

The Beginning Of All Sins novel (Olivia and Tyler)

c 401

[407 words]

Olivia asked, "What was that noise?"

Claude looked away. He stopped squinting as he replied, "Nothing. It must be coming from downstairs."

Dylan walked a bit away before picking up his phone. It was Naomi on the line.

"Where are you, Dylan?"

"I'm at Blue Bar."

"I'm coming."

"You are?"

It was his friend's girlfriend's birthday, and she knew Naomi well. She probably invited her too.

Dylan was surprised to hear Naomi was coming. He hadn't seen her much since she got sick.

She said cheerfully, "Of course I have to come to Louis's girlfriend's birthday party. I've been in the hospital lately, so I'm bored. I need some fresh air."

"Are you coming alone? Please think about this."

"No, Tyler is coming with me."

Dylan was even more puzzled to hear that. Wasn't she Tyler's wife's sister?

He looked into the distance, thinking about this, and wondered if Olivia and Claude were still nearby.

With a million thoughts racing through his mind, he replied, "Sure. We're happy you're coming since it's been a long time since we last met. The room is ready. I hope it's not too loud for you." Naomi joked, "But I'm coming in a wheelchair. Please don't tease me."

"How could we, Princess?"

"Okay, wait for me. Tyler and I are already in the elevator."

"What?" Before Dylan could respond, he heard the elevator open.

He wasn't sure where to look. Finally, he decided to face the elevator and saw Naomi there. She was in a wheelchair, with Emma pushing her. Tyler was standing next to her.

Dylan sensed that today might be eventful. Ignoring everything else, he went to greet them. "My, my. It's been a while, Ms. Naomi. It's great to see you again."

Naomi smiled when she saw him. "It's my fault we haven't met often."

Tyler asked, "Why aren't you inside?"

Dylan replied, "It's too loud in there, so I came out to take your call."

Tyler stood next to Naomi, instructing Emma on things to be cautious about.

Dylan looked at them and thought, 'They're acting just like they used to.'

As he pondered this, Tyler said, "Let's go inside."

Dylan smiled to avoid looking uneasy. "Let's go."

Tyler and Naomi led the way, with Dylan following.

As Dylan wondered whether they would bump into Olivia and Claude, a man and woman appeared from the opposite direction.

They stopped instinctively when they saw the three of them.

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c 402

[321 words]

Tyler stared at them, while Naomi looked surprised. She frowned. "Olivia?"

Olivia, who was behind Claude, stopped when she saw them.

Claude didn't expect this either but seemed relaxed when he saw Tyler. They stared at each other.

Tyler looked serious as he watched Claude, and Naomi kept her eyes on Olivia. She said, "Olivia, you..."

The air turned awkward and quiet, like time had stopped. Dylan stood still and gulped.

Claude broke the silence with a smile. "Tyler, Naomi." He seemed cheerful, like he was happy to bump into old friends.

Naomi, still watching Olivia, turned to Claude when he spoke. "Why are you here, Claude?"

Claude smiled and said, "We just ran into each other."

His explanation sounded... odd, as if hiding something. Naomi didn't know what to say and looked at Tyler for help. He stared back at Claude calmly. Olivia stayed silent behind Claude, not looking up.

Just then, Sophie arrived. She was shocked to see them together and hurried over. "Olivia!" She held her hands and said, "I went to the bathroom. Sorry for making you wait."

Sophie tried to explain that Olivia was with her, but it felt forced, especially since Olivia had appeared with Claude.

Dylan watched everyone, trying to understand the situation.

Finally, Naomi said, "Olivia, aren't you joining us? We're here for a friend's birthday. Come on." She tried to lighten the mood. Olivia had to at least pretend everything was okay with Tyler. Naturally, Olivia knew what Naomi was trying to do. But she didn't go along with it, saying, "The driver is on call, Naomi. I'll head home after my meeting with Sophie."

Naomi was caught off guard by Olivia's reply.

Dylan was even more puzzled about their relationships.

Feeling awkward, Naomi looked at Tyler. He said calmly, "She can do whatever she wants."

Naomi nodded at his words.

Everything seemed normal again. Tyler then turned to Dylan. "Let's go."

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- Chapter 403

Chapter 403

[420 words]

Dylan quickly replied to Tyler, "Okay, they've been waiting. I'll tell them to keep it down and not to drink, smoke, or shout."

Naomi looked a bit better, but she was still weak. Even though it wasn't cold, she sat with a thick blanket over her legs and was followed around by a nurse and a maid.

Emma pushed her wheelchair into a room when she heard this, while Tyler glanced at Olivia, who was standing behind Claude, before entering the room himself.

Olivia watched everyone go into the room, leaving her and Sophie alone in the hallway.

Sophie then said, "You can go in, Claude. Olivia and I need to talk a bit more."

Claude looked at Olivia for a moment before responding, "Okay, take good care of her."

Just then, his secretary, Lilah Nicholson, approached from a distance. After one more look at Olivia, he walked toward Lilah.

Lilah greeted him as she arrived, "They're waiting."

He nodded gracefully.

Some staff were bringing drinks to a private room and noticed Claude as they passed. Two of them whispered, "He's so handsome." Olivia and Sophie overheard this.

Sophie looked at Claude and thought he would be perfect for Olivia if she were still single. He was quite impressive.

She tugged at Olivia, her heart racing, "Let's go, Olivia."

But Olivia wanted to leave. "I should head home," she told Sophie. She needed to go back; she had been out long enough.

Sophie looked at her, wanting to say more.

Olivia continued, "We'll catch up another time." She then gently pulled her hand away from Sophie's.

As Olivia got into the car, the driver asked, "Are we going home?"

She nodded in confirmation.

It was supposed to be a birthday celebration, mostly just drinking and chatting.

The day before, Naomi had confided in Tyler. She explained that staying in the cold hospital ward too long had driven her to desperation, prompting her drastic actions. She wanted to be more social to feel like her old self again.

Tyler didn't say much about her reflection; he just agreed and brought her to the party.

The room wasn't noisy, but it was filled with chatter. As soon as Naomi entered, she became the center of attention.

Everyone was surprised to see her; they thought she would never appear in public again. They were even more shocked to see her arrive with Tyler, commenting quietly on her resilience, especially since Tyler was now married.

Her presence proved she still held her place firmly.

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Chapter 404

[512 words]

Naomi was getting a lot of attention because of the Harrises' reputation when she arrived with Tyler. The other women who came with the men gathered around her. Tyler spent some time talking with Dylan and the others before he announced, "I'm going out to smoke." He got up immediately and left.

Dylan was deep in conversation with his friends and didn't notice Tyler leave. Meanwhile, Naomi glanced over, but he didn't say anything to her.

Tyler stood in the hallway and lit a cigarette, looking down the stairs. They were in the VIP area, so it was pretty quiet.

While smoking, Tyler leaned on the railing with a serious look on his face. The smoke drifted around him as he made a phone call in the dim light.

He called the driver's office at home and asked, "Is she in the car?"

At first, they didn't realize who was on the phone, but they recognized his voice after a moment.

"Who are you asking about, Mr. Harris?"

Tyler crushed his cigarette and lit another one, continuing to smoke without answering.

They quickly checked their records and informed him that Olivia was still out at her doctor's appointment and had not returned home yet. They told him, "The driver who picked her up says they're on their way home."

Tyler just responded briefly to this news and then hung up. The people at the driver's office were puzzled about the purpose of his call.

Tyler didn't finish his cigarette. He stamped it out and went back to the private room.

Naomi had been watching the door, unsure of where he had gone. Just as she began to worry, the door opened, and Tyler walked in.

She couldn't take her eyes off him.

Seeing Naomi surrounded by the other women, Tyler approached as she called out to him softly, "Tyler."

She was cautious. Even though they had resolved their issues, she sensed his attitude toward her had changed.

Of course, she didn't want to push things. She was willing to wait as long as it took for him to forgive her fully. By then, she would close the distance between them.

Tyler heard her and, to keep up appearances, walked over and asked, "Are you cold?"

It was chilly outside, but the room was warm due to the heating.

Naomi smiled at his question. "I'm okay." She instinctively sniffed, noticing the smell of cigarettes on him.

Tyler realized what she was doing and his expression turned distant.

Despite this, Naomi felt relieved to be out. "I'm feeling much better now. Can we stay a bit longer?"

He replied, "You should be careful not to catch a cold."

She kept smiling. "I won't. I dressed warmly."

Then, the manager brought in an air purifier. Tyler decided, "We'll stay a little longer then. Let's leave after having the cake." Naomi's face lit up with a smile, and she blushed. "Okay."

But as Tyler had guessed, being out for so long had tired her out. She had trouble breathing when she got back to the hospital.

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[409 words]

The nurses were busy taking care of Naomi.

Tyler lit a candle that smelled nice and calming. Naomi had been looking at him since she got into bed. She said, "Don't be mad at Olivia, Tyler. I'll talk to her about Claude." She was referring to what happened earlier that day.

Tyler didn't face her as he lit the candle and simply responded, "Whatever." He sounded like he didn't care at all.

Then he faced her. "I lit a candle for you. Try to go to sleep early tonight." The candle was supposed to help with her insomnia.

Naomi was surprised that he didn't want to discuss the issue further, but she nodded and smiled. "Mm-hmm, I will."

His eyes looked cold. "Alright. You don't need me to stay until you fall asleep, do you?"

In the past, he would wait until she was asleep before leaving, but it seemed he didn't plan to do that tonight.

Naomi felt secretly upset by his cold attitude and didn't say anything.

Seeing her quiet, Tyler said, "If you want, I'll stay while you fall asleep."

Naomi became nervous at his cold tone. "It's okay. It's late, you should head home."

He agreed coldly and then left the room, leaving her alone in bed. She sat there, looking at her lonely shadow on the floor.

Tyler went straight home. He looked out into the dark night through the window.

It was midnight when his phone rang. He looked at it and waited a bit before answering.

Claude's voice sounded from the other end. "I'm sorry for calling so late, Tyler. I hope I'm not bothering you."

Tyler leaned back and gave a slight smile. "You're not bothering me."

"I want to explain what happened with Olivia and me today."

Tyler kept smiling, now even more so. "You don't need to explain."

Claude laughed. "I guess you trust her, right?"

"Mm-hmm, of course I do," Tyler replied.

"That's good. We didn't want you to get the wrong idea. I'll take you out for a meal sometime, okay?"

"Sure."

They talked calmly, and Claude ended the call with, "I won't trouble you anymore."

"Okay."

Tyler's smile disappeared as soon as he hung up.

Tyler arrived home to a dark house.

He went straight to his bedroom, surprising the maids who thought he would go to his study or perhaps wake up Olivia, given his usual routine. Olivia was half-asleep when she opened her eyes.

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[432 words]

The moment Olivia opened her eyes, she hesitated, then called out, "Tyler."

She suddenly remembered something. Now fully awake, she pushed herself up from the bed, using her arms for support.

Tyler walked into the room in the middle of the night, and she accepted this calmly. They stood in silence, their shadows mingling on the floor.

After a moment, Tyler broke the silence. "How was the doctor's appointment?"

"Everything seems to be fine," she replied.

"You should tell me right away if something's wrong," he continued, his concern seemingly focused only on the baby.

"I will," she responded.

There was a distance between them, more from Tyler's side. Olivia seemed indifferent, as if bumping into him and Naomi at the bar didn't bother her.

Tyler said nothing more.

Olivia waited, expecting him to mention her and Claude, but instead, she watched his shadow detach from hers. She stared at the floor for a while, and when she looked up again, Tyler was gone; the door closed behind him.

Olivia was surprised he hadn't mentioned the incident. She lay back down, her body going limp as she buried herself in the bed, too restless to sleep now.

The next day, Tyler didn't address the incident. Olivia acted as if nothing had happened, going about her usual routine.

In the afternoon, Ana asked her while sipping tea on the couch, "You're going to a big charity event tonight. Did Tyler tell you about it?"

Olivia, just having come downstairs, stared at Ana, taken aback.

"Didn't you know?" Ana asked, seeing Olivia's confused look.

"No, Tyler didn't tell me," Olivia admitted.

Ana frowned, setting her cup down. "What's going on with you two? You can't just do nothing as his wife. You need to attend events. I'm too old for them now. You have to go by yourself. Do I need to spoon-feed you?"

Feeling Ana's irritation, Olivia carefully replied, "I'll ask Tyler, Mom."

Ana's frown deepened, but she said no more and continued drinking her tea.

Olivia headed back to her room, treading carefully. She hadn't seen Tyler since she woke up and was unaware of the charity event planned for that evening.

Around three in the afternoon, there was a knock at the door as she lay lost in thought in bed. She had been sleeping so much that she felt unwell and had spent most of her time just staring blankly. "Come in," she called.

Linda entered. "There's a charity banquet tonight. Mr. Tyler needs you to come with him. He's been busy today and forgot to tell you earlier."

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[359 words]

Olivia paused when she heard Linda, unsure of how to respond.

Linda asked, "Do you have plans already? Are you busy?"

"Oh, no," Olivia quickly answered. She couldn't believe she actually had to attend the event.

Linda then said, "Okay, Mr. Tyler won't remind you again. Someone will bring your dress for tonight."

Olivia just listened and nodded.

Linda didn't linger. After a bit more small talk, she said, "I'll leave you alone then."

About thirty minutes after Linda left, someone delivered Olivia's dress.

Now that she was pregnant, her belly was noticeable. She couldn't fit into a tight dress, so they had to be chosen and altered carefully.

Luckily, she didn't need to worry about that. Tyler's staff would handle it.

When she tried on the dress, it fit her perfectly and didn't accentuate her belly. The person who brought it sighed with relief.

They left soon after, respecting her need for rest.

*

Tyler got home around five in the afternoon. When the car arrived, Linda came to escort Olivia downstairs.

Olivia had been waiting in her room for a while. She got up and followed Linda.

Tyler was in the car, staring straight ahead as Olivia approached. He didn't look at her. When she reached the car, the driver opened the door for her. They drove off in silence,

Tyler only speaking to instruct the driver to start moving. He was dressed sharply in a black suit, dark tie, and leather shoes.

Olivia sat quietly, her face expressionless and pale, going through the motions like a puppet.

After what had happened that night, she had learned to detach herself. She no longer invested emotionally in anything around her. This was the boundary she had set for herself. Throughout the ride, Tyler sat with his legs crossed, gazing out the window as the scenery flew by.

Suddenly, Linda, who was in the passenger seat, mentioned, "Sir, there might be an interview with the journalists at the event tonight."

Without hesitation, Tyler responded, "Cancel it, we're not doing it."

Linda noted down his directive, "Sure, sir."

Like a dolled-up puppet, Olivia acted as if she hadn't heard anything.

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Chapter 408

[472 words]

The charity event was organized by the local government. It was crowded with business people, and the Harrises were the VIP guests.

As soon as Tyler and Olivia walked in, servers who were there just for them came over to greet them. Some friends came over to chat too.

Olivia stayed quiet, following Tyler around while he talked to everyone. He seemed much livelier here than he had been in the car, wearing a faint smile and chatting with people.

The place was also full of journalists. Their cameras flashed a lot as soon as Tyler and Olivia entered, and Olivia found the bright lights too much for her eyes.

Even though she felt overwhelmed, she managed to stay calm. Since she was Mrs. Harris and had been in the news earlier, it was normal for the media to focus on her.

They kept taking pictures even when she was inside, and she felt nervous knowing they were still on her.

It wasn't until Tyler finished talking to people that he finally looked at Olivia. He lowered his head to avoid the cameras and said, "Let's go."

Olivia heard him despite the noise and nodded.

Tyler then stopped looking at her and led the way further inside. Olivia followed him. Luckily, journalists weren't allowed past a certain point, so Olivia felt relieved without cameras pointing at her anymore.

They went to their seats, which were in the front row. As Mrs. Harris, she was well taken care of; the servers were very attentive.

Just then, Linda, who was sitting behind them, received a phone call. She came up to Tyler and whispered, "Ms. Naomi is here, sir."

Olivia heard this because she was right next to Tyler, and she tensed up at the mention of Naomi.

Tyler didn't show any reaction; he seemed to have expected Naomi's arrival. He looked up slightly, and Olivia followed his gaze.

Emma was pushing Naomi in her wheelchair through the entrance, away from the crowd of journalists. Naomi smiled at Tyler and then turned her attention to Olivia, mouthing a greeting with a big, friendly smile.

However, Olivia wasn't happy to see her. She couldn't forgive Naomi for what she had done to her.

Indeed, the more you cared about something, the deeper the pain and grudge were.

Tyler noticed Olivia's cold reaction to Naomi but chose not to do anything. He turned away and told Linda, "Go be with her. There are many people here."

Linda answered, "Sure. The organizer put Ms. Naomi a few rows behind us. She won't draw much attention."

Tyler simply replied with a short nod, and Linda left as he instructed.

While Olivia was still trying to understand why Naomi was there, Tyler explained to her, "She's bored in the hospital, so she asked to come, and I said yes."

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Chapter 409

[381 words]

Tyler was simply giving Olivia information. He wasn't really expecting her to comment or get involved. After all, the issue concerned him and Naomi, and Olivia felt like she was on the outside looking in. Olivia kept her thoughts to herself.

Tyler noticed her silence and looked away.

Linda led Naomi to sit behind Tyler and Olivia and asked her, "Are you feeling okay, Ms. Naomi?"

Feeling quite good, Naomi smiled and replied, "Yes, I'm actually feeling better being out. Don't worry; I'm fine."

Linda was happy to hear this. "That's great."

Then, Naomi's voice softened as she asked, "Has Olivia... not forgiven me?"

Linda quickly reassured her, "Don't worry. I don't think she's really mad at you."

This seemed to relieve Naomi. "I'm glad to hear that."

After Naomi settled down, a staff member handed Tyler a booklet about the auction items for the charity event. He began looking through it, and Naomi received one too. When she looked up and saw Tyler browsing, she smiled.

Olivia also received a booklet, but she didn't open it because she didn't understand the items listed inside.

She knew it was Tyler's right to bring Naomi to this event. Olivia was just there to keep him company. The auction was Tyler and Naomi's interest, not hers, so she felt it wasn't her place to get involved. Tyler spent quite a bit of time looking through the booklet. He seemed unaware that Olivia hadn't even glanced at hers. Eventually, he handed it back to the staff member.

Naomi finished looking through hers about the same time and whispered something to Linda. Linda then walked over to Tyler and said, "Sir."

Tyler turned to Linda, his expression serious in the dim light of the venue.

"Ms. Naomi said the gold love locket looks nice," Linda conveyed.

Tyler inquired, "How much is the starting bid?"

"200,000 dollars," Linda explained. "It belonged to a married couple who were buried with it during the Edwardian era. It's engraved with 'forever' all over it." Upon hearing this, Olivia's expression grew more somber.

Tyler's expression was hard to read when he heard that. He didn't glance at Olivia to see her reaction at all. He simply stated, "Bid on it then."

"Okay," Linda replied, then went back to Naomi immediately.

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[454 words]

Linda spoke with Naomi, who then looked over at Tyler.

Olivia sat quietly, almost hidden in the shadows.

After about five minutes, the lights in the venue brightened up. Everyone settled into their seats.

Naomi turned her gaze away as she waited for the emcee to step onto the stage.

The items for the auction were placed on stage. The emcee, dressed in a stunning green gown, started the event gracefully.

The charity event was magnificent, much larger than anything Olivia had ever seen before. Sitting under the powerful, bright lights, she felt as if they were the center of attention. It made her feel like she was looking down on everyone from the top of a pyramid.

It was clear why many people envied Mrs. Harris's position and thought Naomi was fortunate. Who wouldn't want to experience the thrill of being in the spotlight with the most influential people around, especially sitting next to someone as prestigious as Tyler?

How was Olivia not lucky to be in this position? However, she knew she was just Naomi's replacement and a tool to cure her illness.

Olivia didn't listen to the emcee; her mind was busy with thoughts.

Meanwhile, Tyler watched the stage intently, appearing extraordinarily calm.

Soon, the emcee started presenting a few auction items that didn't get much interest, so the bidding ended quickly.

But then, the atmosphere changed when the emcee excitedly announced, "I know everyone has been waiting for this. It's our most anticipated item-the symbol of enduring love and devotion, promising to love only one person forever."

A staff member rolled a glass case onto the stage, and inside it was a gold locket gleaming under the lights. The word "forever" was engraved on it, and it sparkled brightly.

As soon as it was revealed, everyone's attention was captured, their eyes fixed on the locket. The emcee announced, "We'll start the bidding at 200,000 dollars. Get ready with your bidder cards." Olivia turned her gaze to the locket as the bidding began. Linda was the first to bid, offering 230,000 dollars.

"230,000 dollars going once. Any higher bids?"

The bids kept coming. "I see you, sir-250,000 dollars going once."

Linda quickly bid again.

The emcee continued, "260,000 dollars going once."

The bidding war continued, and Linda kept raising her card. As the price hit 400,000 dollars, fewer people were willing to bid.

A locket at over 400,000 dollars seemed too expensive for many, no matter how much they liked it. But Tyler was determined to have it.

Naomi watched the bidding, feeling relieved knowing that no one would challenge their bid.

The emcee then said, "Great! We are at 400,000 dollars now. 400,000 dollars going once. 400,000 dollars going twice."

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Chapter 411

[348 words]

The emcee looked at the crowd and announced, "400,000 dollars going twice. Do I hear a higher bid?"

Tyler leaned back in his chair, watching the stage calmly. It seemed obvious that no one else would bid.

The emcee thought the same. "400,000 dollars going thrice. Sol-"

Before she could finish, someone suddenly raised their bidding card. "420,000 dollars."

At that moment, everyone turned to see who it was. Tyler, along with Linda and Naomi, were shocked to see the new bidder. Olivia turned her head and was surprised to see Claude. Her eyes widened, thinking she must be seeing things.

But Claude met everyone's gaze without flinching.

Tyler slowly turned his head and found Claude looking at him. He smiled faintly, acknowledging him from across the room.

Naomi hadn't noticed Claude earlier and was surprised he was interested in the same item. Her smile faded a bit as she frowned.

Meanwhile, Claude shifted his gaze from Tyler to Olivia. Olivia clenched her hand, sensing tension in the air.

Then, Tyler turned away and raised his own bidding card. "450,000 dollars."

The emcee was taken aback by this unexpected turn of events. She had never seen such a late challenge in a bidding war, and she thought 400,000 dollars was already a high price for a locket. But then Claude raised his bid again, saying, "460,000 dollars."

Tyler didn't hesitate. "480,000 dollars."

Claude countered. "500,000 dollars."

Tyler kept going. "520,000 dollars."

Claude raised his bid once more. "540,000 dollars."

"560,000 dollars."

"580,000 dollars."

Naomi watched anxiously as Claude continued to compete. It was clear he was doing this on purpose. She glanced at Tyler.

The crowd got excited, enjoying the unexpected rivalry.

The emcee commented, "It seems Mr. Harris and Mr. Pearce really like this locket. Mr. Pearce is Mr. Harris's brother-in-law. Looks like they might have a little family meeting when this is over." She tried to keep her tone light to ease the atmosphere.

Naomi looked at Tyler again. She liked the locket, but it didn't make sense to her to spend so much on it.

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Chapter 412

[359 words]

Naomi looked nervous. The emcee announced, "The current highest bid is 580,000 dollars. Anyone willing to go higher?"

Tyler didn't lift his bidder card this time. Seeing this, the emcee sensed the bidding might be over. She announced, "It seems we have no higher bids than 580,000 dollars." Even Olivia thought that was the end, but then Tyler casually raised his card, saying, "650,000 dollars."

Tyler was determined not to give Claude another chance to bid by raising it significantly.

The crowd gasped at the unexpected high bid. Everyone murmured about the Harrises living up to their reputation as a prestigious family.

Claude, with a slight smile, then raised his bidder card, "680,000 dollars."

The emcee got more excited, her cheeks red as she called out, "680,000 dollars going once! The price has reached 680,000 dollars! Will it go higher? I can't wait to see!" Naomi quickly turned to Linda, who was watching intently, "Forget it. Tell Tyler to stop bidding."

Linda replied, "Don't worry. Let's see what he does next."

Naomi was anxious Tyler might bid again.

The emcee continued, "680,000 dollars going once, 680,000 dollars going twice. Any more bids, Mr. Harris?"

Tyler stayed silent, not lifting his card. After a pause, the emcee finalized, "Alright, 680,000 dollars for the third time! Congratulations to Mr. Pearce!" She sounded thrilled.

The audience stood and clapped for Claude, who smiled at the applause.

Meanwhile, Tyler's expression turned stern. Olivia, surprised, thought Tyler would keep bidding.

The escalation in price was unheard of recently, especially since this was a charity event, with all proceeds going toward building schools for children in the mountains. The high bid turned into a generous donation.

The emcee thanked Claude repeatedly before inviting him to speak. Standing under a soft light, Claude took the microphone, "Firstly, I bid on this locket for the children in the mountain village. Secondly, I really like this locket, and I'm giving it to a friend as a gift."

He scanned through the crowd and briefly looked at Olivia as he spoke. His glance was fleeting, and he quickly looked away.

Olivia sensed this, and her palms began to sweat.

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Chapter 413

[354 words]

Tyler quickly noticed Claude's glance. His expression was unreadable, like the calm surface of a well. Even Linda, seated next to Naomi, felt the tension and clenched her hands without anyone noticing.

The emcee pressed on, asking, "Friend? Who is this person? Are you close?" Naturally, she dared not ask if the friend was a man or a woman. Everyone already knew about Claude's relationship with the Harrises.

Knowing better than to reveal too much, Claude replied with a soft smile, "Yes, a very close friend."

Curious, the emcee asked, "Is your friend married or single?"

"Married," Claude responded.

The emcee seemed relieved and said, "Ah, so they are married. It's wonderful you wish them happiness. It's a great gift."

Claude added, "I do hope they find joy together."

His words had deeper meanings, but neither the emcee nor the audience picked up on them.

Tyler's gaze turned cool and sharp, the only one seeming to grasp the subtext.

Naomi was stunned by Claude's boldness. His indirect declaration seemed like a direct challenge to the Harrises, and her heart raced.

The emcee, oblivious to the undercurrents, cheerfully continued, "We all envy your friend, Mr. Pearce. May they find everlasting happiness. Do you have any words for Mr. Harris here, who also participated in the auction?"

Claude looked at Tyler before saying, "I must thank him for stepping aside and letting me win the bid."

The audience laughed, unaware of the tension.

Turning to Tyler, the emcee asked, "Mr. Harris, any response?"

The room's attention shifted to him. Olivia remained quiet, watching.

Tyler took the microphone and calmly said to Claude, "Then I truly hope your wish is fulfilled, Mr. Pearce," before handing it back.

The emcee smiled. "Mr. Pearce, anything else you'd like to add?"

Claude, locking eyes with Tyler, declared, "I'll definitely make it happen."

His gaze then shifted to Olivia, making her heart feel like exploding. It seemed he was putting her on the spot, though the audience assumed his look was meant for Tyler.

Olivia became even more quiet. She gulped, puzzled and anxious about Claude's intentions.

Tyler, meanwhile, just smiled.

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Chapter 414

[337 words]

After the auction ended, Olivia and Tyler left together, while Linda turned to Naomi and said, "Let's go, Ms. Naomi."

Naomi nodded, and Linda wheeled her out.

As Olivia and Tyler were getting into the car, someone approached them quickly. Olivia squinted, recognizing the figure after a moment as Claude's assistant, Lilah. She tensed up slightly.

Tyler knew who she was too. He winded down his window but waited for Lilah to speak.

Holding out a box carefully, Lilah said, "Mr. Harris, this is a gift from Mr. Pearce to Mrs. Harris."

Olivia looked down, avoiding eye contact.

Tyler examined the box briefly and then looked back at Lilah to confirm, "A gift from Mr. Pearce, you say?"

"Yes, a gift from Mr. Pearce," Lilah affirmed.

After a pause, Tyler reached out, "Hand it over then."

Lilah glanced at Olivia, who still wasn't looking at her, and then handed the box to Tyler.

"Please thank Claude for this generous gift," Tyler said with a slight smile, then rolled up the window.

After Lilah walked away, Tyler didn't waste any time opening the box. Inside was the shiny locket.

Olivia stayed silent, her expression unreadable.

Tyler stared at it for a long time before turning to Olivia. "What do you want to do with this?" he asked. It was clear he wanted her input since the gift was for her.

"Just give it to Naomi if she likes it," Olivia replied.

Tyler closed the box, still staring at Olivia's face.

At that moment, Naomi came outside and bumped into Lilah, who was heading back to the venue.

"Ms. Naomi," Lilah greeted her.

Naomi paused, giving Lilah a small smile after noticing she had come from Tyler's car. Lilah didn't linger and continued back to the venue.

Linda watched the exchange, curious about why Lilah had approached Tyler's car.

Olivia waited for Tyler to say more after she had spoken.

Finally, after a long silence, he said, "Naomi never accepts gifts like this, especially when the intention is unknown."

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Chapter 415

[414 words]

Olivia was unsure if Tyler was hinting at something. Did he mean it was inappropriate? She couldn't tell if she interpreted it wrong.

After pondering for a moment, she finally spoke, "I know you meant to bring Naomi here, Tyler. I'm just a distraction. She's going back to the hospital, and the journalists aren't around. I'll take a different car." Tyler seemed lost in thought after her words. After a pause, he replied, "Sure, do whatever you want."

He handed her the small box, but Olivia didn't accept it. "Give this to me if Naomi doesn't like it. I don't want you two to have regrets. I think she has wanted this love locket for a long time. Consider this my blessing for both of you."

She didn't wait for his response and left immediately.

Tyler watched her leave with a cold expression.

Meanwhile, Naomi was on her way to another car but noticed Olivia leaving Tyler's car. Confused, she watched Olivia approach.

"I'll ride in this car, Naomi," Olivia said mechanically, maintaining her distance.

Naomi, concerned, asked, "What happened, Olivia? Why did you leave Tyler's car?"

"I think it's better if you ride with Tyler. I'm tired, so I'm getting in," Olivia said, without looking at Naomi, and got in the car.

Naomi turned, wanting to say more, but Linda intervened. "Let's get you to Mr. Tyler's car."

Naomi reluctantly agreed, worried she would attract attention.

Olivia drove off in Naomi's car, leaving Naomi to join Tyler. Seeing the box in the car, Naomi asked, "What's this?" "Just open it," Tyler responded indifferently.

Naomi opened the box and was stunned to find the love locket inside. She instantly looked at him. "The love locket?" Tyler's face remained expressionless. "She thought you might like it and wondered if you'd accept it."

Puzzled, Naomi speculated, "Is it a gift from Claude?"

"Mm-hmm," Tyler muttered, his gaze fixed ahead, resting his chin on his hand.

"That Claude... He's outbidding you to get Olivia this?" Naomi frowned, taken aback by how brazen Claude was. "Mm-hmm," Tyler replied flatly.

"He's getting more and more gutsy. He-" Naomi paused, then firmly closed the box. "We should have Olivia return it to him."

Looking at Tyler, she continued, "I'll talk to her again. I hope you understand Olivia, Tyler. Even Morgan fell hard for him back then. Olivia is still young, so it makes sense that... she can't resist his charm." Her words lingered in the air, laden with implications.

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[378 words]

Tyler didn't react to what Naomi said.

When Tyler got home after taking Naomi back to the hospital, Olivia was already there. It was 11 o'clock, and most people in the house had gone to sleep. Tyler went upstairs and straight into the bedroom. Olivia was sitting by the bed, still awake. She looked at him as he walked in.

He put the box on the nightstand and said, "Keep it."

The room was dimly lit by just one wall lamp, casting a large shadow behind him. He stood tall in front of her, making her look small by comparison. Tyler then took off his tie and left the room. As he turned to go, his face showed a brief flash of intense emotion before he concealed it.

Olivia stared at the box, unsure whether to open it or even touch it. After a long time, she looked away.

Just then, her phone beeped with a new message. It was from Claude.

[Don't feel pressured, Olivia. This is your first gift from me.]

On his way to the office, Tyler rested his eyes. Angus called him, and he picked up. "Claude wants another board meeting about the restructuring. Only a few of Yancey Bank's directors are in favor of it." Tyler, waking up, replied casually, "Claude was just promoted to vice president, right? If he's so keen to leave his job, let's help him out before the restructuring."

Angus was quiet, taking in what Tyler said.

That morning, as vice president, Claude called for a second board meeting. The topic was the same: restructuring. Yancey Bank operated by voting, so if Claude pushed for changes, the Harris Group couldn't stop him.

The board members met again. Standing in front of everyone at the meeting, Claude said, "Restructuring will benefit Yancey Bank's future, which is why I want to discuss it again. I hope you'll understand my reasons and support it."

He looked at Angus and the others who opposed him, "I hope the opposition will agree with the decision of Yancey Bank's directors." The room fell silent. He then nodded to the person managing the meeting, "Let's start."

The person turned on the projector, and everyone looked at their laptops. Suddenly, some unexpected photos appeared on their screen.

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Chapter 417

[434 words]

Everyone was unsure at first, then they started looking worried. They stared at Claude, who was on stage, and began whispering to each other.

At first, Claude didn't notice their reactions, but as the room got louder, he turned and saw the photos of him holding a woman's hand on the screen. He started to feel anxious.

Suddenly, Angus's group stood up, pointing at the screen. "Isn't that Mrs. Harris?" The other directors from Yancey Bank also stood up, comparing the pictures on the screen with those on their laptops. They were the same.

Claude's face became tense and serious. Angus demanded immediately, "What are these pictures about, Mr. Pearce? What's your relationship with Mrs. Harris?"

The room filled with gasps and murmurs. Claude was the new leader of Yancey Bank, and his actions represented the company. Any scandal could hurt the company's reputation and, in turn, the interests of the board. This was even more critical since it involved the Harrises.

The host of the meeting was just as shocked by the unexpected photos. She tried to turn off the computer to get rid of them, but despite pressing the button repeatedly, the photos stayed on the screen. Angus pressed on, "Mr. Pearce, could you explain your relationship with Mrs. Harris?"

More of his supporters joined in, "You're supposed to be the Harrises' son-in-law, but here you are, caught in photos with Mrs. Harris. This shouldn't be happening at our company. You're the vice president, representing our future. How did this happen? Can you explain these photos?"

Claude stood on the stage, facing the board of directors and their growing demands for an explanation. Some of his long-time supporters also began to demand answers.

He looked around at everyone's faces, feeling betrayed. He knew Tyler was behind this, either as a warning or a ploy to get him to resign. He couldn't believe Tyler sacrificed his family and Olivia's reputation just to fight him.

Despite his disappointment, Claude remained composed and faced the crowd courageously.

Angus threatened, "If you don't explain this, for the company's future and our collective interest, I will ask the board of directors to remove you from your position as vice president!"

Claude, still composed, asked Angus, "What do you mean by that?"

Angus pushed him further, "Can you explain these pictures then?"

"Why don't you ask Tyler?" Claude retorted.

Claude glanced at the host and instructed, "Turn off the computer." As they couldn't shut it down, it became clear that the computer had been hacked.

Just then, Lilah ran to the main switch and pulled the plug directly.

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[402 words]

The screen went black, along with the laptops in front of the board of directors.

Even though Lilah had turned off the screen, the discussion continued. The directors were concerned about the impact on the company. They turned to Claude and asked, "You need to explain this, Claude. This isn't a joke, especially with the ties between Yancey Bank and the Harrises."

One of them was the son-in-law, and the other was Mrs. Harris. It was a scandal that could hurt the company badly.

Even the most supportive directors couldn't ignore this. They started to question Claude too.

Claude watched as their support wavered. He understood people and their nature very well. He knew he couldn't use his position to influence the board. Those who had seemed supportive were only looking out for their own interests. It seemed only a matter of time before they would turn against him.

The company was clearly in trouble.

As the directors were stirring up a storm, Lilah stood up and said, "This is all a misunderstanding! It's not what it looks like. Mrs. Harris has been friends with Mr. Pearce's cousin for years. He sees her as a sister. The Harrises have already explained

those misleading photos that were published. Please don't believe the rumors. Things are not as they appear!"

But who would believe her? Nobody would, unless the Harrises spoke up themselves. Otherwise, the photos would continue to threaten the company. The room was still in turmoil.

As Lilah struggled to calm the crowd, Tyler appeared at the door.

"What happened, Claude?" Tyler asked as he entered, looking around as if he were just visiting.

Lilah was surprised to see him. She was wary, not knowing why he was there.

Tyler then surveyed the chaos before asking, "What's all this about?"

His presence made sense. After all, the Harrises owned part of Yancey Bank, and Angus was under his management. His arrival didn't seem strange to anyone. The noisy meeting room fell silent at his appearance and question.

Tyler turned to one of the senior directors, who approached him and began, "Tyler, we were meant to discuss some restructuring plans, but then we came across some photos on the computer. They..." He paused, then continued, "Well, they show Claude with Mrs. Harris..." He was subtly probing about the scandal, trying to verify the truth.

Claude watched coldly as Tyler stepped into the fray.

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[434 words]

Tyler acted like he didn't understand what the older man was saying. "What pictures?" He looked puzzled.

The man paused for a few seconds. Wanting to clarify things, he told the host, "Turn the power on."

The host hesitated, unsure of what to do next. Feeling pressured by the intense gaze on her, she walked over to the switch and turned on the power.

As soon as she did, the images on the computers appeared just like before.

Everyone's eyes turned to Tyler, who chuckled and said, "You scared me there. It seems there was just a mix-up with the information. The Harrises and the Pearces are family, so Claude surely wouldn't make such a funny mistake." He looked at Claude as he spoke. His smile didn't fade. "Right, Claude?"

Of course, Claude understood Tyler's game. But he kept his cool and played along, "Absolutely, Tyler. It's good to see you here. My computer must have been hacked. Those pictures got everyone confused." "Don't worry," Tyler continued. "Did you think I forgot how much you care about Morgan? Now that Olivia's expecting, I haven't had the chance to thank you for looking after her recently, and for the gift you sent."

Then Tyler addressed everyone in the room, saying, "Don't worry. This is all just a big misunderstanding. There's no truth to the rumors."

Relief filled the crowd when they heard this.

The older man who had first spoken to Tyler said, "We're glad that's sorted out. We hope Harris Group and Yancey Bank can sort out the photos to make sure they don't cause any more confusion and trouble." Tyler nodded. "Yes, that's a good plan. We'll take care of it." He then turned to Claude. "Everything's fine here, so I'll be going. Let's catch up soon, Claude."

Claude responded with a friendly nod and a smile, "Sure, let's get together for a meal."

Tyler gave a forced smile in return. "Sounds good."

He lingered for a moment before walking away.

Seizing the moment, Lilah spoke up, "Even though we don't know why those pictures appeared, I'm sure Mr. Harris's explanation has cleared up any doubts. This isn't what it seems. As you all know, Mr. Pearce is a kind and caring person. The Harrises and the Pearces will sort this out and clear up any confusion."

The board members felt relieved, and Angus and his group stayed quiet.

Watching the situation calm down, Claude realized this was Tyler's way of warning him not to pursue Olivia further. Tyler was making it clear-if Claude continued, he could stir up trouble for Yancey Bank.

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Chapter 420

[361 words]

The board of directors approached Claude after hearing from Lilah. "We're glad this was just a misunderstanding, Claude. Please ignore our earlier comments." Claude smiled and replied, "Why would I mind? I know you're all just concerned. It's understandable."

Everyone smiled in relief, not knowing it was Tyler who had stirred up trouble in the meeting to warn Claude.

After the meeting, Claude and Lilah left the room. Claude noticed Tyler was still there, talking to Jordan.

Jordan spotted Claude and immediately said, "Claude, why didn't you take care of Tyler yourself?"

Walking over, Claude smiled. "I was in a meeting and didn't want to interrupt."

Tyler politely said, "I didn't realize he was busy. It's fine, I'll catch him next time." He then said his goodbyes and left Claude and Jordan alone.

Claude watched Tyler leave with a cold stare.

Jordan turned to him and instructed, "Don't mess with the restructuring plans."

Smiling, Claude just nodded and replied flatly, "Mm-hmm."

Back in his office, Claude looked at Morgan's framed photo.

He studied her smile for a moment before turning the photo face down, determined never to see her face again.

Olivia had been staring at a love locket she received. She didn't want to keep it and planned to ask Sophie to return it to Claude.

As she was about to make the call, her phone rang-it was Naomi. Without a second thought, Olivia hung up, not wanting any contact with her.

Naomi didn't call again but sent a couple of texts instead.

[Can you forgive me, Olivia?]

[Keep your distance from Claude, Olivia. After all, the two families have a unique relationship. If you really like him, I'll help you after the baby is born and your connection with the Harrises is over.] Olivia deleted the messages without responding.

Just then, Tyler walked in. Olivia, sitting on the couch, looked up to see him standing at a distance. The room was filled with silence.

It was as if a thin wall were between them. Neither dared to bridge the gap.

Tyler acted as if nothing was wrong and casually asked, "I suppose you stayed in the room all day?"

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[444 words]

Olivia had been staying upstairs a lot lately. She confirmed, "I have."

Tyler suggested, "You don't have to go to those events if you don't like them." He was referring to the charity auction they attended last night.

Olivia replied sincerely, "You can take Naomi with you next time."

"She might not be able to attend all of them because of her health. I just want her to feel better, that's why I've been taking her out these past few days." He then loosened his shirt collar and walked over to the wardrobe. These days, he rarely comes into the room for anything other than to change clothes.

As Tyler's footsteps faded, Olivia sat quietly with her gaze lowered.

After changing, Tyler asked, "Where are the documents on the table?" He usually kept his papers in the room.

Olivia, who hadn't paid much attention to the items in the room, quickly stood up. "Let me look for them." She began searching the table and cabinets.

Tyler watched as she looked for his documents. After a long search, she found them in the cabinets, remembering she had put them there earlier for convenience.

She handed them to him, "Are these the ones you're looking for, Tyler?"

He briefly glanced at them and replied indifferently, "Mm-hmm."

Despite being pregnant, Olivia was thin. Other than her growing belly, she looked as she did before pregnancy, dressed in maternity clothes for comfort and appearing like an adorable woman.

Tyler took the documents and instructed, "Go rest." He then left with the papers.

Olivia knew he was also eagerly waiting for the baby's birth, hoping it would resolve things. She responded indifferently, "Okay."

She seemed detached and emotionless, almost robotic.

*

That evening, after a hectic day caused by Tyler, Claude returned home.

Sophie entered his room and mentioned, "Olivia called, saying you sent her a gift. She has forwarded it to me, asking me to return it to you."

Standing by the window, Claude turned to face her without any visible disappointment or surprise and said, "You can keep it since she doesn't want it." He then turned back to admire the mountain view outside Sophie expressed her concern, "Do you really like her, Claude?"

He faced her again, speaking softly yet firmly, "This has nothing to do with you, Soof."

She stared at him. Although his tone was gentle, his demeanor suggested it was just superficial.

Claude didn't add anything more and headed to his study.

He looked at the other gift on the table—a hair clip that reminded him of Olivia. He picked it up, fidgeting with it and chuckling as he recalled the day's events.

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Chapter 422

[350 words]

Olivia went downstairs in the morning and saw some newspapers scattered on the coffee table. She glanced at the headlines, which read:

["Dispute Between Yancey Bank and Harris Group Escalates. Brothers-in-law Become Foes."]

The news shocked her.

Just then, Alisa approached her and said, "Ma'am, your father sent over some food."

Hearing this, Olivia came out of her daze and noticed Alisa holding a container. She put the newspaper down and asked, "Oh, what did he send?"

"Your favorite," Alisa replied, opening the container to reveal plum jam.

Normally, this would have made Olivia very happy, but she felt too down to enjoy it. She asked Alisa to just put it in the fridge.

Alisa smiled and asked, "Would you like some now?"

Distracted by the news, Olivia replied, "I'll have it once it's cold."

Alisa took the food to the kitchen.

Left alone, Olivia stared at the headline again, wondering if it could really be true.

*

Tyler and Naomi decided to visit the Jones family. Hillary had been worried about their relationship, but to her relief, they seemed closer than ever. She was thrilled they were visiting together. In the kitchen, Hillary was giving orders to the maids for the day's meals.

Darren walked in and remarked, "You see, Tyler and Olivia aren't like you think. Olivia isn't bad at all." He had always defended Olivia, not wanting Hillary to misunderstand her.

Hillary scoffed. "Everyone knows you're biased. But let me say this, she's no angel, but she doesn't have the guts. If she ever tries something, I'd like to see it."

"What-" Darren started, taken aback by her harsh words.

She dismissed his annoyance, "I don't see why you defend her when she's not even a legitimate daughter."

"You're unbelievable," he retorted, always losing this argument.

Hillary ignored him and continued to check the crab on the table, deciding to clean it thoroughly.

Realizing his words had no effect, Darren left the kitchen.

Tyler and Naomi arrived around 10 am. Hillary greeted them with open arms, unable to hide her joy. Darren, feeling conflicted, followed quietly behind.

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Chapter 423

[338 words]

Tyler stepped out of the car just after the nurses helped Naomi. Hillary walked over excitedly and called out, "Naomi, Tyler."

"What's cooking, Mom? It smells great out here," Naomi said as she stepped out.

Hillary replied with a smile, "Your favorites, of course," then glanced at Tyler. "I didn't expect to see you here with Naomi today, Tyler."

Tyler responded indifferently, "Naomi wanted some home-cooked meals, so I brought her over. Hope that's okay." His tone wasn't enthusiastic, but he was polite.

Hillary reassured him, "You're not bothering us at all. We're happy you're here."

Darren, standing by her, added, "Come on in with Naomi, Tyler."

Tyler nodded at him and followed Naomi inside.

As she was wheeled into the house, Naomi said, "Can I have some soup, Mom? I'm craving it."

Hillary replied as she walked to the kitchen, "Of course, I'll get it ready."

Darren offered nervously, "I'll make you some tea, Tyler."

"Thanks," Tyler said, still polite.

Naomi took a deep breath as she entered the living room, soaking in the familiar smells. She felt the joy of being free from the hospital.

After a moment, she said gratefully, "Thanks for staying by my side, Tyler. It means a lot that you came home with me."

Tyler had been distant lately but still took care of her needs. He simply said, "As long as you're happy."

"Am I taking too much of your time?" she asked.

"Don't worry about it."

Naomi beamed. "It feels like old times, being out of the hospital."

Tyler didn't respond and sat down on the couch.

Soon, Darren came over with the tea. "Try this, Tyler. I made it myself. Hope you like it."

Tyler looked at Darren, took the tea, and said, "You don't need to be so formal with me."

Naomi watched them, her smile broadening. Even after all these years, Tyler remained respectful and caring toward her parents.

It was clear he loved her deeply, which made her feel incredibly happy and hopeful for their future.

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Chapter 424

[423 words]

Tyler spent almost the entire day with Naomi at her house. They left around 6 pm, enjoying the cool evening breeze through the open car windows.

Naomi suddenly rested her head on Tyler's shoulder. "I really hope we can stay like this forever, Tyler."

In the dim light of the car, Tyler could only make out Naomi's pale face. His expression was unreadable as he gazed into the dark night.

Rain began to fall, creating a melancholy scene with wet leaves scattered along the street and small lamps glowing faintly. Naomi felt the distance in Tyler's behavior but chose to stay close, leaning on his shoulder and holding his arm.

"Can you forgive me, Tyler?" she asked quietly, not caring about how she appeared. All she wanted was his forgiveness, confident that he would forgive her eventually.

She believed their relationship was strong enough to withstand any issues. She hoped they could quickly put their recent troubles behind them. She wanted to be with him always, just like they were now- peaceful and steady.

"Let's move on," Tyler said, his voice devoid of emotion, as if he was just trying to keep the peace between them.

Naomi didn't notice his detachment. She smiled and squeezed his hand. "I'm such a lucky girl," she murmured.

But at that moment, Tyler thought of someone else, which made him frown. He quickly looked away to hide his feelings.

Olivia, who had dropped out of school, was keeping up with her studies. She was reading a textbook on her couch.

It wasn't just for fun; she was serious about learning. The only sounds in her room were the rustling of pages and the scratch of her pencil on paper.

Outside, the wind was blowing strongly. Olivia glanced out the window, watching the trees sway in the gusts.

Suddenly, her phone buzzed with a message from Claude: [It's a windy night.]

She had been ignoring him. She treated him as her friend, but it was a different story to him. He had crossed the line. Confused by his intentions, she usually didn't respond to his messages. But tonight felt different-lonely and overly quiet.

She looked at the message for a moment before replying tentatively, [It is.]

[Are you scared?] Claude texted back after a while.

Olivia was surprised. How did he know she would become nervous whenever it rained?

[I'm not], she responded, trying to sound braver than she felt.

Claude's next message popped up: [Turn on the TV. There's an old movie that I think you'd like.]

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Chapter 425

[377 words]

Claude mentioned the name of the movie to Olivia. It turned out to be her favorite. She took a moment before responding.

[I've seen it.]

[You have?] Claude replied, surprised. He suggested another movie.

To Olivia's amazement, she found she liked that one too. She was at a loss for words.

[Don't tell me you've seen this one too?] Claude texted.

Although they were just exchanging texts without any emojis, Olivia could picture him laughing if they were talking in person. She imagined him looking at her with a soft and calm gaze. [I have.]

[It seems there's someone out there who shares my taste. Guess I'm not alone anymore.] Claude replied.

Olivia clutched her phone tightly as she read his message and sat down on the carpet under the couch.

Tyler was unusually eager to get home that evening. After dropping Naomi off at the hospital, he didn't linger and headed straight back.

The driver opened the door for him as he arrived. The house was unusually quiet due to the dreary weather, and it was only 7 pm.

No one was in the living room, so he went directly upstairs and entered the bedroom. There, he found Olivia sitting on the carpet, engrossed in her phone.

"What are you up to?" Tyler asked, wondering who she was messaging.

Startled, Olivia looked up quickly. Seeing Tyler, she instinctively covered her phone screen with her chest.

Tyler hadn't been suspicious at first, but her reaction made him focus on her phone.

Olivia set her phone down on the carpet and stood up, trying to appear relaxed. "You're home already, Tyler?" she asked, noticing him staring at her phone. She instinctively lowered her head, her heart pounding.

Tyler shifted his gaze from the phone to Olivia. "Who are you texting?"

"A classmate," she responded.

He approached her. "Didn't the doctor say to use your phone less?"

"I don't use it much. Just a bit bored from studying," Olivia explained.

Tyler continued walking toward her. Olivia instinctively stepped back, her eyes widening slightly.

He stopped, noticing her reaction. "What? Am I that scary?"

Olivia looked away and murmured, "No."

Tyler paused, looking at her. Her expression had gone blank because of his presence. His eyes darkened. "You're studying?"

"Yes."

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[314 words]

Tyler took a long look at her. "You need some rest."

"Have you been with Naomi?"

Tyler's expression darkened. "I went to your house with Naomi and then took her back to the hospital."

Olivia paused, processing this information. "It's nice you could spend time with Naomi. She probably felt better."

She didn't say much because she knew Tyler had been seeing Naomi, which seemed normal. But thinking about her home, she realized how long she had been away. She felt a pang of jealousy and longing.

He studied her face for a while, then turned and walked away.

Olivia just stood there, her expression unreadable.

*

The next morning, Hillary called. "Tyler brought Naomi home yesterday. Why didn't you come?"

Olivia was confused by the question. "He didn't mention he was going there," she replied honestly.

That surprised Hillary. After a pause, she smiled. "No worries. I'll send someone to pick you up and make you something to eat."

"Okay," Olivia responded, a word she was used to say often.

"Alright, I'll let you rest then," Hillary said, ending the call with a smirk.

"Okay, Aunt Hillary."

After hanging up, Olivia's face turned serious. She knew Hillary's tactics too well.

Suddenly feeling uneasy, Olivia pressed her lips together. Then her phone buzzed with a message from Claude.

[Are you up? The weather is nice today. Go see the sunflowers outside. They bloomed.]

Olivia glanced at the balcony. After some time, she walked over and looked down.

The garden was a sea of gold. The vibrant colors stunned her, and the sunny weather made everything shine even brighter. She stood there, lost in the view.

That same morning, Tyler stepped out of the study and saw Alisa heading into Olivia's room with breakfast.

"Mr. Tyler," she greeted him.

He looked her way. "Has Olivia woken up yet?"

"I don't think so, sir," Alisa replied.

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[385 words]

Tyler nodded, staying silent and not leaving.

Alisa wasn't sure what he wanted. After waiting for a few seconds, she knocked on the door a couple of times while holding the breakfast tray.

When there was no response, she entered.

Inside, Olivia spun around in surprise when she heard the door open. Her eyes met Tyler's.

He noticed the bright sunlight streaming in from the balcony, and then his gaze shifted to the phone in Olivia's hand.

Olivia gripped the phone tighter and looked down.

Tyler turned away and walked out, leaving Olivia standing frozen in place.

The maid entered and said, "You're up. I thought you were still sleeping. I've brought your breakfast."

Olivia looked at the breakfast tray and nodded. "Okay."

Meanwhile, Tyler got into his car and stared at the sunflowers outside. His secretary, sitting next to him, his secretary tried to see what he was looking at but couldn't figure it out.

After a long pause, Tyler instructed, "Get someone to remove all the sunflowers this afternoon."

The driver, glancing at him through the rearview mirror, asked, "Sir, may I know why we're removing them?"

Tyler replied curtly, "They're bad luck."

Neither the secretary nor the driver understood what was happening, but the driver simply said, "Okay."

As the car drove off, Tyler's expression remained cold. Linda sat quietly beside him, puzzled about what had upset him.

Tyler suddenly said, "People are already talking about our family. Let's give them more to talk about."

Linda just looked at him, knowing well that the Pearces and HARRISES were the talk of the town because the media had sensed something amiss.

That morning, an entertainment channel had revisited a painful episode from their past.

The host revealed, "Ms. Morgan Harris and Mr. Claude Pearce were deeply in love and about to marry. But they had an argument the night before their wedding, and Claude left town. The next day, Morgan tragically jumped from a building, leading to widespread media coverage."

"The families claimed she was depressed," the host paused, "but was that the whole story? Our findings suggest otherwise. The autopsy indicated she was assaulted, and there were rumors that it happened before their argument."

The host then displayed two photos from the autopsy, showing a woman with bruises all over her body.

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Chapter 428

[328 words]

The host looked serious as he spoke. "This old, blurry photo shows that she was beaten up and her lower body was badly injured."

That morning, Olivia was feeling bored, so she turned on the TV in the living room. She usually watched entertainment news for fun, but this time she also started reading a book. Just a few seconds later, she heard something shocking on the TV. She looked up so suddenly that the book she was holding dropped to the carpet with a loud thump, startling her. Ana came in from the greenhouse and immediately noticed the TV screen as well.

The news was spreading across the country.

Claude had left his house that morning and soon got a call from his assistant. "Mr. Claude, you should check your phone right now."

He followed the instructions without asking any questions. As soon as he hung up, his phone lit up with a bunch of alerts.

Olivia was staring at the TV when she sensed someone at the door. Turning, she saw Ana. She quickly got up from the couch.

Ana was also watching the TV, her lips tightly pressed together.

Olivia had thought that Morgan's death was simply because she jumped off a building, but it turned out to be more complex. Claude had assaulted her. But why would he do something like that? Olivia found it hard to believe. She didn't know Claude well enough, nor the history between the two families.

She wasn't sure if the news was true, but it frightened her, making her hands tremble.

After a moment of silence, a maid walking by saw what was on the screen and was so startled that she grabbed the remote and turned the TV off.

The maid was still shaken as she glanced at Ana, who seemed to quickly regain her composure and went upstairs.

After Ana left, Olivia turned to the maid and asked, "Is this true?"

The maid didn't answer her.

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Chapter 429

[338 words]

Olivia spoke in a low voice but loud enough for the maid to hear. She looked away, seeming too nervous to speak.

After a long pause, the maid finally said, "We can't talk about this here," and hurried away.

Olivia stood there, her face pale as she watched the maid leave.

*

The news hit the Pearces hard. The next day, Yancey Bank denied the allegations, stating their vice president had not assaulted his ex-fiancee. They accused the channel of spreading lies and threatened legal action.

But the denial only drew more attention to the past. Everyone believed Morgan had died from depression, and they admired the couple's seemingly perfect relationship. Morgan had always accompanied Claude wherever he went, and the media loved them.

After Morgan's death, Claude left the family and moved to the outskirts to honor her dreams. Their love story had touched many hearts, but now, a darker truth was coming to light.

Nobody cared about the bank's statement. Online, people were furious with Claude and Yancey Bank. Some even destroyed their bank cards and reported other wrongdoings by the bank.

The controversy grew. Netizens started digging up the past, and the bank quickly arranged a board meeting where Angus proposed removing Claude as vice president.

The Pearces hadn't expected this old issue to resurface. The families had kept Morgan's death quiet, but now an entertainment channel had exposed it.

When Claude returned, his family was already in turmoil over the scandal.

Sophie was shaking when she saw the news. "No! Did Claude upset someone? It's all over the media!"

She stood up abruptly, but Jacob grabbed her hand, frowning.

"What's happening? How did this come out?" Sophie believed there was a campaign against Claude. He had already paid dearly, living in seclusion for years. "I need to talk to the stations! I want to find out who's doing this to our family!"

Jacob held her back, trying to calm her. "Soof, let's see how your family will manage this first. Don't rush into anything."

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Chapter 430

[419 words]

The news was huge, but Claude never showed his face in public. Even the Pearces couldn't track him down.

The next morning, Sophie called Olivia to see if Claude had reached out to her. Olivia stood silent for a while before she finally spoke, "No."

She hadn't heard from him-no calls, no texts. She realized that even if he had tried to contact her, she probably wouldn't have answered. Sophie said anxiously, "Olivia, please let us know if he contacts you. We're all trying to find him."

Olivia didn't make any promises, but Sophie didn't need her to. Sophie felt better just saying what she needed to, and then she hung up.

Olivia held her phone, feeling utterly alone, wondering if the rumors about him were true...

Just then, her door opened. She hadn't slept at all since the news broke.

Now that Olivia was closer to Alisa, the maid could tell something was wrong. Alisa came over and said, "Don't worry about that. We don't talk about Ms. Morgan's incident here."

Olivia clenched her fist and asked, "Isn't the family going to do anything?"

Alisa replied without thinking, "Why should they?" Immediately realizing her mistake, she covered her mouth.

Olivia felt something was wrong and just looked at her.

Alisa knew she couldn't dodge the question, so she glanced at the door to make sure they were alone and then whispered, "When Ms. Morgan jumped, Harris Group's stock tanked. And the autopsy showed she'd been badly abused before her death. It was humiliating, and now nobody outside the family is supposed to know. They loved their daughter but were ashamed of what she did, so they hate her for it." The words 'hate' and 'ashamed' hit Olivia hard. She never expected Alisa to say that.

But it made sense to Olivia, piecing together the small things she'd noticed.

Alisa continued, "That someone like her, pampered by her family, would end her life over a man would be a joke. That's why no one is allowed to mention her name here." Olivia collapsed onto the couch, overwhelmed by the darkness of the situation. After Morgan's death, the family seemed to care more about their reputation than mourning her. Olivia didn't know whether to pity Morgan or despise her family's cruelty. She touched her belly unconsciously.

Seeing Olivia's reaction, Alisa added softly, "Just remember, nothing is more important to the Harrises than pride, and this scandal was more than just a family issue-it involved a man. It's really a mess..."

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Chapter 431

[403 words]

Olivia didn't understand, but she could see why. With the Harrises, anything seemed possible, but she was truly scared.

She couldn't pinpoint the source of her fear.

There were noises outside, causing Alisa to look over and stop speaking. Once the sounds faded, she shook her head at Olivia, signaling her to never bring this up again, and then went to fetch a blanket for her.

Suddenly, someone entered the room, making Alisa turn to see a man at the door.

The maid clutched the blanket in surprise, wondering if what she had said was overheard...

Olivia looked at the door, shocked to see Tyler there. She quickly stood up, her face turning pale.

Having heard the conversation, Tyler looked sternly at Alisa, who stammered, "M-Mr. Tyler."

"Get out."

Alisa set down the blanket and hurried out.

Olivia was still breathing hard from the shock, while Tyler fixed his gaze on her and asked, "What were you talking about?"

Olivia tried to speak, but no words came out; her breathing only grew faster.

Beside the white couch was a metallic floor lamp casting a yellow light over them, making both their tall and slender figures stark against the background. Their shadows mingled on the wall. Olivia's shadow seemed to tremble in the embrace of Tyler's shadow, though in reality, they stood apart as he judged her.

"Have you seen the news?" Tyler then sat on the couch, crossing his legs, his black socks visible. His navy blue sweater added to his stern demeanor. "Even the maid advised you not to get involved."

He continued, "Do you know why my sister loved him so much she was ready to forsake everything to follow him around the world? She was a lady of this house, yet she chose to cook and clean for him. My family reluctantly accepted it."

His eyes then fell on a doll near his foot. He picked it up and looked it over.

The doll, which Olivia had won from a claw machine during school with her friends, was cherished by her, so much so that she brought it to the Harrises. Her friends always said it resembled her.

Tyler paused, studying the doll's face before setting it down and turning his attention back to Olivia. "Claude has to answer for Morgan's death. Do you understand?" he stated pointedly. Olivia's mind went blank as Tyler sat, his gaze cold and piercing.

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Chapter 432

[398 words]

Three days after the news broke, Claude stepped into the public eye again. He stood at the main entrance of Yancey Bank, surrounded by reporters, and announced that he was stepping down as vice

president for a while.

"This is my personal issue, so please don't involve the bank," Claude said. "Yancey Bank has been successful because of your support. Please focus your questions on me. I'm ready for whatever you have to say. Thank you."

Despite disappearing for a few days due to the scandal, Claude remained calm as he spoke.

As he tried to leave, reporters crowded around, blocking his exit. One reporter pushed forward, holding up a recorder, and asked, "Did you assault Ms. Morgan the day she died? The Harrises are upset with your family about it. Did your actions cause her death?"

Claude kept his smile and replied, "No, I'm sorry, but I won't answer that."

"Why won't you answer the question?" the reporter pressed.

"We're here to talk about my role at Yancey," Claude responded.

When the reporter tried to ask more, Lilah stepped in. "Ms. Morgan has passed away, and Mr. Claude is stepping down. We can't answer these questions out of respect for her family."

"Why not just deny it if it's not true? The Harrises didn't," another reporter shouted.

"I'm really sorry," was all Claude said.

His secretary then intervened, "Please let us through. Mr. Claude won't be answering more questions."

Lilah and a few men cleared a path, but the reporters were relentless, their cameras clashing in the chaos.

The drama unfolded on live TV.

Tyler watched from his office, idly spinning his pen.

In the Harrises' home, Olivia watched silently, while Ana smirked coldly from the couch. A chill swept through the room, giving Olivia goosebumps.

That evening, Naomi called Olivia. When Olivia answered but remained silent, Naomi said, "Don't get mixed up in this."

She paused, knowing Olivia still hasn't forgiven her, then added, "The Harrises and Pearces are no longer on good terms. Stay away from Claude."

After Olivia hung up, Naomi set down her phone and turned to Tyler, who was flipping through a magazine. "How did the media get hold of this?" she wondered.

"There's always people who aren't afraid of stepping on the family's toes," Tyler replied, turning a page.

Naomi sensed that something was odd with how quickly everything had escalated.

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Chapter 433

[385 words]

After much thinking, Naomi still couldn't make sense of things. She said, "Claude is getting a lot of attention, so it makes sense that someone might be after him."

Tyler just nodded, not looking up from what he was doing.

That same evening, Olivia's phone rang. It was Claude on the other end. "Olivia," he began, his voice calm.

Olivia's heart raced, but Claude spoke gently. "Do you believe them?"

His voice carried a touch of sadness as he continued, "Other people's opinions don't matter to me, but yours does. At my age, why should I care so much about what you think? Do you think I'm a rapist?"

Caught off guard by his call, Olivia struggled to process everything. Claude had left his job at Yancey Bank and was dealing with a lot, yet he still made time to call her. She hadn't realized how important she was to him.

She thought about Morgan, who loved Claude deeply. How could he have hurt her like that?

After a moment of silence, Olivia finally spoke. "Did you?"

"Do you believe me?" he pressed.

She was unsure, so she answered honestly, "I don't know you very well."

"Your trust means a lot to me," Claude said.

"Why don't you clear things up then? If the accusations aren't true, why did you resign?" she asked. His reaction seemed to confirm the worst, as if he was acknowledging what everyone was saying. "I resigned to let the deceased rest in peace," he explained.

Listening to his deep, low voice that still carried its usual gentleness, Olivia felt torn.

"I don't care about what others think. I just care about you, so I'm asking you to believe me," Claude pleaded.

Should she believe him? Why should she? Who was he to her?

Olivia felt overwhelmed, but something inside her whispered that he couldn't have done what he was accused of. He didn't seem like a cruel man.

Still, if he was innocent, what really happened to Morgan that night? How did she end up dead?

Cautiously, Olivia asked, "Can I trust you?"

"I'd be really happy if you did," Claude replied with a sad smile. "I'm worried you might shut me out forever."

After a brief pause, he added, "Olivia, you're the first person I've cared about this much."

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Chapter 434

[384 words]

Olivia didn't respond to that, so Claude said gently, "It's okay. I just wanted to talk to you."

"Did you love Morgan?" Olivia asked.

There was only a long silence from Claude. Frustrated by his vague response, Olivia hung up the phone.

Claude was surprised by her action. He put his phone down, his eyes filled with sadness, and he forced a sad smile.

His secretary noticed his mood and cautiously said, "Mr. Claude... I don't think that's a good idea."

Claude just looked at her, then walked around the room with a thoughtful expression.

After he spoke to the media, Claude stayed in the family's vineyard. Sophie and the rest of his family tried to reach him, but they knew he often became unreachable when it involved Morgan. Sophie was worried about him. She decided to talk to Olivia, feeling she might be able to reach him.

The Harrises ignored all the rumors, especially Ana. She kept busy with her usual activities, such as yoga, facials, arranging flowers, and having tea with friends.

One day, Ana and Olivia were stopped by Sophie in the corridor of a clubhouse. Ana was ahead, and Olivia was following behind her. When Olivia heard Sophie call her name, she stopped and waited quietly. Ana didn't like the Pearces much but kept her cool. Her friends were there too, and they all watched as Sophie approached them.

Ignoring the onlookers, Sophie said to Ana, "Ms. Ana, I'd like to speak to Olivia."

Ana hesitated but allowed it, saying, "Okay, go ahead." She and her friends then walked toward the tea room.

Once they left, Olivia looked at Sophie, ready to leave if not needed. She didn't want to get involved, so she said, "Do you need help? If not-"

But before she could excuse herself, Sophie rushed over and took her hand. "Did Claude contact you? It's urgent that we speak to him. I came here because I heard you would be here with Ms. Ana."

Olivia didn't know what to say, but then Sophie continued, "Olivia, he would surely have contacted you. Can you please tell me where he is?"

Seeing how anxious Sophie was, Olivia thought about it and then said, "He called me, but I don't know where he is."

"He did?"

Olivia nodded hesitantly.

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- Chapter 435

Chapter 435

[371 words]

Sophie knew she was right about Claude contacting Olivia. "Olivia, don't listen to what others say about him. It's not true."

Olivia wasn't sure how to feel. She pulled back her hand and replied, "I'm not sure, Soof."

This response caught Sophie off guard.

Trying to escape the conversation, Olivia said, "I have to go." She then walked toward the room where Ana was, without looking back at Sophie.

When Olivia entered, Ana was enjoying some tea and setting up for a card game. Ana asked, "Done chatting already?"

Olivia approached her and answered, "Yes, just a quick catch-up."

With a relaxed tone, Ana suggested, "We're about to play cards. Why don't you grab something to eat?"

"Okay, Mom," Olivia responded.

Ana put her cup down and started dealing the cards.

It was around six in the evening when they finished playing. The group decided to head out for dinner. As they left the room, they ran into Tyler.

Tyler was dressed in a sharp black suit, standing out with his distinct features and piercing eyes. He was there for a business dinner.

Olivia was surprised to see him and stood silently next to Ana.

Ana greeted him with a smile and teased, "What a coincidence! Did you come looking for Olivia?"

Tyler's business associates smiled at Olivia, recognizing her as his wife.

Tyler, always respectful to Ana in public, remained composed and asked, "Having a good time with your friends?"

Ana explained, "Yes, I thought Olivia might get bored at home, so I brought her out."

"Alright, I'll leave you to it," Tyler responded.

Ana quickly added, "We're planning more card games later, but since you're here and Olivia might be getting bored, why not take her with you?" Olivia tensed up at the suggestion.

Ana, still smiling, didn't wait for Tyler's response. She turned to Olivia and said, "Go on."

Tyler, taken aback by Ana's assertiveness, momentarily showed a stern expression.

As everyone watched, Ana looked at Tyler and prompted, "What do you think, Tyler?" Tyler agreed, "Of course."

Ana told Olivia again, "Go on."

Hesitating, Olivia slowly walked over to Tyler. He then asked her, "We're playing some games tonight. Are you sure you want to come along?"

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Chapter 436

[426 words]

Olivia took a moment to think over Tyler's question. Ana watched her intently before Olivia finally answered, "That's fine. I'm not doing anything anyway." "Okay, let's go then," Tyler responded simply.

And so, Olivia ended up going with Tyler. Ana, feeling relieved and happy, went back to her card game while Olivia accompanied Tyler to another room for dinner.

The conversation at dinner mostly revolved around work, with Olivia sitting quietly next to Tyler. Under the soft lighting, her complexion appeared somewhat yellowish.

"Just let me know if there's anything you don't want to eat or if you need anything," Tyler told her.

"Okay," Olivia replied politely, maintaining her composure.

Suddenly, a group of women dressed in kimonos entered and sat next to Tyler's colleagues.

Olivia was taken aback by the unexpected addition but tried to remain calm.

Tyler, seeming unfazed as if he was used to all this, glanced at her. "I'll have someone bring you water instead of tea."

"O-Okay," Olivia stuttered slightly, her nerves showing when a woman in a kimono positioned herself next to Tyler.

Since she was sitting next to him, the woman didn't know what to do.

Tyler told the woman, "Don't worry about it. You can leave us."

The woman nodded and moved away.

This was all new to Olivia, who had initially thought the gathering was a simple meal but now realized it was more than that. Tyler offered no explanations, instead focusing on his guests. "Thanks for helping me, everyone. Dinner's on me today, so order whatever you like," he announced to the table.

The atmosphere was a bit strained, with the men being somewhat reserved around Olivia. They managed a dry chuckle, "We might not be as experienced as you, Tyler, but we're sure to enjoy the meal." Tyler smiled warmly. "It's my pleasure to host you. Have a great evening."

The men seemed to find reassurance when they glanced at Olivia and noticed she didn't appear too uncomfortable. Encouraged, they each reached for the woman sitting next to them and began to drink.

As the evening progressed, the men loosened up, engaging with the women who expertly poured wine directly into their mouths.

Olivia watched uncomfortably, wishing she could close her eyes and block it all out. She wasn't accustomed to such environments.

Tyler, meanwhile, ignored her reaction, sipping his tea and enjoying the company. After the meal, he mingled freely, sharing jokes and stories about work.

This side of Tyler was completely new to Olivia. He joked, drank, and stayed calm throughout the night.

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Chapter 437

[408 words]

Olivia felt like Tyler was a stranger, but she figured that wasn't surprising since he seemed at ease in this setting.

This was how men earned their money, she realized. She was just too young, and it was her first time experiencing something like this.

If Naomi were here, she'd handle it better, probably even making jokes with Tyler.

After the meal, Tyler grew distant. He drank a bit and seemed slightly tipsy, while the other men became downright obnoxious as they drank more. They started by sipping from the women's glasses and ended up kissing them.

Tyler held his wine glass and looked on, his expression somewhere between sober and drunk.

One of the men declared, "We'll definitely secure that plot of land you want. No matter how tough the owners are, we'll handle it smoothly."

Tyler was eyeing a coastal plot to transform into a port for the Harris Group to enter the trading market. However, the land was mostly owned by the city's wealthy families who preferred to use it for burials, making negotiations tough. That's why Tyler had found a few people who knew the area well and ran businesses there.

Tyler chuckled in response, "I hope so, to avoid clashes. Thanks for your help."

They all toasted to that.

Tyler joined in the toast and added a simple "Thank you."

When everyone toasted Olivia next, she picked up her glass. Tyler quickly added, "She's pregnant, so she can't drink."

Everyone nodded and turned their attention back to Tyler, clinking glasses with him instead.

Olivia sat quietly, barely touching her food, just waiting for the moment she could leave.

After a sip of wine, Tyler noticed Olivia's disinterest in her meal and asked, "Not hungry?" Olivia, not wanting to upset Ana by leaving early, replied, "I'm not hungry."

Tyler suggested, "You should try to eat something," though his voice lacked warmth.

She still didn't eat. Tyler didn't force her but had the servers bring out dishes that were safe and appealing to pregnant women, also Olivia's favorites.

Reluctant to waste food, Olivia finally started eating but soon put her utensils down again.

The dinner ended at eight.

Tyler and the men planned to play golf next. He told Olivia to go home if she was tired, but she responded, "I'm not tired, Tyler."

She felt compelled to stay through the night, not wanting to irritate Ana, who had been in a foul mood recently.

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[358 words]

Tyler didn't answer and just stared at the food on the table.

Later, they all went to a golf course, and Olivia tagged along. She was so exhausted that she started feeling dizzy, yet she forced herself to stay awake.

As they entered the place, Tyler suggested, "You should rest."

The men with them paused and glanced at her, making her feel uncomfortable.

Tyler still looked cold and just kept walking. Olivia was unsure if Tyler wanted her to stop following him or if he was just upset because Ana had pushed him into coming.

While she was thinking this over, Linda offered, "I can rest with you at the pavilion."

Olivia nodded. "Okay." She walked off with the secretary.

The pavilion was on a hill, swarming with mosquitoes. Olivia was bitten several times as soon as she sat down, not knowing how long she'd have to endure it while she swatted them away. Linda noticed her discomfort. "Why don't I bring you indoors?"

Olivia looked at her legs, now covered with red bumps, but insisted, "I'm fine," even though she couldn't stop scratching.

Linda watched her for a moment, then stood silently nearby.

Tyler was busy playing golf with the other men and showed no signs of stopping, even after an hour. Olivia's legs were now full of mosquito bites. She wondered if Tyler was

deliberately doing this to her. Every now and then, Linda checked her watch, and eventually, she decided, "Let me call Mr. Tyler."

She stepped aside to make the call, but he didn't answer. Olivia looked out into the night and finally said, "There's no need for that. I'm okay."

Linda felt bad for her but could only put her phone away.

An hour and a half later, the group finally approached the pavilion.

Olivia's legs were so itchy they felt numb.

Tyler seemed to be enjoying himself. When he finally came over and saw Olivia's legs, he briefly glanced at them, but his expression didn't change. Linda approached him cautiously. "You... You're back."

Olivia still sat on the bench, not moving. He looked away and said, "Yes, did you wait too long?"

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[434 words]

Linda replied, "Not at all."

Tyler handed his golf club to an employee, then wiped his hands and said to the men, "That's all for today. I'll see you again in a few days?"

The men had eaten well and enjoyed themselves, so they quickly said, "No worries, Mr. Tyler. Your wife is waiting, so go ahead, we're fine." Tyler smiled and responded, "Okay."

After wiping his hands again, he asked the golf course manager to take care of the men, and then he told Linda, "Let's go."

He was talking to Linda, but Olivia heard him too. Everyone noticed that Olivia seemed left out and just watched quietly.

Olivia eventually stood up and left the course. When they reached the car, Tyler got in first. Olivia, who was pregnant, walked slower. Linda reached the car before Olivia and opened the door for her. After helping her in, she sat down.

Tyler then told Linda, "You can go home now."

The secretary nodded and closed the door.

As soon as the door shut, Tyler glanced at Olivia for a second, then looked away. "Why didn't you stay inside?" His expression was stern.

"I thought you wouldn't be long," Olivia replied.

"What does that have to do with you staying inside?" he asked her calmly.

"You asked me to wait at the pavilion, so I didn't dare leave," Olivia explained.

He frowned at her but then suddenly pulled her close. Before Olivia could react, she was sitting on his lap. She put her hands on his shoulders and looked down, blushing. "What are you doing?" she asked nervously.

"Was that on purpose? Hmm? Did my mom push you out here so I could see you getting bitten by mosquitoes? Since when are you on her side?" Tyler tried to keep his distance from her, but Ana had made that difficult.

Feeling stuck and because she was pregnant, Olivia didn't move much and just pressed her hands against his shoulders. "No, that wasn't on purpose. I don't want to just follow you around, and if you didn't want me to come, you could have just said no."

Tyler was furious. "Say no? How do I say no to a honey trap?" He leaned in close to her, his voice bitter.

Olivia was surprised he saw it as a trap. "I'm not bait, and I'm not trying to trap you," she defended herself.

Tyler studied her closely—her pale skin, slender arms, pretty face, and delicate neck—and whispered, "How are you not? If you're not, why did you return the locket to Claude?" His voice was dangerously low.

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[392 words]

"I can't do anything if that's what you think," Olivia said with a defeated look.

He studied her face, then gently touched her cheeks and said, "Olivia, you've gotten braver. Did Claude teach you that?"

Olivia turned her head away slightly.

Tyler stopped moving as he looked at her long, dark eyelashes that made her small oval face seem even more attractive in the tight space.

She wasn't trying to tempt him, but she was very tempting. She didn't realize how much she was like a piece of delicious cake, drawing him in to taste her sweetness. He finally understood why Ana had sent her.

Tyler could smell her scent and wanted to hug her tightly, but instead, he lightly ran his finger down her cheek to her chin.

Olivia felt his intense gaze and sensed something was wrong. She felt anxious and wanted to escape his hold.

But Tyler held her close and whispered, "I should control myself, Olivia."

A moment later, he was so close that she could feel his breath as he touched her soft skin. He seemed enchanted, losing control as he kissed her soft pink lips.

Olivia hadn't expected that. She pushed him back quickly and turned her face away, asking frantically, "What are you doing?"

Even with her hand in the way, he didn't move back, his lips still touching the corner of hers. "Don't you know what I'm doing? Weren't you tempting me? Do you want to see me lose control? Why are you trying to get away now?"

He held onto her waist tightly.

Olivia was slim, and even though she was pregnant, her body was still slender. Her belly made her waist look smaller, and the slight weight gain made her body more curvy.

Tyler kissed her again, and as their lips met, Olivia struggled and said, "If you know Ms. Ana sent me here, you should let me go."

Tyler seemed to snap out of his daze and froze. His forehead rested against hers, and he could hear her rapid heartbeat and quick breathing.

Olivia seemed to have lost all her strength and sat back down on his lap. She lowered her head and stopped moving.

Their faces were very close, but she kept her head down while he frowned at her. Even at such a close distance, their eyes wouldn't meet.

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[359 words]

Olivia wrapped her arms around herself tightly.

Tyler, realizing he had lost control, quickly regained his composure. "Sorry. I must have scared you," he murmured, releasing her arms gently.

She moved off his lap with effort and sat silently next to him, the quiet stretching between them.

Tyler massaged his forehead and muttered to himself, "Well, well, well. Good thing you reminded me I drank. I almost fell for this trap she set for me." Olivia had been holding herself protectively ever since she moved away from him. Later, she quietly rested a hand on her baby bump.

Tyler put his hands on his knees.

Time seemed to stand still. Olivia kept looking down, her lips pale, and she didn't respond to anything.

Tyler took a deep breath. "Look, I'm sorry about all this. Please ask the maid to put some ointment on those mosquito bites."

Olivia tried to sound calm. "I will."

The effects of the alcohol had worn off. The brief closeness it brought was gone, and they were distant once again.

Ana had indeed orchestrated this. She was aware of her son's actions and was unhappy that he had been ignoring his pregnant wife.

She believed a couple should spend more time together. Even in her condition, Olivia could still threaten her son's resolve.

Ana smiled to herself, pleased with her scheming.

"What are you smiling about?" Maisy inquired, noticing Ana's good mood.

"Nothing. Just waiting for them to come home."

Maisy was surprised. "Tyler went out with Olivia?"

"Yes."

Maisy laughed. "Good! Nobody can resist someone as adorable as Olivia."

It was midnight. Ana, sipping tea, suggested, "You should go to bed."

Maisy, who had taken a long nap earlier, wasn't very tired but agreed anyway. "Alright then!"

The maid escorted a chuckling Maisy from the living room.

After Maisy left, Ana heard the distant sound of a car and looked out the window.

*

Inside the car, neither Olivia nor Tyler spoke until Tyler finally said, "You should get off. I'm going to Sandalwood Palace tonight."

It was obvious Tyler was trying to control his urges. Olivia listened quietly and then opened the door.

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[332 words]

Ana stood at the door with a big smile as Olivia got out of the car.

But when Ana saw that Olivia was alone, her smile disappeared. She watched Olivia walk inside and noticed the red bumps on her legs.

Ana glanced past Olivia, her head raised haughtily. "What's going on? Isn't he coming inside?"

"He... He said he needs to go back to Sandalwood Palace," Olivia answered carefully.

"Why on earth would he need to go there if he's already here?"

Olivia stayed quiet, looking down.

"Tell him to come back," Ana said in a low voice. "It's getting late. There's no good reason for him to go to Sandalwood Palace now."

Olivia was taken aback. She stood there, not moving.

"What now?" Ana snapped.

Olivia could feel Ana's intense stare as she stayed silent and still.

"Are you defying me now?"

Olivia realized Ana was giving her an order, not a suggestion. "I'm... I'm going," she said. She then walked to the door and paused on the steps without saying anything.

Tyler saw her and understood. He told his driver firmly, "Let's go."

The car drove away. Ana watched from the living room, her expression darkening.

Olivia closed her eyes-and then heard the car returning. She looked up, puzzled.

The driver got out and opened the door for Tyler. He walked toward her and said softly, "Don't just stand there. Get inside."

He entered the house. Olivia snapped out of her surprise and followed him inside.

Ana's stern look softened, and she smiled. "Welcome home, Tyler. I hope you and Olivia had a great time!"

Tyler knew what she was implying. "It was okay. Why are you still up?"

"Oh, you know me. You two were out, and I was worried. I wanted to wait until you both got home safely."

"Thank you for your concern, Mom."

"It's late. You both should get some rest now."

"I agree. Good night." He turned to Olivia, who was behind him. "Let's go."

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Chapter 443

[387 words]

Olivia hummed in agreement. Ana watched Tyler and Olivia as they walked upstairs, her face looking more relaxed.

Alisa met them at the top of the stairs. "Mr. Tyler, the lights in the study are broken, and we can't get them fixed tonight. Ms. Ana said you should sleep in the bedroom instead." Olivia looked up, surprised, while Alisa looked away.

After a moment, Tyler replied, "Alright." He headed to the bedroom.

Olivia glanced back to see Ana watching from the living room. Ana's look seemed to say, "Take this chance."

Olivia tightened her hand around her wrist, looking down as she walked into the bedroom under Ana's watchful eye.

They hadn't slept in this room together for a long time, but the bed was neatly made, thanks to Ana.

Tyler took off his coat silently and then said to Olivia, "It's late. Go to sleep." He avoided looking at her and went to take a shower.

Olivia felt awkward, now that they were together in the same room. She knew she had to share the bed with him tonight, but she couldn't bring herself to leave the room. Olivia took a few moments to calm down and started getting ready for bed. She changed her clothes. After Tyler came out of the bathroom, she went in.

She took her time. When she came out, it was already 1 am.

Tyler was reading in bed but put his book down when he saw her. "Try to get some sleep," he said, massaging his temple before lying down.

Olivia wondered why he had come back when he had planned to stay at Sandalwood Palace. Maybe he was worried Ana might get upset with her? ...Or perhaps she was reading too much into it. It was hard to tell.

She dried her hair and applied some cream to her stomach, a routine she believed helped with post-pregnancy stretch marks. Tyler, almost asleep, opened his eyes when he noticed Olivia wasn't in bed yet. He saw her applying cream to her stomach.

Caught off-guard, Olivia quickly pulled her shirt down to cover her stomach and fixed her hair.

Finally, she got into bed but didn't dare to pull the blanket over herself. She glanced at Tyler and saw that he was turned away from her, showing only his broad back.

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Chapter 444

[384 words]

Olivia thought for a long time before carefully lifting a small part of the blanket. Slowly, she pulled it toward herself and covered her stomach. The room wasn't very cold-there was a heater on, after all. Soon, she fell asleep.

Tyler turned to his side and looked at her. She seemed like a calm, small cat curled up by herself. He watched her for a while before pulling most of his blanket over her. Olivia's hands automatically grabbed it and held it tight to her chest.

Tyler was about to turn off the lamp when he saw her move closer to him as if she was trying to get some warmth from him.

After a long pause, Tyler finally turned off the light.

What happened in the dark remained unknown.

In the morning, Olivia woke up holding the blanket. She rolled around in the bed for a bit before her eyes landed on Tyler, who was picking out clothes from the closet.

She was surprised. Memories came rushing back, and she sat up straight.

Tyler hadn't seen her wake up. He chose a necktie, turned around, and noticed she was awake. He faced the mirror and tied his tie quietly. He could see Olivia's reflection but didn't talk to her and just adjusted his tie.

Seeing Tyler here felt unreal to Olivia. She remembered that nothing happened last night-not even a simple hug and felt relieved. She quietly got out of bed and said, "Good morning."

Tyler glanced at her. "Morning."

With Tyler there, Olivia didn't know what to do.

After a long, awkward silence, Tyler finished with his tie. He walked toward the door, passing her. "Just go back to sleep. I'm off."

He left the room just like that. Olivia didn't look after him.

*

Tyler continued with his usual activities. He ate with the same group as yesterday and talked about the details of the move. Later, he reached a hotel where everyone else was already waiting in the lounge. The group quickly approached him. The leader said, "So glad to see you, Mr. Harris! We're greatly honored to be under your care."

Tyler smiled a little. "How was your stay?"

They were clearly happy with the hospitality. They beamed. "It was very, very comfortable! We really enjoyed our time here."

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Chapter 445

[352 words]

Tyler smiled. "This hotel is known for its great breakfast. I invited you all to try it with me."

The group was pleasantly surprised. "How could we possibly refuse?" they exclaimed.

Tyler chuckled and led the group in a lively conversation.

Then someone called out, "Tyler."

The group turned around. It was Claude-the man who was still being talked about in the news. He was smiling.

Tyler smiled back, raising an eyebrow. "Claude."

He was with just his personal assistant. He had been keeping out of the spotlight since the incident. If he hadn't spoken, Tyler would have missed him.

Claude walked over. "Funny running into you here. What a coincidence."

Tyler looked at him carefully before answering, "It is. How have you been?"

Claude's eyes seemed to twinkle. "I'm doing alright."

"That's good to hear. I was worried it might have knocked you down too hard."

"Not at all. I have to keep going... for Morgan's sake."

"That's a relief. Then I don't have to worry on Morgan's behalf."

The rest of the group was confused. They stared at the two until Claude recognized one of them. "Mr. Simmons?"

Just as shocked, the man hurried over to Claude and hugged him. "Claude! I wasn't sure it was you!"

Tyler squinted his eyes. Linda, his assistant, looked a bit stern.

Claude and the man chatted briefly before breaking apart. "Tyler, I'd like you to meet a friend I made when I was in an old town," Claude said.

"I was there for work and ended up driving my car into a water reservoir. Claude saved me," Mr. Simmons added quickly. "It's amazing to meet my hero again!"

Tyler raised his eyebrow. "That's new to me, but it doesn't surprise me since Claude is my brother-in-law."

The man laughed. "Sorry, I should have told you, Mr. Harris. I'm just happy to see Claude again!"

"Why are you two here?" Claude asked.

Mr. Simmons answered before Tyler could. "Mr. Harris is interested in some land here, Claude. Since I know the area, he asked for my help."

"Which area is that?" Claude asked, interested.

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[358 words]

Tyler gave Mr. Simmons a sharp look, while Linda looked at Mr. Simmons expectantly.

"It was just a regular piece of land. Nothing special," Mr. Simmons said quickly.

"I see," Claude replied.

"We're about to have breakfast. Do you want to join us?" Tyler invited.

"No thanks. I'll pass," Claude declined.

"I see," Tyler responded quietly.

Mr. Simmons said goodbye to Claude as everyone went their separate ways.

Claude spoke to his secretary, "Looks like the Harris Group is up to something new, huh?"

"Do you want me to look into it?" Lilah asked.

"Yes."

She nodded. "Got it."

Tyler wouldn't team up with someone like Lionel Simmons without a reason. Tyler and these people came from completely different worlds. The only reason Tyler would reach out to them was that he needed their influence in some rural areas where a city boy like him had little control.

Claude returned to the monastery where he was staying. When he got there, Lilah handed him her notes. He looked at them and grinned.

"This must be one of Harris Group's biggest plans. No wonder he needed help from those people," Lilah observed.

Claude closed the folder. "They've always been ambitious. Tyler's always looking for more," he said.

"What should we do?"

"It's time for me to step in."

Lilah stayed silent.

Suddenly, Sophie burst into the room. "Claude! How are you?! You really scared us!"

Claude turned to see Sophie and Jacob entering the room quietly.

"Hello, Ms. Sophie," Lilah greeted her.

Before Jacob could stop her, Sophie hugged Claude tightly. "You're okay, right?! Tell me you're okay!"

Claude looked down at her with a faint smile. "How did you find me here?"

"You don't know how worried we've been!" Sophie exclaimed, looking up at him. "Your mom has been crying every day. She was so afraid you might... you might break down..."

Claude looked into Sophie's eyes with a gentle expression. "You should have more faith in me, Sophie. I'm stronger than you think."

But for Sophie, the recent events had been too much. "But that incident... It was crazy! You had to quit your old job at—"

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Chapter 447

[513 words]

"I'm fine, really," Claude said as he gently removed her hand from his arm. "How have you and Jacob been doing lately? Honestly, I hope Jacob keeps a close watch on you because of your impulsiveness. I wouldn't want you to accidentally say something inappropriate to the media."

"I'll keep an eye on her, Mr. Claude," Jacob reassured.

Claude smiled at him. "You're probably the only one who can, I'm afraid."

"Is there anything else you need help with?" Jacob asked, making his loyalty and position clear to anyone paying attention.

Claude gave him a long, thoughtful look. Jacob met his gaze earnestly.

"Just take care of Sophie for me," Claude finally said with a smile. "You don't have to worry about me."

"Well, I guess that's true. Sophie and I feel better knowing you're alright," Jacob responded sincerely.

"You should go home with him," Claude told Sophie.

After hearing that Claude was okay, Sophie was ready to leave, but she felt compelled to add, "You know, everything that happened is in the past. We all hope it doesn't bother you anymore," she said. "Please. We were all so worried about you."

Claude patted her head. "You've really grown up. But you should go home with Jacob. I'm going to stay here for a bit longer."

Sophie looked around. The place looked like an old shack. After thinking it over, she said, "Alright. We'll be waiting for you at home."

They talked a bit more until Sophie felt reassured about his mental state. Just as she was about to leave, she turned back and said, "I know you called Olivia."

Jacob's eyes flickered briefly. He watched Claude, who hadn't noticed his look. After a pause, Claude admitted, "Yes, I did. I told her to take care."

Sophie was about to speak again when Lilah interrupted, "Let's go for a walk, Ms. Sophie. The air is great outside."

Sophie agreed and they left. Jacob started to follow, but Claude stopped him. "Jacob, please stay. I'd like to talk to you."

Jacob turned to Claude. Sophie also looked back, hopeful that this was a sign of Claude mentoring Jacob. The fact that he was told to stay meant this was a good start. She then walked away, leaving them alone.

"I understand what you're trying to say, Jacob," Claude started.

Jacob bowed his head slightly. "I'm here to help."

"I know. You're smart, and I can tell you'll be one of us," Claude remarked.

"I'm honored to hear that."

"I heard Olivia was your ex."

"We broke up a long time ago. It was never serious. We're just friends now," Jacob replied quickly when Claude brought up a sensitive topic.

Claude nodded, satisfied. "That's good to hear. I trust you'll look after Sophie well. I'd prefer it if you didn't get involved with Olivia again."

Jacob understood the implication. He kept his humble expression and said, "Understood."

Claude smiled as he sipped his tea. "Good."

Meanwhile, Sophie walked around outside the monastery, waiting for Jacob. She kept glancing toward the gate, watching for his return.

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[382 words]

"Jacob!" Sophie called as she walked toward him. They exchanged a glance and got into the car.

"So, what did he say to you?" Sophie asked.

Jacob remembered how Claude looked when he brought up Olivia and frowned slightly. But then he quickly smiled. "Your brother is a really nice guy. He's gentle and treats me well." "Of course he is. Claude is the best."

"He didn't seem like the sort of guy the media made him out to be. He couldn't have possibly done those things to Morgan Harris," Jacob blurted out.

"No way! That's all horse crap!" Sophie responded with frustration. "Someone must have set him up! No one really knows what happened that night... not even my brother."

Jacob paused for a second. "That aside, Claude also... asked about Olivia."

Sophie stared at him intensely. Jacob could feel the intensity of her gaze and took her hand. "Look, Soof, I even took you to meet my parents! There's no way I still have feelings for her. It's just... Claude. I think he might, you know—"

"Claude likes her," Sophie cut in.

Jacob was silent for a few seconds.

"To be honest, I wouldn't mind if Olivia became part of my family. If only she wasn't already married into the Harris family..." Sophie said thoughtfully.

Jacob's expression darkened a little.

"Anyway, you can't meet Olivia anymore, Jacob! Not even as a friend!" Sophie stated aloud. "Because Claude is, well, interested in her."

It was both a reminder and a warning. Between those lines, though, was Sophie's own hidden worry.

Jacob smiled. "What are you talking about? Why would I try to meet her?"

He looked deeply into her eyes, and she hugged him tightly.

Jacob drove with one arm around her.

After eating, Tyler and his assistant left the hotel.

Linda started, "Should we watch Claude's friend more closely?" She was talking about Lionel Simmons.

"Yes. Keep a close watch. I don't want any surprises."

"Understood."

Tyler hummed as he got into his car.

"Ms. Naomi wants you to visit her this afternoon," Linda mentioned.

Tyler thought for a moment before replying, "Alright."

"She also said she wants a bouquet of irises."

Tyler paused for a second. "We'll pick one up on our way."

"Understood."

They headed toward the hospital.

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Chapter 449

[406 words]

Tyler had been spending a lot of time with Naomi lately, so it was usual for him to go to the hospital again.

"Buy some ointment for me," he said suddenly.

Linda looked at him, curious. He glanced back at her.

"Oh! Is it for bug bites?" she asked.

Tyler just looked forward without saying anything. Linda understood what that silence meant.

"Alright," she said thoughtfully. "Understood."

Ana had called Olivia over for a talk. As she sipped her tea on the couch, she started, "You probably know why I've been desperately giving you two time alone, right?" Olivia didn't say anything.

Ana put her cup down. "I want you to remain Mrs. Harris, and that means you need to actually do something about it. What kind of wife lets her husband go see her sister every single day?"

Olivia looked down.

"Do I really need to tell you how to win your husband's heart?"

Olivia felt a heavy pressure on her. "I understand your point, Mom. I'll do as you say."

Ana wasn't satisfied with just a vague promise. She chuckled and said, "Don't blame me for taking my steam out on you if I don't see Tyler sleeping at home on these nights." Olivia tensed up.

Ana took another sip of her tea. "He should be at Harris Group now. Why don't you send him some tea in the afternoon?"

"Wait! I..."

"What?"

"He... He might be busy right now. I shouldn't disturb him...?"

Ana laughed sharply. "How could that be disturbing? You're just sending him warm tea."

Olivia had no choice but to agree. "Okay."

At two in the afternoon, Olivia took a basket of cookies and a thermos of tea to Harris Group. She was quiet during the ride and only looked up when the car stopped in front of the building. "Do you want to call Mr. Tyler?" the driver asked.

Olivia had been thinking about whether to call him for a long time. She frowned and said, "Right."

She dialed the number she hardly ever used.

Tyler was in Naomi's hospital room when his phone rang. He was surprised to see it was Olivia. Why would she, of all people, call him? It was perplexing.

Naomi, who was knitting in her bed, noticed his frown. "What's wrong?"

He put his book down on his knees. "Nothing."

Then, he got up and walked out of the room to answer the call.

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[412 words]

"What's the matter?" Tyler asked.

Olivia sensed his cold tone and calmed herself. "Um, I was told to bring you afternoon tea. Are you in your office right now?"

Tyler raised an eyebrow, knowing exactly who might have sent her. He leaned against the railing and looked down the empty hallway. "No, I'm not."

Olivia wasn't expecting that answer. While she paused, trying to think, Tyler added nonchalantly, "I'm at the hospital with your sister."

Tyler often spent time with her sister, so it made sense he was there and not at his office. Still, this left Olivia unsure of what to do next. "What should I do with the tea, then?"

"Just leave it at the front desk. They'll send it to my office," he instructed.

"A-Alright."

Tyler ended the call. Olivia heard the beep and went silent.

Sensing the change, the driver asked cautiously, "Is Mr. Tyler not there?"

"No. He told us to drop the tea at the front desk."

The driver was taken aback.

Tyler stood at the window of the hospital floor, looking down below. He smoked a cigarette while resting against a pillar, appearing a bit lonely.

Olivia got out of the car slowly, followed closely by the driver.

They approached the impressive building of Harris Group, and Olivia was momentarily awestruck. She walked toward the front desk, where a very professional-looking young woman in uniform was working. The woman looked up, saw Olivia, and immediately approached her. "Mrs. Harris!"

Olivia was startled by the address but then remembered she had been here before. "This is Tyler's afternoon tea, prepared by his family. Could you please send it to his office? Thanks."

The receptionist seemed a bit surprised. "For Mr. Harris, right?"

"Yes."

"I'll make sure it gets there right away," the receptionist promised.

As Olivia turned to leave, the receptionist called after her, "Won't you stay for a while?"

Olivia hadn't planned on staying. "... I have something else I need to do. Sorry," she replied gently.

"That's a shame. Let me at least walk you to the door," the receptionist offered.

Olivia nodded.

As they walked through the lounge, people started to notice and whisper about Olivia and why she was getting such special treatment. Olivia tried her best to ignore the stares. Just as the receptionist was about to open the door for her, Olivia stopped her. "It's alright. I'm just here to drop off the tea."

The receptionist smiled. "Understood, Mrs. Harris!"

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