being crazy in real life. Their way of thinking has long surpassed the point where ordinary people cannot understand. However, I've yet to reach that point. That's why I only consider myself a novelist, not an author."

Amelia chuckled. "Tiff, if your readers were to hear you, they'll be sorely disappointed. The best-selling author that they're fans of regards herself as a third-rate novelist. Are you indirectly saying that they have poor taste?"

Tiffany laughed.

A short while later, Gary brought out the contract. "Amelia, take a look. If there's nothing wrong with it, you may sign here."

Amelia read through it before handing it to Tiffany for a second opinion. The latter read and said, "Babe, it's all right. You can sign."

Amelia signed her name on the papers and pressed her thumbprint on them. Gary then took over the contract and did the same as she did. "This contract will be sent to the legal department to be notarized," he informed. "There will be no fine no matter which party violates the contract. This will better protect both parties."

Amelia nodded.

Tiffany made a thumbs-up gesture and said, "Splendid! Gary, it's no wonder your company is acclaimed. Based on how much you value your clients alone, it would be unthinkable if it wasn't."

Gary's tanned skin flushed slightly. Right as he was about to say something, Amelia's phone rang.

She whipped out her phone and saw Carter's name flashing on the display. She smiled apologetically at Gary and said, "Sorry, I have to take this. I'll be right back." She then moved to the corner and answered the phone.

Carter's slightly weakened voice sounded from her phone. "Amelia," he called out.

"Carter, you're up?"

"Yes. I was too impulsive yesterday. Did I scare you?"

"A little. You fainted right before me and didn't come out of the operating room for a long time," she admitted. "I was worried something would happen to you because of me. If that happens, I'd feel extremely guilty."

Carter's crazed side had truly scared her. If the old Carter had half the courage he had then, perhaps their ending would've been different.

Carter's mood seemed to have brightened on the other side, his tone sounding lively as he asked, "Amelia, are you worried about me?"

"We're friends. Of course, I'll worry about you. I'm not an emotionless person who would do nothing when you fall in front of me. Carter, please don't think of me as cold-blooded. Regardless if it's the past, present, or the future, whether we remain friends or not, I will never wish for you to be hurt," she said frankly.

It was silent on the phone for a moment before Amelia heard a low sigh from him.

"I'm sorry, Amelia," Carter apologized.

"I don't blame you. I only hope you'll stop being this impulsive in the future. Health is priceless. If you lose it, no amount of money will let you live."

"All right." He kept silent once again. "Amelia, will you come to visit me in the hospital? Don't overthink it. I merely want to see you and make sure you're safe. That way, I'll be able to recuperate in peace."

Amelia hesitated.

"Is that a no?" he questioned.

Sighing, Amelia answered, "Carter, I have matters to handle right now. I might not be able to leave any time soon. I'll drop by the hospital in the afternoon, is that okay?"

"Amelia, can't you come over right now?" Carter deliberately made himself sound weak.

Amelia began to sense a slight headache coming. She raised a hand to rub at her forehead and said, "Carter, I'm busy right now. Rest well. Tiffany and I will visit you when we're free."

"All right." Carter's voice evidently turned downcast. "If you're free in the afternoon, come visit me in the hospital. I miss you."

Amelia felt highly pressured. The way Carter render her helpless was truly terrifying.

“Carter, someone’s calling for me. I have to go. If I’m free in the afternoon, I’ll go visit you.” As soon as she said her piece, she hung up without even saying goodbye.

She kept her phone and said to Gary, “It’s a friend.”

Tiffany turned toward her. “Carter?”

Amelia nodded.

Tiffany frowned, lowering her voice as she muttered, “What a pest.”

Gary looked between the two women and could tell something was amiss. “Is there anything you need my help with?” he asked.

Amelia shook her head and smiled. “It’s nothing. I have a friend who’s hospitalized and said everyone’s gone to visit him except us. He thinks we’re not being great friends.”

Gary nodded, not having much to comment.

“Gary, I still have something on. Tiffany and I will be going first. You may let Riley come over whenever she’s free. I’ll send my address to you in a bit. When she comes, tell her to give me a call,” Amelia instructed.

Gary stood up to send them off. “I’ll let her go over tomorrow. Don’t worry. She’ll only protect you in the dark. She won’t interfere with your daily life.”

Amelia nodded.

“Gary, I’ll transfer the commission back to your account. Send me your account number later,” Tiffany said.

“All right.” Gary pulled the door open for them. “I’ll walk you two downstairs. If there’s anything you need my help with, call me. We’re all friends. As long as it’s within my capabilities, I’ll definitely lend a hand.”

“Thank you, Gary.” Amelia smiled. “If there’s anything we need help with, we certainly won’t stand on ceremony.”

Gary walked the two of them downstairs and only left after watching them leave in the car.

As soon as he entered his office, a flexible figure jumped out. He turned around and saw that it was Riley. He frowned and said, "Riley, what are you doing in my office?"

Gary was rather oblivious when it came to love. If it were a woman he had no feelings for, no matter how much they tried to drop hints, he'd never pick up. Therefore, he had no clue that Riley actually had feelings for him.

Riley raised her chin, looking slightly aggrieved.

Being watched by her that way, goosebumps immediately rose all over his skin. He returned to his chair and said, "Don't look at me like that. I have goosebumps all over."

Her gaze became increasingly indignant. However, she knew that other than being outstanding at work, the man she loved was a brick short of a load everywhere else. Even if she were to continue being ambiguous with him, he would never be able to figure out her intentions.

After hesitating for a while, she asked coyly, "Gary, are those two women earlier really your friends?"

"What's wrong with you today, Riley?" Gary glanced at her strangely. "You're being really weird. Of course, they're my friends. Did you come all the way here simply to ask me that?"

She clenched and unclenched her hands, mustering up a little courage before she asked, "Both Amelia and Tiffany seem to be your type. Are you perhaps attracted to one of them?"

Without much thought, he replied, "Riley, when it's time for work, work. Since when are you so concerned about my private matters?"

I've always been concerned! You're the one who never took it to heart.

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Chapter 155 Oblivious To Her Feelings

"Gary, if you wish to date, I—" Riley stammered, too embarrassed to complete her sentence. "I—"

Gary found her really strange. "What's your problem? Are you feeling unwell? I can approve a one-day leave for you. Otherwise, I could ask Howard to take you to the hospital."

Is he stupid? She stared resentfully at him and said, "You're a blockhead!"

Having said that, she dashed out of the room right away. When she bumped into Xander, who was completely clueless as to what happened, she shoved him aside and made off without any explanation.

Gary was baffled. Seeing Xander still standing at the doorway, he raised his voice and said, "Why aren't you entering if you're here? Are you fond of eavesdropping now?"

Xander entered the room, shrugging his shoulders. He smiled. "Gary, it seems you're having great luck with the ladies. Riley waited this long to confess to you. It's not an easy feat."

Gary glared at him. "Stop spouting nonsense," he chided. "Riley only sees me as a senior. Don't make up baseless rumors and spoil her reputation."

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Xander couldn't help but feel sad for Riley.

Gary was undoubtedly oblivious when it came to relationship matters. Otherwise, why would a wealthy man in his thirties not have a single girlfriend? It wasn't because he didn't have charm but because of his insensitivity.

As long as men had some spare cash, their looks didn't matter. The women would convince themselves to accept the man as long as they were being financially supported. They would then brag about how strong their love was. But in the end, they themselves wouldn't know for sure whether they truly loved the man or their money.

"Gary, if Riley were to hear you say this, she'll cry to her death." Xander shook his head.

Gary scratched his head in confusion. "Why are you talking about Riley again? We are purely co-workers. She entered the company at eighteen years old and is considered the youngest in here. Everyone's used to doting her. I, too, treat her like my biological sister."

Xander pulled out a chair and took a seat. He asked, "Riley came all the way to your office. Are you telling me you really have no idea of her intentions?"

Gary still couldn't catch the gist of it. "Does she have someone she likes?"

Xander slapped a hand against his forehead, speechless. "When it comes to the management of the company, I deeply admire you. After all, if it weren't for you, the company wouldn't have made so much progress this rapidly and our wages wouldn't have continuously increased. However, when it comes to relationship matters, you're a real blockhead," he said bluntly.

Gary threw the pen in his hand in Xander's direction. "Xander Erikson, you little rascal. You dare to speak to me this way? I've selected three missions for you. You better get working!"

Xander's expression turned disgruntled in an instant. "Gary, my dear boss, you can't do that to me! I've been going on consecutive missions the last month. Every mission was also perfectly executed. As a boss, you can't be this inhumane!"

"Oh? So you're aware I am the boss. Since you offended me, this is your consequence," Gary said unsparingly.

Xander groaned, "You sure are a sly fox. If anyone were to call you an honest person in the future, I'll be sure to give them a good beating."

Gary stretched out a hand, and Xander immediately placed the pen the former threw back onto his palm.

"Go back to work." Gary waved his hand like he was shooing off a housefly.

Instead of leaving, Xander stood up and leaned forward, his whole body almost spanning the entire desk.

Gary looked at him in alarm. "What the hell is the meaning of this?"

"Gary, be honest. The two beautiful women you brought along earlier; are you interested in one of them?" Xander asked.

Gary looked at him calmly and answered his question with another question. "Why are you asking?"

Xander was a man after all. He looked at Gary intently and said, "Don't you understand? This is the first time you have personally received a female client. On top of that, you even called for Riley, Howard, and me. If you weren't interested in their beauty, why would you be so diligent? At first, I guessed that you liked Ms. Amelia. But it's too bad that she's pregnant. However, Tiffany is not too shabby either. She's a looker and has a nice figure. Although she's not as good as Ms. Amelia, she's still gorgeous. The

problem is, you're too uncouth. I'm not sure if a delicate beauty like her would take a fancy toward you."

Gary glared at him. "How am I uncouth? I have money, cars, and houses. I have everything that most men work so hard for. What's a woman got to be unsatisfied about?"

Unsure if he was bold or simply stupid, Xander said, "Oh please! If it were a gold digger, perhaps she would be attracted to what you own. But Amelia and Tiffany Winters aren't that types of women."

Gary had felt differently toward Amelia from the beginning. She was indeed the type of woman he was attracted to. Whenever he was near to her, he could feel his heart thumping loudly against his ribcage, as if he'd returned to his adolescent years when he had a crush on a girl for the first time.

"So, tell me. How am I incompatible with the two of them?"

Xander scrutinized Gary from head to toe. He scratched his chin and grinned. "Do you really want me to be honest?"

"Shoot."

"It's obvious. You and they clearly belong in two different worlds. You could tell with one glance that they're intellectual beings—poised and sophisticated. You, on the other hand, are almost twice the size of them, behave unrefinedly, are unromantic, and are completely ignorant of what women want. It's far from the type of man women are looking for."

Am I that terrible? Gary's face looked terrible. I'm an easy-going person, am generous to friends, have a good balance between work and personal life, earn well, and can even cook. I am practically an all-rounded man. If I were to have a girlfriend, she'll definitely be treated like a princess. Don't women these days like men like me?

Noticing his mood, Xander bounced off the table and prepared himself to flee. "Don't be mad." He raised both arms in surrender. "Listen to me. Otherwise, you can forget about dating someone else's woman."

Gary inhaled a deep breath and pointed at the chair. "Sit," he said. "If you do not make yourself clear today, you're not allowed to take a single step out of this office."

Xander patted his chest, feigning a look of horror on his face. "How can you do that?"

Gary's body was filled with goosebumps. He truly couldn't handle a grown man acting coquettishly. "Xander Erikson. Try making that expression again and I'll let you have a go with a real torture chamber."

Xander gasped. "This is violent suppression."

"You irritating rascal! You still have the guts to mince my words."

"Gary, I am merely teaching you how to pick up girls. Otherwise, based on your incomprehensible temperament, it would be impossible to catch any of the two women."

Frustrated, Gary questioned, "So you say. Then tell me, which part of me am I inferior to other men?"

"Gary, you are an atypical Mr. Perfect. Women with your physique would most certainly take a liking to you. However, I reckon Amelia and Tiffany Winters prefer men who look gentle and refined. I highly doubt you're the type of man they like. Moreover, the fact that they could hire bodyguards would mean they do not lack the money. Hence, if you like one of them, you best be prepared to be broken-hearted."

This brat! All he can say about me is this bullshit?

Gary randomly picked up a file on the desk and threw it toward Xander. "You weasel! I haven't even had a chance to date, and you're already saying I can't make it."

Xander managed to dodge it with his quick reflexes. "Calm down!" he urged. "Listen. I personally think Riley isn't too bad. She's only a few years younger than you, has a decent-looking face, is considerate, isn't capricious, and is your right-hand woman both in your work and personal life. Why don't you consider her?"

Gary frowned. "Xander Erikson, you weasel. I see Riley as my own sister. I intend to see her get married in the future. I'll skin you if you blabber all that nonsense one more time!"

Xander sighed. His skull is too thick. Nothing gets in. Poor Riley...

"Gary, you'll break Riley's heart if she hears you." Xander shook his head disappointedly. "She's carried a torch for you for so long, yet you're so oblivious to it. I even suspect whether you're doing it on purpose or if you truly have a piece of wood for a brain."

Gary knitted his brows. "Riley and I are completely platonic. I only see her as a sister and she sees me as her senior. Stop saying rubbish or I'll really skin you alive."

Shrugging, Xander said, "You may see her as a sister, but how are you so sure she sees you the same? If you truly do not feel anything for her, then quit giving her the wrong impression. A young lady like her has no resistance when it comes to a Mr. Perfect like you. She's already plunged way too deep, yet you're still claiming she's a sister to you."

Gary was genuinely stupefied. It had never crossed his mind that the concern Riley showed him was out of infatuation. As Xander said, he was indeed a blockhead when it came to women he had no interest in. No matter how they try to fawn upon him, he always assumed it was platonic.

Xander decided he had said enough. With both hands at the back of his head, he did a little stretch and said, "All right, I'm going back to work now. Think about what I said. I still think you and the Winters ladies belong in two different worlds. If you really want to go after one of them, then you better be prepared to put in two hundred percent effort."

Having said that, Xander left the office, leaving Gary behind as he moped in his seat.

Being deemed a failure before he even tried made him feel exceptionally displeased. Although he felt something for Amelia, it wasn't that serious to the extent he would screw his principles and be a homewrecker. Therefore, it was unfortunate that he could only let that be a passing phase.

He raked through his hair in frustration, feeling utterly indignant. It took over thirty years for him to take a liking to a woman. Yet, fate had to let that woman be married and pregnant. Albeit he knew it was impossible between them, his heart would immediately begin to race whenever he pictured Amelia's beautiful face. As for Riley's feelings for him, he couldn't and didn't want to waste a second fretting over it.

After all, he truly saw her only as a sister and was persistent that she saw him the same way. Everything Xander said earlier had completely fallen on deaf ears.