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Harvey gently pressed his hand to his somewhat unsettled heart and frowned in bafflement. 'Impossible! How can there be such a thing?' he said in his mind. 'I am Harvey Riddle, Mr. Riddle Sr.'s only grandson. I can have any woman I want. No way I would be into such an ill mannered woman.' 2

Harvey seemed to have convinced himself. He did not stay longer and went to his grandfather's office to meet his grandfather before going to class. On Monday, unlike usual, the Royal Creek Institute would have a flag-raising ceremony that high school and university students would attend.

After breakfast, everyone gathered at the sports ground. The flag-raising ceremony was about to begin when Harvey arrived. Everyone was talking, watching Harvey come over. Many girls screamed, and some boys could not help but look over. Harvey smiled and walked forward with calm steps. He found the line of his class and stood in the front. While everyone was looking at him, a girl trotted up to him. Harvey subtly frowned, somewhat unnerved to be disturbed in public. When he looked down, it turned out to be Snow. Snow looked at him with a shy smile. "Harvey, I will see you during lunch break." After not seeing her in two weeks, Harvey did not reject her but nodded slowly. But at this moment, there were cheers from those behind him.

"I have said it all long: Harvey and Snow are a perfect couple." "Absolutely! This is the first time I have seen Harvey smile so gently at a girl." "I have to say that these two gentle people look great to be together." Snow listened to these words and could not hide the joy in her eyes.

She deliberately did not go out to welcome Harvey this morning. Had she done it, no one would have noticed how special she was to Harvey. She had to let everyone know Harvey was paying special attention to her. Apparently, she succeeded.

Snow pursed her lips and let out a restrained, modest smile. She thought he would feel distant after being away for two weeks. But now, Harvey's attitude toward her had not changed much, which made Snow feel a little relieved. She was determined to have Harvey for herself. She tried her best to keep the title of the most beautiful girl in school just to make herself worthy of him. As long as she had Harvey, no one at school could challenge her position. Nicole was standing not far away and had seen what had happened. She could not help but squint, recognizing Harvey as the man who interrupted her martial arts practice in the morning. 'No wonder he is so rude; He likes Snow. Birds of a feather flock together, so he is unlikely to be a good person.

His handsome face will be a waste if that's the case. All he got is his good looks.' Seeing Nicole also looking at Harvey, Lulu rushed over. "Do you also think Harvey is charming?" It was the first time she had seen Nicole staring at a boy. "Good looks are all he got, and having good looks doesn't mean he is capable." Nicole did not bother to look at them

again.

Harvey seemed to have sensed Nicole's gaze. As soon as she looked away, he glanced in a direction and spotted Nicole. While he was the center of attention and other people were talking about him, Nicole paid him no mind. There was an unexplained frustration inside him. This was the first time he experienced the taste of being slighted, and it really upset him. But Harvey quickly collected himself and pulled back his gaze. The flag-raising ceremony was proceeding in an orderly manner. Unbeknownst to everyone, someone standing by the floor-to-ceiling window in the parlor of the principal's office was watching the flag-raising ceremony outside. The man dug his hands into his pockets and watched the flag-raising ceremony downstairs with great interest. He kept watching when he found the person whom he wanted to see. It did not take long for Mr. Ellison to return to the parlor. "I am sorry for keeping you waiting, Mr. Johnston. I met my grandson just now." "It is okay." Jared pulled back his gaze. "Have you thought about the proposal?" Mr. Ellison knew Jared was talking about investment, and he smiled heartily. "Yeah, but I think you do not know the Royal Creek Institute very well. So I might as well take you on tour today and see if the Royal Creek Institute is a worthwhile investment." Although Mr. Ellison said it euphemistically, he made it clear: the Royal Creek Institute did not need capital injection right now. But Jared may take a look at it, and Mr. Ellison would not refuse if Jared still wanted to do it.

"Okay, but can I choose someone else to show me around?" Jared raised an eyebrow and went straight to the floor-to-ceiling window. Mr. Ellison was puzzled and did not know what was there for Jared to see with the flag-raising ceremony going on, and the sports ground was full of people. But hearing what Jared had said, Mr. Ellison had put two and two together and figured there was someone among the crowd that Jared wanted to see. Mr. Ellison let out a benignant smile. "I was planning to show you around myself. Am I not a good enough tour guide for you, Mr. Johnston?" Since Mr. Ellison had said so, Jared raised an eyebrow and said, "It is my pleasure." Sure enough, Ellison wanted to hide and protect someone in the school.

Seeing that he agreed, Mr. Ellison stood up with no hesitation. "Please, this way." Jared nodded gently and followed Mr. Ellison. The two went downstairs, and Mr. Ellison graciously and gently introduced Jared to the architecture of and teaching in the Royal Creek Institute. Max was following from behind, taking notes with a pen from time to time. Further at the back were the teaching directors and grade directors, who followed with trepidation. They looked nervously at Mr. Ellison and Jared from behind, afraid that a mistake would upset Jared. As they finished touring the school buildings, Mr. Ellison walked with Jared to the sports ground. The flag-raising ceremony was nearing the end, and everyone was about to disperse and return to the teaching buildings. It was at this moment that a commotion rose from the back of the crowd. "Wow! Who is this man? He is so charming!" "Yeah, he looks more charming than Harvey. Is he from our school?" "Idiot! When you see Mr. Ellison is so respectful toward him, you know he is not an ordinary figure." "Absolutely. Even the teachers behind them look so nervous. This guy must be some bigwig."

As more and more people shifted their attention to Jared, Harvey also looked back toward the rear of the sports ground. His pupils suddenly contracted. 'It is him!'

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Jared was walking with Mr. Ellison, face expressionless. A hazy fog seemed to cloud his upturned eyes, making it impossible for people to guess what he was thinking. Unlike Harvey's bright personality, Jared was like the spring snow of March, ultimately cold and forbiddingly charming.

The surrounding students looked at him and became quiet involuntarily as if any extra would be blasphemy.

Mr. Ellison also noticed the changes in the students and glanced at Jared, who seemed to dislike being watched like a monkey, and whose faint smile had disappeared from his face. Mr. Ellison frowned and said, "Let us go to Zone B."

Jared narrowed his eyes as he noticed that there was no one on the sports ground anymore. There was no point in staying here to listen to these annoying noises. His black eyelashes flicked. When he looked up again, he let out a faint smile. "I think that is all for today. Max will follow up with you."

Mr. Ellison still wanted to say something, but when he saw Jared's face, he had no choice but

to nod his head. "Okay, let me see you out, Mr. Johnston."

Jared nodded gently. His gaze fell on Harvey, and the two of them looked at each other silently for a few seconds before Jared turned around and left.

Harvey clenched his fists as he watched Jared leaving. Jared's eyes looked frosty and elitist just now. This guy knew him, but he disregarded him. When thinking of this, a dark and displeased look flashed in his eyes.

Edwin Bradford, Harvey's buddy, saw that he was not happy, came to his side, and whispered, "That guy was looking at you when he left. Do you know him?" Harvey glanced back at Edwin, his tone as gentle as ever as he said, "Yeah, he is the heir to the Johnston Group. You had better not mess with him."

Edwin looked at him in puzzlement. "Johnston Group?"

Harvey looked at him and smiled without saying a word.

Edwin's face changed. Just as he wanted to say something aloud, he came to his senses and lowered his voice. "The all-powerful Johnston Group?"

The Johnston family owned the Johnston Group. They were involved in the military, political, and business circles and could be said to be the most connected family in San Joto.

If it was he who had returned, there would be a major storm coming to San Joto.

Harvey said not a word but just nodded gently.

Edwin was stunned. "Hasn't he been abroad all the time? Why is he back?"

Everyone knew that San Joto's top magnate, the Johnston family, had a rebellious heir five years ago. He gave up the helm at the Johnson Group that his grandfather left for him, went abroad to carve his own path, and even eventually established his own business empire. His company, JJ Johnston Group, was now one of the largest in the world, no smaller than Johnston Group of San Joto. Edwin could not think of why Jared wanted to return when he was doing so well abroad. He would not be as free working in Johnston Group as he was abroad. "I don't understand either." Harvey's eyes darkened.

Edwin scratched his head. He would have to ask his father back home then.

Just as Edwin froze in place in a daze, Harvey had already left. When he snapped back from his thoughts, he called out, "Hey, wait for me. I have something more to say!" But Harvey had gone far. Edwin did not need to be a rocket scientist to know that Harvey was going to look for Snow. He smirked when Snow came to mind. He had always felt that Snow did not deserve Harvey. Right now, everyone was staring at the freshman Class A doorway, surprised to see that Harvey had come looking for Snow.

Snow was flattered to see Harvey, a bright smile spreading across her face.

She saw the stares from the corner of her eye, and the smile on her face became even broader. She looked at Harvey with surprise. "Didn't I say I would go to see you?" Snow thought, 'He came over right after the flag-raising ceremony was over. Does that mean he missed me very much?'

Harvey looked at her with an unfathomable expression in his eyes. He said in a soft voice, "It doesn't matter. So why do you want to see me?" In fact, he did not like Snow to visit his class to look for him because he did not like to be the talk of his classmates.

No one knew what he was thinking, though. When they heard Harvey talking to Snow so gently, they all looked at Snow with envy. Harvey was approachable, gentle, and courteous, but it did not mean he could mingle with everyone.

There were many people in the classes next door poking their heads out to take a glimpse of the most charming boy and girl in the school. Snow's fans admired the two of them, saying that the two were a match made in heaven.

At this moment, a clear voice came. "No doubt that Snow is pretty. But compared with Nicole, she is still nowhere close. If it weren't for Nicole's notorious character, alas..." Harvey fell into thought when he heard Nicole's name.

The cold glance of the girl in the morning had been firmly imprinted on his mind. Now that he heard someone mention her name, he flashed back to the brief moment he had met with Nicole and the look in Nicole's eyes the moment the flag was raised.

The girl's beautiful face appeared in his mind's eye. He had seen enough pretty girls since he was a child, but he had to admit that Nicole was indeed the best looking of all the girls he had

ever seen.

Snow could no longer maintain her gentle face when she heard what people said and saw Harvey's silence. 'Nicole is certainly up to no good. She has seduced Gary. And now people are even associating her with Harvey,' Snow muttered in her mind. Snow took a deep

breath, her voice sharp when she said, "Harvey, what are you thinking?" Harvey frowned. "Nothing, just tell me whatever you want to say. It is almost time for class." Harvey's impatience surprised Snow. He had always been very polite to her. But how could this change all of a sudden?

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Feeling aggrieved, Snow immediately lowered her head and whispered, "I just want to tell you that Nicole bullied Raine in the caféteria yesterday. According to Raine, Gary seemed to be protective of Nicole recently, as if Nicole had fascinated him. I think that is unbecoming of Nicole to do that."

Raine increasingly hated Nicole and wished that Harvey would help her teach Nicole a lesson.

Harvey looked into Snow's eyes and had figured out everything. "So you want me to step up and help you and Raine teach Nicole a lesson." His voice sounded nonchalant, making it impossible for people to tell his emotions. Snow looked up at Harvey with anticipation. She knew Harvey understood what she meant. In fact, she was confident that Harvey would agree to it. After all, he had never refused all her requests last time.

But this time, Harvey said nothing, just looking faintly at Snow, who was standing there. Feeling a little nervous, Snow quickly continued. "Nicole bullied me before. You should have seen that photo on the school forum. She is ill-mannered and nasty in words and actions. She has even hit my friend for no reason."

Harvey looked at her quietly, thinking of Nicole's face. 'Is she really the kind of person Snow has said she is? But Snow doesn't have to lie, and Nicole is indeed infamous on the forum.' There was still silence as Harvey did not speak. Just as Snow panicked, fearing that he would reject her, Harvey said, "Okay, I will help you."

Snow breathed a sigh of relief and looked at Harvey with a sweet smile on her face. She knew Harvey would agree.

Harvey also returned a smile but with a hint of austerity in his eyes. He might have agreed, but he would first investigate what had actually happened. He did not want to be reckless. In high school, Nicole was reading a book, waiting for class. Not long after, Lulu also returned and said excitedly to her, "Guess who I just met, Nicole?"

Nicole heard her excitement and looked up. "Who?" Lulu furtively leaned close to Nicole's ear and whispered, "After the flag-raising ceremony, Mr. Ellison inspected the school with a man who looked more handsome than Harvey, allegedly wanting to invest in the school. I heard Vivian say that the guy was the boss of JJ Johnston Group. Seriously, he is rich, single, and available!" At first, Nicole thought Lulu had some important things to tell her, not expecting to hear her spewing gossip. She had no words for it.

But after a moment, she frowned as something came to mind. "What company did you just say?"

Lulu did not know why Nicole asked, but she still repeated it honestly. "IJ Johnston Group." Nicole was spinning the pen in between her fingers, deep in thought.

Lulu saw Nicole's reaction and asked, "What is wrong, Nicole? You know the owner of JJ Johnston Group?"

Nicole shook her head. Jared was the only Johnston she knew. But Jared was the heir to the Johnston Group, so she did not know the CEO of JJ Johnston Group. The reason she found JJ Johnston Group familiar was because of a previous job.

But when she was partnering with Specter on that job, he screwed up and got the database of the JJ Johnston Group implicated. She had tried her best to make up for it. But it was said that JJ Johnston Group's software was on its first day on the market, and it was supposed to be a hit. But a major bug cost them at least \$100 million in losses.

Nicole had always felt a little guilty about that because that was the only mistake she had made when working with someone else. Ever since then, she had also been implicated and could not accept jobs as frequently as before. Clients were shunning her, probably for fear of earning the wrath of JJ Johnston Group and affecting their business cooperation.

"Where is the CEO of JJ Johnston Group now?" Lulu overheard Ellison say that he was seeing the guy out before she came. "He is leaving now. Ellison sees him out."

Nicole nodded in acknowledgment. She then grabbed her bag and headed out of the room. Something came to mind all of a sudden, and she looked back at Lulu with a serious face." Don't tell anyone about my relationship with the Riddle family just yet." Lulu nodded and replied, "Got it." Nicole nodded and then dashed toward the school gate. She moved fast and arrived at the gate in no time, just in time to see a black vehicle, the brand of which no one recognized, slowly drive out of the school. Nicole frowned as she saw the side profile of the somewhat familiar face in the rolled-down window. The man had no expression on his face, unlike his usual look. He was cold and serious, even intimidating.

'Could it be that Jared is not only the heir of Johnson Group but also the CEO of JJ Johnston Group? Damn it! How did I not think of that earlier? If so, then this fiancé of mine is also my biggest' creditor.' Just how naive I was to drink drinking coffee with him all day long like nothing had happened. So Jared must be the person who put a bounty on me on The Hunters dark web! I'll be done for if I am busted.'

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Nicole had never been afraid of anyone, but now she was as nervous as hell. She could barely hear what the teachers were teaching in class today as her mind was filled with Jared. After that day, Nicole no longer dared to go to the café again. Before she could figure out

how to solve the problem, she had better lie low. For five days, Jared did not see Nicole. Thinking back to the last time, he did not remember he had ever said anything wrong to her. So why did this little girl ignore him? She even ignored his messages, informing her of the new coffee arrival. Could it be that coffee did not work for her either? Jared sat depressed in the café, looking at his phone. Nicole really did not reply to his messages. Max was seeing Jared like this for the first time. Since the day before yesterday, Jared had been in a bad mood. Every day, he came to the café, sat there, apparently waiting for someone. But Nicole never appeared again, seemingly disappearing from this world. Seeing that it was already dark outside, Jared suddenly heard someone entering the door. He thought it was Nicole, but it turned out to be Norah. Jared's expression turned icy again. Norah had been sending him a text message every two days, and he ignored them all. Now she came looking for him at the café. "Mr. Johnston? I didn't expect to see you here. What a coincidence." Norah cheekily pretended to meet him by chance. In reality, ever since she knew Jared owned this café, she had been coming here very often. But every time she finished her homework and came, Jared had left. But today, Jared was still here. It looked like her persistence had paid off.

"Coincidence? A staff member at the counter desk said that you come every two days, don't you?" Jared questioned her bluntly. He was not interested in Norah.

Norah was embarrassed but quickly calmed down. "I can't help it. The coffee here is so good. I like the coffee here, just like Nicole does." Jared's expression eased up at the mention of Nicole. "Nicole said she liked the coffee here?" "Yeah." Norah let out a smile. "Can I sit down and talk, Mr. Johnston?" Jared frowned, but in the end, he did not refuse. "Sit down, please." "Thank you, Mr. Johnston." Norah was almost ecstatic, unconsciously fiddling with her hair and staring at Jared as she sat down.

But Jared was unimpressed and ordered Max to serve Norah a cup of coffee. He then asked," What is Nicole doing these days?" He was really curious why Nicole did not come to the café. But he did not realize that his questions had sent Norah a blow. At first, Norah thought Jared was interested in her when he let her sit down, not expecting that he was actually asking questions about Nicole. Suppressing her disappointment, Norah forced a smile. "She scored zero in the Math Olympiad test the other day and is desperately trying to make up for it. After

all, the monthly exam is just around the corner. She may fail if she does not work hard." Norah sounded like she was concerned about Nicole, but all she said was about Nicole's shortcomings.

But Jared could not care about Nicole's academic performance. "That makes sense now." It was because Nicole was busy studying that she ignored him, and he felt better now. "Is there anything you need her help with? I can help you too." Norah did not want to miss any chance to offer herself.

Jared's expression turned icy. "It is alright. She is irreplaceable." Those few words once again sent Norah's heart to the bottom. Questions had been asked, and the coffee was served. Jared no longer wanted to linger on." This cup of coffee is on me. I will make a move first." "Mr. Johnston..." Norah's eyes widened. She had been dressed up for so many days just to

meet Jared once, not expecting that he would get up and leave after just asking a few questions

about Nicole.

Jared did not look back as he pushed the door open and left with Max.

Norah looked at him from behind with anger in her eyes. 'Damn it, Nicole! What the hell is so good about you that Jared cares so much about you?'

Many guys at school tried to chat her up, but she ignored them all just so that she could win Jared's heart and beat down Snow and Raine. But she did not expect Jared to brush her off just like that. It seemed that only when Nicole's reputation was ruined that Jared would change his mind. 'Just wait and see, Nicole. I will certainly give as good as I get.'

On a sunny day, Nicole and Lulu had a morning class and then went to have lunch at the caféteria.

While on their way there, they just happened to overhear people discussing something. Lulu looked curiously in the direction they were pointing and saw a group of hooligans sitting in the cafeteria reading books and doing revisions, seemingly hard at work. Many people around

their mobile phones like they saw some rare wonders. Some of them uploaded photos to the school forum, and it went viral instantly.

[Isn't that Justin? Did he hit his head somewhere or something?)

[This is the agreement between Nicole and Austin. If Austin can get to the top twenty in this monthly exam, Nicole will agree to become his boss.)

(I have got to say that Nicole is simply playing him.) [Absolutely. Fat chance of Austin getting into the top twenty. Everyone knows his grades are so bad that he has always been maintaining at the bottom ten places forever.)

Almost all the comments were mocking and questioning Austin. Only a few comments said that the learning atmosphere in the school atmosphere had changed for the better, but unfortunately, no one cared.

Lulu entered the caféteria and saw Austin, the leader, biting his pen and pondering a language paper. She knew that Austin and Nicole had an agreement, but she did not expect Austin to take that so seriously. "Nicole, you see, Austin and his underlings are studying really seriously.

Nicole looked ahead and saw Austin vexed by questions. Seeing that, she walked straight toward Austin. Lulu was stunned and quickly followed. Nicole came beside Austin and tapped lightly on his desk.

Austin was irritable because of a tough question. When someone came up and tapped on his desk, he got pissed and vowed to teach the person a lesson.

He looked up with a mean look on his face. His expression froze when he saw Nicole. "Boss? What are you doing here?"

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Nicole looked at his empty paper. He had gotten the only multiple-choice question he had answered wrong. She could not help but frown. Austin saw her looking at her paper and hurriedly reached to cover it, his face turning red. "Boss, don't look at it. I started this from scratch and had learned nothing before." "Come to the café after school and ask me anything that you don't know." Studying in the class was prone to drawing unwanted attention, not as convenient as studying outside. Nicole did not look at Austin's expression but left with Lulu.

His underlings behind him also saw this and looked at each other for a moment, and then a bold one poked at Austin and asked, "Austin, what is our boss doing here? What did she tell you that makes you look so stupid?"

Austin raised his fist the moment he heard the boy calling him stupid, wanting to beat him. The boy immediately raised his hands begging for forgiveness and asked brazenly, "Austin, please tell us what she has said. After all, we are only here reading these stupid books for your sake."

Those behind them also looked at Austin and nodded. "Exactly, Austin. We are all working hard for the boss; you can't be so selfish. Tell us what the boss says."

Austin looked at them. "Don't be frightened if I tell you all."

They all said they would not be scared. So Austin swallowed and then said, "The boss said that she would help us with tuition."

'What?' Nicole was notorious for her poor grades at the Royal Creek Institute, having scored a zero on the Math Olympiad test and being the first student in the history of the Royal Creek Institute to score zero. Yet she wanted to give them tuition? 'Is she kidding us?' Austin looked at their shocked faces and finally realized how silly he had just looked. Someone muttered in a low voice, "If we let Nicole give us tuition, we might as well find Raine's help. She is the first in the grade." But quickly, they shut their mouths up when they saw Austin's expression.

Austin heard the objection from his underlings and waved his hand at them with dignity and honor. "Follow me to the café after school. Let the boss give us tuition." In fact, he knew Nicole's academic level; it would be an impressive achievement if she could help them get to the bottom twenty of the grade. But Nicole was his boss, so he trusted her unconditionally.

There was a great deal of mourning among his underlings, but Austin glared at them. "Step forward if any of you are not happy with it!"

No one dared to defy Austin's command or said a word, even though they all were reluctant. Austin nodded with delight and said, "Let's go. It is almost class. We have to return to the classroom."

They walked away as if they were on the warpath. The other students in the caféteria stared with their mouths agape. 'Did we hear that right? Nicole will give Austin tuition?! A zero scorer is giving students at the bottom of the heap tuition?! It's like the blind leading the blind.' Gary was also in the caféteria and watched Nicole walk past him. He felt terrible when

she did not spare a glance at him but walked straight toward Austin. As if that was not enough, Nicole said she would give Austin tuition. Hearing that made Gary frown like a thunder cloud. Nicole's habit of talking big had not changed a bit.

Sitting across from him, Raine and Norah were also shocked by Nicole's decision to give Austin tuition. They could not believe that Nicole had the nerve to give others tuition with her grades.

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Except for her achievement in the Math Olympiad, Nicole had nothing to show in other areas. But Austin had no qualms about accepting Nicole's offer, and that made Raine angry. Austin was in the same grade as her, who was sitting in front of them and the top student in 12th grade. Austin had snubbed her by doing that. She sneered when thinking of this. "I admire Nicole's courage. She herself was at the bottom of the barrel yet wanted to give Austin tuition. She should have more self-awareness." Raine echoed. "Yeah, she is really audacious enough to do that. Let's wait and see how she embarrasses herself." Gary had no appetite and felt depressed when the thought of the bet between Nicole and Mr. Kennedy came to mind. The Math Olympiad would be held one day before the monthly exam, so his time was tight. With this thought in mind, Gary stood up, ignored Raine, who was still talking to herself and left the caféteria with his bag. Raine looked melancholily at Gary and stomped her feet in hatred as he went. "It is all Nicole's fault! It affects Gary's appetite again!" As she spoke, she glanced at Nicole and Lulu, who were queuing in line. The longer she looked, the more upset she became.

Having spotted an opportunity, Norah said, "Don't worry, we don't need to do anything now because she is going to make an exhibition of herself soon."

'Both the Math Olympiad competition and the monthly exam were just around the corner. Everyone would see Nicole's true colors. When the time comes, I will add fuel to the fire and make her reputation stink By then, Jared will ditch her.'Norah smiled triumphantly at the thought that she would soon beat Raine and Snow and gain Jared's favor.

What Norah said quickly calmed Raine down, and a sneer crept across Raine's face. She would like to take a good look at how long Nicole could remain smug.

After the lunch break, the news that Nicole was going to give Austin tuition spread. Many people were gloating and laughed at Nicole for biting off more than she could chew. Nicole was sitting in her seat. Bradley, sitting next to her, looked over and whispered at Nicole after seeing the school forum. "Nicole, are you really going to give Austin tuition?" Nicole flipped through the book in her hand. "I just asked him to ask me questions he didn't know."

Bradley was just about to say something, but Jack in the back could no longer sit still. At

first, Jack had changed his mind about Nicole. But she had not only refused Gary's help but also promised something that she could not deliver. Now Gary was studying desperately every day, worried that he would embarrass himself for not getting first place. What about Nicole? She brazenly said that she was going to give Austin tuition in this tense moment. So Jack disliked Nicole now. She had scored zero on the test. What made her think she could teach others? If she had the time, she should run errands for Gary instead. Jack could not help but sneer. "Be more self-aware, Nicole. Why would others seek your advice when you have scored zero? Even if Austin is not as great as others, he is still in the top ten."

Speaking of this, Jack paused for a few seconds before he continued. "You care so much about Austin, but why don't you see how much Gary has done for you? Gary is studying hard to make up for your big talk, yet you show no gratitude for him at all. Don't you think you are going too far?"

His speech was so impassioned that he even felt righteous. But Nicole did not even look at him but lazily rested her head on her hand and flipped through the book Jack banged the table with anger. "This is enough, Nicole! At first, I thought you were just reserved and not a bad person. But I was wrong. You are really the same as what was written on the school forum: cold-blooded and violent."

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Nicole heard him say this and slowly looked back at him. There was no emotion in her upturned eyes as if she just wanted to see who he really was.

Bradley, who was next to them, stood up. "Who do you say is cold blooded? The last time Nicole and I were attacked by Cain, I saw a few of you nearby. Did you guys come over to help us? If it weren't for Nicole, I might still be lying in the hospital. What has she done to you that makes you want to accuse her of being cold blooded and violent?"

Jack looked speechlessly at Bradley. It was really their fault last time. Nicole might have first said that she did not need their protection, but they should not have sat by and done nothing while watching their classmates being beaten up.

Seeing that everyone in the class was all looking at her, the class monitor frowned, stood up, and maintained orders. "Bradley, just shut up, would you? Jack, you sit down, too."

After Jack sat down, Bradley was indignant. Apparently, it was Jack who provoked Nicole first.

"Obviously, it was Jack who provoked Nicole first. Shouldn't you scold him?"

Vivian, the class monitor, looked at Bradley impatiently. She was frustrated when she saw Nicole's face from the corner of her eye.

She was irate to see Nicole stirring up trouble just because she was pretty. There was nothing wrong with what Jack said.

"Bradley, I know you and Nicole are friends, and you are on her side. But Nicole's behavior

has brought a negative impact on our class. I think what Jack said about her has merit. You shouldn't defend her again."

Nicole heard this and lazily looked up at Vivian. Nicole's stare caused Vivian to feel diffident. But she continued to condemn Nicole. "I think Nicole should apologize to Gary. After all, it is because of her irresponsible words that caused trouble to Gary." Most of the classmates agreed with Vivian. They all looked at Nicole as if urging her to apologize. Seeing this, Nicole closed the book with a snap. Just as Bradley wanted to say something, she turned to look at him, motioning him to sit down first. Nicole then stood up and walked toward Gary in the back row without looking at Vivian at all. She looked cold yet exuded an indescribable beauty.

Gary watched as Nicole strode over and looked condescendingly at him. With both her hands on the table, she leaned slightly toward him with intimidation. Nicole looked at Gary in front of him with a rare hint of anger on her face. "Gary, when did I say I needed you to win the bet?" No one expected Nicole to talk to Gary like this. All eyes were on her with surprise. Gary looked sheepishly at Nicole, whose face was so close to him that he could smell the

refreshing scent of her body. But her question sounded so merciless. He was just trying to help her win the bet. Yet she turned around to question him.

Vivian saw Nicole questioning Gary and got even more worked up. She frowned and said, "Nicole, don't you think you have gone too far? Everyone knows your level. Who do you think you are that can get back first place in the Math Olympiad competition? In case you don't know, the mayor is paying great attention to this year's Math Olympiad competition, and he will be one of the guests presenting the award. It is okay if you don't appreciate Gary's help, but you shouldn't question him. You are really hopeless." Nicole did not look at Vivian. She stared at Gary and said coldly, "Gary, you must take note that you should not just care about what you think. Instead, please see if others need your help What she meant was obvious: she did not need his help at all.

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With that said and disregarding whether Gary had understood what she said, Nicole pulled back her hands from the table and walked slowly back to her place. The entire class was silent.

Gary looked at Nicole's back. Even if she leaned back lazily, her back was still straight, unlike the pretentious pride of Raine and Snow. Nicole's pride was not showy but subtle and in her bones. But her pride could be felt in her behavior, look, and action. Maybe he was indeed wrong this time. But when thinking of Nicole's zero-score test paper, a determined look appeared in Gary's eyes again. Mr. Louis had once said that Nicole was talented, and he

would not want Nicole to be barred from taking part in the Math Olympiad competition from now on. He must help her win the bet. Thinking of this, Gary glanced at Nicole and then said coldly to Jack, "You come with me." Jack looked at Gary in bafflement, wondering if he had offended him. After Gary and Jack left, the class fell into a dead silence. Instead of dealing with Nicole, Gary chose to call Jack, who was the source of the problem, out. Everyone, especially the girls, looked at Nicole with jealousy in their eyes. Vivian looked at Nicole frostily as if she was to poke a hole in Nicole's body with her gaze.

But Nicole did not look at her. In her eyes, Gary was the crux of all the problems. Fixing Gary and the others would automatically fall in line.

The school bell rang, and everyone pulled back their attention from Nicole, acting as if nothing had happened. Ms. Emerson walked in and saw Gary and Jack not being in their seats. She frowned but said nothing

After class, Ms. Emerson called Nicole out alone, handed her two exercises, looked at her, and said, "I have pondered about it and think that you are not someone who would say something irresponsibly. These are the original math papers authored by Mr. Hancock from previous Math Olympiad competitions. Take them back and study them."

Nicole looked at her and felt a little surprised. It seemed that Ms. Emerson really thought so when she saw Ms. Emerson's sincere look on her face. So Nicole did not decline but took the two exercises. "Thank you, Ms. Emerson."

"Go now." Ms. Emerson smiled at her.

Nicole walked away, but Ms. Emerson stood there, looking at Nicole, and whispered, "All the best, Nicole." She had been thinking about it all these days. Nicole was just trying to prove herself. She should not have suspected Nicole. As a teacher, she should have encouraged her students.

Back at the office, Ms. Emerson had just sat down when Mr. Kennedy came over with a thermos cup in his hand. "I heard that your student, Nicole, who couldn't even help herself, wanted to give the second-to-last Austin tuition. I just want to remind you that Austin is in twelfth grade and his poor academic performance is not something that Nicole can help. You have got to look after this 'Math Olympiad genius' of yours. Don't forget, we still have a bet."

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Mr. Kennedy was triumphant as if he had seen Nicole lose her bet.

Mr. Kennedy swagged out of the office, thinking that Ms. Emerson would let him taunt her and say nothing, just like she would previously. But he was wrong this time. Ms. Emerson said faintly from behind him, "Mr. Kennedy, you don't have to worry about how my students are doing. Nicole has the freedom to choose, and I will not interfere. However, there is one

thing I am curious about you, Mr. Kennedy. Can't you even afford a cup of coffee? Otherwise, why would you always come to my office for coffee?"

Getting taunted by Ms. Emerson, Mr. Kennedy looked back and pointed at her angrily. "How dare you satirize me! You had better believe I will tell the director—"

Ms. Emerson was sitting at her desk, looking at him frostily, her face nonchalant when she heard him mention the director.

She had thought it through. Instead of grinning and bearing it every day, she might as well send the helve after the hatchet and resign. Mr. Kennedy was stunned by what she said. He had always been bullying newcomers and had never been treated like this. So he did not know how to deal with it for a while but could only say some harsh words. "Great, Ms. Emerson. You don't even give a damn to the director now. Remember what you have said." Ms. Emerson watched on and felt vindicated as he turned away, disconcerted. But Mr. Kennedy said Nicole was going to give tuition to Austin? What was he talking

about? Nicole was in Mathematics school, while Austin was in language school and a twelfth-grader. How did an eleventh-grader give tuition to Austin?

But as she herself said, Ms. Emerson was not going to interfere with Nicole's decisions and actions. Nicole had her own ideas, and she knew what she was doing.

Ms. Emerson took a sip of hot coffee. She did not bother much about what Nicole did. It was dinnertime. Nicole and Lulu headed straight to the caféteria after school.

While on the way there, Lulu was chattering about how cool Nicole was at noon. Nicole listened on with not much reaction on her face. She just did what she felt she should do, not as cool as Lulu said.

The two arrived at the caféteria, ordered their food, then found a place and sat down. Just. then, there was a sudden commotion in the caféteria, and Lulu looked over curiously. "Wow! It is Harvey and Snow! Are they here to have dinner together?"

The girls had gone ape. After all, Harvey was a twelfth-grader. Just like Stanley, the president of the student council, he could rarely be seen at school. So it was a surprise that Harvey had been appearing in school for the past two days. What a broad stroke of luck. Harvey and Snow were walking side by side, both of them having very gentle smiles on their faces. Harvey wore a white casual suit, looking warm and gentle. His handsome face did not show any displeasure despite the commotion. Instead, he was courteous and gentle to everyone. Snow, who walked beside him, was a little outclassed. She was beautiful, gentle, and generous, no doubt. But she did not look as eye-catching as she should be in front of Harvey. "People say Snow is imitating Harvey's fashion, and it looks like it is the case," someone whispered. Many people nodded their heads in agreement. After all, the traces of imitation were too obvious. Nicole did not look at the two people who were celebrated by all, while Lulu exclaimed in surprise, "It is really Harvey! I couldn't see his face clearly during the flag-raising ceremony because of the distance. But seeing him in close-range, he looks even more charming." Nicole was busy having her meal and ignored Lulu's cries of excitement. The hoo-ha stopped all of a sudden. So did Lulu. Nicole then heard Lulu ask in a strange tone of voice, "Do you know Harvey?"

"No," Nicole replied without looking up. Lulu continued. "Really? But he has been staring at

you, and now he is coming toward you."

Nicole paused what she was doing and looked up. Sure enough, Harvey, who was still surrounded by the crowd, was slowly walking step over toward her table. Snow was following Harvey, eyes staring at Nicole with ill will. Nicole immediately grabbed her bag and said to Lulu, "Let's go." Lulu was a little confused, but she still did what Nicole said, carrying her plate and preparing to leave.

Seeing Nicole standing up as if to leave, the smile in Harvey's eyes stopped. He had never seen someone like her who avoided him like the plague.

Before Nicole could go far, she heard an extremely gentle voice calling out. "Nicole, wait a second." His voice was the same as yesterday, full of a hint of lofty gentleness. She walked ahead, ignoring him and the stares from others.

Everyone in the caféteria was looking at them. They all were surprised to hear Harvey call out Nicole's name. For someone as popular as Harvey, there were less than a handful of people in the entire Royal Creek Institute who could actually talk to him.

After all, considering Harvey's family background, not everyone, especially commoners, could talk to him. People even felt inadequate to get a gentle glance from him. Harvey might look friendly, but deep down inside, he was full of himself. He was nice to everyone, but he only remembered the names of a few of them. But just now, he had called out Nicole's name with no difficulty.

Many girls looked jealous in their eyes the moment he called out Nicole's name. They had liked Harvey for so long a time, yet Harvey did not even remember their faces. Never mind Snow, who had been following Harvey all this while. But who did Nicole think she was to deserve Harvey's attention? Just because she had a pretty face, or was it because she could stir up trouble?

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Everyone thought Nicole would stop when Harvey called out her name. It turned out that Nicole not only did not stop but also walked even faster. Nicole frowned, and she saw the staircase up ahead packed with people wanting to get a glimpse of Harvey. "Please give way. Thank you." These people just looked at her in astonishment, and they gave no response after hearing her words. It was as if her disregard for Harvey had stunned them.

While Nicole looked impatiently at these people blocking her way, Harvey had come up from behind, while Snow could barely keep up. It was clear that Snow had lost pace in catching up with Harvey.

She was almost being left behind by Harvey in front of everyone's eyes, and this was an even greater shame than screwing up her deportment. Snow looked at Nicole with bitter eyes.

Harvey also looked at Nicole, his eyes filled with unspeakable emotion. It had been a long time since he last lost himself in pursuing someone. He now did not even get a

response from her, even though he called her name. She really had many surprises for him. Nicole turned to look at the two of them. She had no words. Since she could not walk away, she placed her and Lulu's plates into the plate collection position before turning around and looking at Harvey and Snow with her arms folded.

Harvey did not look like he was angry. Instead, a smile spread across his face as he saw Nicole's apathy. "You heard I was calling you, didn't you? Why didn't you wait?" It was better for him not to call her because she made a run for it when he did. Nicole really did not respect him at all.

Nicole looked at him indifferently. Neither did she answer his question. Lulu looked at Nicole, then at Harvey, and whispered, "Harvey, Nicole said she doesn't know you. She rarely interacts with people she doesn't know." Everyone was even more stunned at this moment. Who in school did not know Harvey? He was Mr. Ellison's grandson. Yet Nicole said she did not know him? Nine out of ten did not believe it. But to say that she knew Harvey and ignored him made her look even more arrogant. Harvey's face changed subtly upon hearing this. Yesterday he had said hello to her, yet she now said that she did not know him? He felt ineffably upset but still looked gentle on his face. He looked at Lulu and said, "Thank you for telling me that." Lulu blushed as Harvey looked at her. Nicole stepped forward and kept Lulu behind her. "If I am not mistaken, you are up to something here." He extended an olive branch to Lulu because he could do nothing with her. No way she was going to be fooled.

Her alertness surprised Harvey. Nicole looked at him, knowing that this guy was up to no good. There was a smile on her face, but deep down inside, she was indifferent. Harvey snapped back from his thought, looking at Nicole, and said softly, "Hi, Nicole, 1 arn Harvey. This is my friend Snow. Now we know each other, don't we?" Nicole said nothing, nor there were emotions on her face. It was as if this was just not-so clever acting

Harvey was not angry either. "Now that we know each other, let's talk about you bullying Snow and Raine."

There was an uproar as soon as his voice trailed off. Sure enough, Harvey was here to stand up for Snow. All eyes were on Nicole at this moment. Everyone watched with a look of great schadenfreude.

Nicole watched the farce, her expression turning icy as she looked Harvey in the eyes. "What do you really want to say?"

Harvey looked at the uncooperative girl, the smile on his face fading gradually. Instead, a glint of coldness flashed in his eyes. "If you apologize to the two of them in public and promise not to bother them again, I will let the matter rest. How about that?"

Snow was triumphant, ready to hear Harvey give Nicole some severe punishments. After all, his grandfather, Mr. Ellison, was the principal of the Royal Creek Institute. Meting out punishment for Nicole could not be easier. To her surprise, Harvey had just asked Nicole to apologize? Her eyes were filled with indignation, and Snow whined, "Harvey..."

Snow was taking great pains to maintain her magnanimous image. Instead of telling Harvey that she was not happy with the outcome, she used her puppy dog eyes on him. It would not only show her closeness to Harvey but also let Harvey understand her hint. But all this fell through, for Harvey completely ignored her. He looked solemnly at Nicole across from him, waiting for her to buckle.

Before he returned from abroad, he had seen the photos on the school forum and was thinking of giving Nicole a severe punishment. But after he dug deeper, he found some people thought Nicole was not as bad as the rumors. So Harvey just wanted Nicole to apologize when he confronted her. He thought Nicole would agree to such a simple request. After all, this punishment was really light.

But Nicole just looked at him with a smirk and said indifferently, "Why should I apologize?" Apparently, it was the two of them who made things up. So why should she apologize to the two of them?

Harvey looked at her frosty and proud expression, which looked as if she saw him as a nobody. Between the two of them, he clearly had a higher stature, yet she was still proud. Her upturned eyes had a light in them as if it was an indestructible sword. Her contempt made Harvey's gaze turn cold. No one had ever dared to defy his words in front of him. "I give you one last chance. Apologize to Snow, and I will let the matter rest."

Nicole did not even look at Snow. Instead, she looked Harvey in the eyes, not feeling intimidated. "Same answer: Why should I?"

Harvey looked at her and had a headache all of a sudden. She was just a girl. So why did she not obey his words? Why was she not under his control? Why did she look at him with such indifferent eyes? Everyone, including Lulu, was standing behind Harvey, unable to see his almost out-of control expression. Nicole looked at him and let out a smile at last. She approached him but quickly walked past him, just like when they first met, leaving behind only a faint, refreshing fragrance. Only this time, she had spoken to him. 2

"Harvey, first ask your grandfather if you are qualified to teach me a lesson." 6