

Ex Convict 3421

Chapter 3421

Mason didn't apologize to Daniel and his friends for the fight. Several students who were injured by Mason that day were sent to the hospital. Although their injuries were not serious, they were kept in the hospital for observation overnight.

On the Reed family's side, after learning about their son's fight, they didn't retaliate against the students as the school teachers feared. Instead, they went to the hospital and apologized to the students and their parents.

This was unexpected and a relief **for** the school.

In any case, it's best that this matter is resolved without any major consequences.

As for Veronica and Mason's classmates, the gossip about them has escalated, with some even directly asking Veronica if she and Mason are dating.

Veronica was taken aback by this.

How could she possibly be dating Mason?

"Mason is my little brother!" Veronica said seriously.

"What little brother? He's not even your real brother! Besides, you "

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two are **so close**, and **that** senior seemed interested in you that day. Mason even fought him, so obviously there's something **going** on between you and Mason," the other person said ambiguously.

Veronica's face darkened. "Mason and I are just siblings. There's nothing going on between Mason and me like you're suggesting. If you keep spreading rumors, be prepared for the consequences!"

The other person fell silent upon hearing this.

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After all, Veronica's backer is Mason, and Mason's backer **is** the Reed family.

If Veronica really loses her temper, she'll have the backing of the Reed family.

“Okay, let’s stop talking about it.” The person muttered for a while, but when their gaze suddenly caught sight of something behind Veronica, their face changed and they hurriedly ran away, as if they were afraid of something.

Veronica was startled and turned around to see that Mason was standing not far away from her, though she didn’t know when he had arrived.

At this moment, those black eyes were fixedly staring at her, and his lips were almost pursed into a straight line.

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Is he...angry?!

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Veronica suddenly had this realization, but... what was he angry about?

Is she angry about the things she said to someone else just now?

“Mason...” Veronica approached and said, “Did you hear what others said just now? Don’t mind those words, they were just talking nonsense!”

Grace pressed her lips together and remained silent.

Until it was time to go home after school, he didn’t say much to Grace, at most just responding with a simple “mm–hmm” when she spoke.

Veronica couldn’t do anything about it. She couldn’t just force Mason to talk.

As they were about to enter the house, he suddenly spoke up and asked, “Are we just siblings to each other?”

“Hmm?” She paused for a moment, then said, “Of course, I treat you like a younger brother, no, even closer than a younger brother!” After all, she had a half–brother named Lionel Barlow, but her feelings towards Lionel were not very strong.

From childhood to adulthood, she relied on Mason more than anyone else.

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His lips tightened, and he walked straight into the house without saying anything, leaving Veronica confused.

Did she say something wrong? Why does he seem even more unhappy now?

A few days later, Veronica ran into Daniel again at school, and when Daniel saw Veronica, he was momentarily stunned.

"I'm sorry!" Veronica said. "That day, I didn't know my brother would suddenly become violent. I'm very sorry that he hurt you and your friend."

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Daniel seems a bit awkwardly saying, "You didn't hit us, so why are you apologizing?"

"I...I am his sister. I apologize on his behalf. Besides, this whole thing started because of me," Veronica said.

"Do you really think he's your brother?" Daniel asked with a strange expression on his face.

These days, he had naturally heard more gossip about Veronica and Mason's relationship.

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Veronica's expression changed, "I don't know what you think, but for me, Mason is my family, he's my brother!"

After speaking, Veronica turned and left.

Daniel was stunned for a moment, then hurriedly caught up and stopped Veronica, "I'm sorry, I'm not..." He seemed to want to explain something, but then realized that explaining anything would only make things worse, so he didn't know what to say.

The two of them stared at each other for a while.

After

a while, Daniel finally managed to say, "I believe you. You and he are just siblings. Actually, I should thank you. Last time

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when your brother was about to beat me up, you rushed out and stood in front of me."

That was also the first time he had been protected by a girl. It was strange, but this scene had been unconsciously appearing in his mind these days, making him unable to forget it.

Veronica's expression softened when she heard him say this.

"I'm just too sensitive," she said.

"But you and your brother must have a deep bond," he brought up a topic, "I heard from classmates at school that he lives with you."

"Yeah, he's been living with me since we were very young," she said, "so we've been together since we were little..."

Maybe it was the sincerity on Daniel's face that made her unconsciously say these words.

"Actually, when I was a kid, I always wanted a little brother to play with me!" Daniel sighed, "In kindergarten, I once brought a little boy from the nursery class back home because the kindergarten I went to and my home were in the same neighborhood, very close. As a result, my parents were shocked when they saw me bringing a child back, and the other child's parents almost went crazy

looking for him, they even called the police..."

As Daniel talked about his childhood anecdotes, Veronica couldn't help but laugh, as if the scene was happening right in

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front of her.

As Daniel actively talked about some childhood embarrassing moments, Veronica gradually relaxed and talked about some

childhood memories with him.

Time passed by unknowingly.

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After that, it seemed like Veronica was running into Daniel more often, sometimes on the school campus, sometimes on the playground, and sometimes in the library.

Sometimes, they just exchange a smile, while other times, Daniel would approach her and initiate a conversation.

A bewildering feeling spread in Veronica's heart, something she had never experienced before.

One

day, when Daniel met Veronica again, he smiled and said, "I want to buy a pair of sneakers this Sunday. Um, do you have time? Can you help me pick out some sneakers?"

"Me?" Veronica paused for a moment, surprised.

"Yes, are you free?" Daniel looked **at** her with bright eyes.

At that moment, Veronica suddenly didn't want her eyes to show disappointment. "Okay, I'll go with you to pick out a dress on Sunday," she replied.

Daniel's face immediately lit up with a sunny smile and he

exclaimed excitedly, "That's settled then! I'll come pick you up at 10am on Sunday. Where do you live?"

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Veronica shared her home address and asked for Daniel's

address. She realized that they were in completely opposite

directions. So she suggested, "Let's meet at the entrance of the

mall. My home is conveniently located near a subway station that goes directly to the mall."

"Okay, let's meet at the entrance of the mall. Don't be a no-show!"

said Daniel.

At that moment, someone nearby called out to Daniel

to play ball. He said, "I'll go play ball first. See you on Sunday!"

"Okay, see you on Sunday," Veronica replied.

Watching Daniel's back as he ran away, Veronica's lips curved into

a smile. Sunday...this was the first time she had a date with a boy

other than Mason.

A date?

When these two words crossed Veronica's mind, she paused for a

moment. Was she...on a date now?

On Sunday, Veronica woke up early and took some time to dress up, putting on her new dress.

When Mason saw Veronica at the dining table, he was slightly

surprised. He felt that Veronica was different from before, but he

couldn't quite put his finger on what was different.

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Stepmother Rosalind Bush looked at Veronica and couldn't help but ask, "Veronica, are you going to accompany Mason to the Reed family today?"

Although Mason lived with the Barlow family, he still had a few fixed days each month to visit the Reed family. This was one of the conditions that Jason agreed to when he allowed his **son to** live with the Barlow family for a long time.

"No, I'm going shopping with...um, a friend later," Veronica said.

"Shopping? Do you have enough money? If not, just tell me!" Rosalind played the role of a kind mother at the moment.

Over the years, she has been working hard to please and flatter Veronica. After all, the Barlow family now relies on Veronica to keep Mason hooked, which is why they are living the good life.

"No need, I have enough money," said Veronica calmly.

In recent years, due to the Reed family's influence, her relationship with her stepmother has somewhat improved.

However, she is aware of her stepmother's insincerity and superficial warmth, which is only due to the Reed family's influence.

Mason looked at Veronica and asked, "Do you want to go shopping with your friends?"

"Mmm," she said.

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"Which friend?" he asked insistently.

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"Hmm?" After a moment of confusion, she said, "It's Pamela.

She called me a few days ago and said that it's been a long time **since** we've seen each other, and she wants **to** meet up and go shopping."

Pamela was her classmate in junior high school and they had a good relationship. They used to hang out together on weekends.

Mason didn't say anything else.

Veronica couldn't help but silently criticize herself for lying just now.

Why did she lie to Mason? Maybe it's because Mason and Daniel

had a conflict last time, so she instinctively didn't say that she went shopping with Daniel this time.

"I'll take you there. Where will you meet Pamela?" said Mason after finishing breakfast.

"No need, I'll take the subway directly to the mall entrance, it's very convenient. You can go back to your home first, I still need some time before leaving," said Veronica.

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In the living room now, only Rosalind and Veronica remain.

Rosalind smiled and said, "Veronica, it seems like you haven't been as close to Mason as before. Has something happened between you two?"

Veronica looked at Rosalind strangely and said, "I don't understand what you mean, Aunt Rosalind."

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Rosalind smiled and said, "Remember how Mason used to always be in your room before? He wouldn't leave until it was time to sleep. But lately, it seems like you've been leaving your room earlier than usual."

"He finished his homework and naturally left my room. Besides, I also need my own alone time," said Veronica.

Actually, this is intentional on her part. She doesn't want Mason to spend all his time around her. She hopes he can use some of his time for his own hobbies. So sometimes, after finishing

homework, she'll make an excuse to go to bed early or say she wants to do something alone and quietly, and let him go back to his own room.

"I see," Rosalind said thoughtfully, "although you need some alone time, Auntie just wants to remind you that even though

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Mason is like a brother to you, he's not actually your real brother. He's the second son of the Reed family, so you mustn't cause any rifts with him. If he goes back to the Reed family, things won't be as good for us in the future."

"I know he's the second son of the Reed family, but to me, he's just my little brother," Veronica looked straight at Rosalind and said. "Besides, even if Mason goes back to the Reed family in the future, it's only natural because that's where he belongs."

She doesn't believe that if Mason returns to the Reed family, the bond between her and him will disappear.

"What are you talking about?" Rosalind's voice suddenly rose. "How could you let him go back to the Reed family? If he goes back to the Reed family, will they still treat our family so well?"

"Why can't he go back to his own home? Are you trying to keep him in the Barlow family forever, Auntie Rosalind?" Veronica sneered at Rosalind.

Although Rosalind has been trying to please and flatter her stepdaughter for years, she became displeased and angry when she saw the expression on her stepdaughter's face at this moment. "Of course we have to keep him in the Barlow family, the longer the better! Have you ever thought about it? Without him, could you live the way you do now and live in this house?"

"Mason won't stay with the Barlow family forever. He'll have his own life, just like Auntie Rosalind said. He's the second son of the
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Reed family, so naturally, he'll return to where he belongs in the future."

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Mason will have a wider horizon, not being trapped here as a tool to be used due to her relationship with the Barlow family!

"You..." Rosalind suddenly exclaimed in anger, "Are you trying to make me angry to death?!"

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At that moment, Archer Barlow emerged from the bedroom and said, "What's all the fuss about so early in the morning?"

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"It's your precious daughter after all. I can't believe she doesn't want Mason to stay with the Barlow family and instead wants him to go back to the Reed family. If Mason really goes back to the Reed family, what are we going to do?" said Rosalind.

As soon as Archer heard this, his face immediately changed and he said to Veronica, "Veronica, did you really say that?"

"Yes, I said **it**," Veronica said.

"How could you say something like that? You should know what

Mason means to our family, the Barlows! In the future, you can't say such things casually, and especially not in front of Mason!

Do you understand?" Archer said to his daughter with great seriousness.

"What you need to do is figure out how to keep Mason in the Barlow family for as long as possible!"

"So, Dad, are you planning on being a parasite forever?" Veronica asked. "Our family has relied on the Reed family for too long, but it's better to rely on oneself than on others. You should know this. **If** you always think about relying on and using others, one day you

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won't be able to rely on them."

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Archer became very angry and said, "What parasite? How dare you speak to your own father like that?"

"I'm telling the truth. Do you not know that many people outside are calling us, the Barlow family, parasites?"

As Veronica finished speaking, Archer raised his hand and slapped her across the face.

Suddenly, a red mark appeared on Veronica's face.

"Enough, you can't say things like that anymore!" Archer said angrily.

Meanwhile, Rosalind said on the side, "Okay, Veronica, apologize to your dad. He's doing it for the whole Barlow family, isn't he?"

This couple, one playing the angry role and the other playing the conciliatory role.

Veronica only felt a strong sense of fatigue and disgust. She didn't even want to say much, just picked up her bag and said, "I'm leaving." And she left directly.

Behind her, Archer was still cursing, while Rosalind was trying to persuade her.

Veronica walked out of the community and headed towards the

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subway station.

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Although she had woken up feeling excited today, her mood was now so depressed.

Her father and stepmother were just using Mason as a tool to continue their parasitic lifestyle.

And she was probably an accomplice.

She knew that Mason would stay with the Barlow family solely because of her relationship with them.

Perhaps, over the years, Mason hasn't made many new friends and has spent most of her time revolving around the Barlow family due to her close relationship with them.

If Mason had really been taken back to the Reed family back then and lived with them, he wouldn't be struggling to adapt to society

like this now!

As soon as Veronica thought of this, she felt a strong tightness in her chest.

She didn't even know when she arrived at the entrance of the mall until she heard Daniel's voice, which snapped her back to reality.

"What's wrong with you? I called you so many times just now, it's like you didn't hear me," said Daniel as he ran up.

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"I spaced out a **bit** just now," said Veronica.

Suddenly, Daniel frowned and asked, "What's wrong with your face?"

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"Face?" Veronica was confused until Daniel's finger touched the red mark on her cheek. Then she realized it was the spot where

her father had slapped her before.

She bit her lip and showed an embarrassed expression on her face.

"Did someone hit you?" At this moment, Daniel also noticed the bruising on Veronica's face, which was a sign of being hit.

She gave a bitter smile and said, "I was beaten by my father."

Now it's Daniel's turn to feel embarrassed, "Sorry."

"Not much," she said.

"Um...actually, I also used to get beaten by my father quite often!" Daniel said, trying to ease the awkwardness. "I've caused a lot of trouble since I was young, and my father didn't hesitate to hit me."

"But my father hits me not because I cause trouble, but simply because my thoughts are different from theirs," Veronica said, looking at Daniel. "Do you know what a parasite is?"

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"Huh?" He was stunned for a moment, as if he didn't expect the topic to suddenly shift to this.

"A parasite is an animal that lives on or in another animal or plant and feeds on its nutrients, but can harm the host. If we use it to describe a person, it refers to someone who relies on others and doesn't work for themselves!" Veronica spoke with bitterness in her eyes. "And my family and I are like parasites."

At this moment, she inexplicably wanted to speak out the words that had been suppressed in her heart.

She couldn't say these things to Mason or any other classmates,

even though she knew they were all talking about the Barlow

family. She had been suppressing these thoughts in her heart.

After having a conflict with her family today, she suddenly had the urge to confide in Daniel when she saw him.

Daniel felt his heart tighten as he saw Veronica's expression,

which made him feel a little sorry for her.

“Who...who talks about their own family like that?” he asked quickly.

She gave a self-deprecating smile, “There are also many people at

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school who say that. You must have heard of it **too.**” Even though Daniel had never heard of it before, he must have heard of it after the fight with Mason.

Daniel fell silent immediately.

Veronica said, “This is the truth. My family is indeed a parasite,

relying on the Reed family. If Mason wasn’t in the Barlow family, our family wouldn’t have such a good life.”

“But you definitely aren’t,” Daniel said.

“What?”

“I mean, you definitely aren’t a parasite. Even if your family is currently relying on the Reed family, I believe that when you have the ability to work in the future, you will be self-sufficient and not rely on others to get something for nothing!” Daniel said.

Veronica paused for a moment and asked, “Do you really think I’m not that kind of person?”

“Right, I believe you’re not that kind of person. If you don’t believe

me, we can make a bet. Let’s bet on whether or not you’ll be

self-sufficient in ten years!” Daniel smiled and said.

His smile was infectious and it made her feel better. The

gloominess that was weighing on her heart seemed to dissipate gradually after talking to him.

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“Thank you,” she said.

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“**What** are you thanking me for? Weren’t you the one who came to accompany me to buy sneakers today? I should be the one thanking you,” he said.

“By the way, let’s go to the mall now to buy sneakers,” she said.

“Before we go into the mall... Oh, wait for me here for a moment!” he said, then hurriedly ran off. She only saw him run across the street and into a pharmacy. After a moment, he rushed out of the pharmacy and quickly ran back to her side.

"It's alright, fortunately this ointment is also sold in this pharmacy. You must remember to apply it when you go back!" he said, as he handed her a tube of ointment.

Veronica looked at the ointment in her hand. It was the same one that he gave her last time, but it was thrown away by Mason into the trash can.

She pursed her lips slightly and said again, "Thank you."

"Don't keep thanking me all the time, let's go!" he said with a shy smile.

Veronica couldn't help but smile, and the two of them walked into the mall.

On the other side, at the Reed family's place, Mason sat in their

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living room and went with his family to their ancestral hall. There, they paid their respects to the ancestors' tablets.

Here are their great-grandfather, great-grandmother, grandfather, and grandmother.

My father rarely comes here, it's always my mother who brings them together.

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After completing the ritual and offering incense, Grace led the youngest Jasmine while the triplets followed behind her, walking towards the main house.

Along the way, Jasper asked Mason, "Brother, what happened when you got into a fight at school last time? What happened?"

Jasper only knows that there was a fight and several students were hospitalized. His parents went to the hospital to visit the injured students and even paid for all their medical expenses.

"Not much," Mason pursed his lips and recalled the scene of Veronica standing in front of Daniel in his mind.

This was her first time protecting another boy, which made him extremely uncomfortable.

It's like some things are gradually going beyond his expected

scope.

“Did those people bully you?” Jasper asked again. She knew that despite her second brother’s fierce actions, he would never actively seek trouble with others unless provoked.

Mason looked up and suddenly looked at Jasper.

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Jasper felt a **little** overwhelmed **by** his **gaze** and asked, “What’s wrong with you, Second Brother?”

“What does it mean if a girl is willing to risk getting hurt or hit in order **to** protect another boy?” he asked.

Jasper’s **eyes** widened in surprise as he looked **at** the other person. After all, Mason rarely spoke **so** many words at once.

He asked about it, **or** rather, this question.

“That’s definitely because this girl likes this boy,” said Jasper. “What’s up, Second Brother? Did any girl come to protect you when you were fighting?”

Mason’s face slightly sank, his long eyelashes half covering his eyes, but he didn’t say anything more.

Jasper is used to his younger brother’s behavior, so he doesn’t bother asking any questions since he knows he won’t get any answers.

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Moreover, Second Brother has always only valued Sister Veronica.

Even if another girl were to come out and protect Second Brother, he would still ignore her.

At this moment, Mason’s eyes darkened and his hand hanging by his side involuntarily tightened slightly.

So, did Auntie rush **out** to protect Daniel because she likes him?

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Whenever he thinks about her falling for another guy, he **feels**

extremely upset!

And this unpleasant feeling seems **to be** continuously gnawing at him!

Veronica helped Daniel pick out his sneakers, and then Daniel offered to take Veronica out to lunch.

The two of them picked a fast food restaurant in the mall. Veronica held the seats while Daniel went to queue up to order the **food**.

In the fast food restaurant, there were also several students around their age who were dining, including some couples.

Next to Veronica's table, there is a young couple who appear to still be students. They are having a meal together, and the boy is helping the girl by getting her napkins and two drinks. He lets her try both drinks and she chooses the one she likes, while the boy drinks the other one.

These two individuals are probably a couple.

It seems that when a man and a woman are together, they are easily assumed to be a couple. But in the eyes of others, what do they think of her and Daniel?

I don't know if what she and Daniel did today can be considered a date.

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At that moment, a voice sounded, "You've been waiting for a while."

Veronica snapped out **of it** and only saw Daniel walking over with a tray in his hands.

"Ah, I didn't wait very long," said Veronica.

"Here you go, this is the B combo you wanted," said Daniel as he placed a B combo in front of Veronica and sat down. "What were you thinking just now?"

"Not much, just thinking if this counts as a date..." Veronica blurted out, but as soon as the words left her mouth, she realized something was off. Her face turned bright red. "I...I didn't mean it like that, I just..."

Daniel's face also turned red, but he confidently said, "It's a date!"

Veronica was surprised and looked at Daniel in a daze.

Daniel scratched his head awkwardly, "Of course, it's just for me.

You agreed to come out with me today, and I'm happy. I hope today can be considered a date."

Veronica blushed and lowered her head, burying herself in her

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lunch.

Daniel smiled and ate lunch with **her**.

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After finishing their meal, Daniel checked the time and said, "Shall we go to the square later? There are usually street performances on weekends."

"Okay," Veronica replied.

The two of them left the mall and headed towards the nearby square.

Suddenly, an electric scooter swerved to avoid a pedestrian and headed towards Daniel and Veronica.

Veronica instinctively tried to dodge, but the scooter was moving too fast. She closed her eyes, thinking it was going to hit her.

At that moment, a force suddenly grabbed her arm and pulled her to the side.

Suddenly, she ran into a wide embrace, while the electric bike crashed into the green area behind her.

Veronica was breathing heavily, still in shock. She heard Daniel's concerned voice in her ear, "Are you okay? Did the car hit you?"

Veronica realized that it was Daniel who had saved her earlier by holding onto her, allowing her to escape danger. Now, she found

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herself completely enveloped **in** Daniel's embrace.

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“Thank...thank you, I’m fine. The car didn’t hit me,” she said, her face slightly blushing as she tried to pull away from his embrace.

“Great, I’m so glad you’re okay!” exclaimed Daniel as he hugged Veronica tightly with excitement.

Her body stiffened, and her hands were placed between her and his chest. At this moment, she could have pushed him away, but she didn’t.

I can’t express my feelings at this moment, but... she knows that she doesn’t really want to push him away, to push away this big guy with a bright smile.

Veronica and Daniel, at this moment, did not notice that a car was parked nearby. Inside the car, Mason was sitting in the back seat, watching the scene through the window.

This scene made him feel extremely uncomfortable, and once again he heard Jasper’s words in his ear, “If a girl is willing to risk getting hurt or even hit in order to protect another guy, it means she likes him.”

So... does Sister really like Daniel?

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Mason ordered the driver in front in a cold tone, “Drive us **back to** the Barlow family.”

The driver acknowledged and started the car again, heading towards the direction of the Barlow family. Mason kept his gaze fixed on the window until he could no longer see Veronica’s figure, then he lowered his eyes.

While driving past the entrance of the shopping mall, he caught a glimpse of her and instructed the driver to stop the car.

Just as he was about to open the car door and get out, he saw the electric scooter rushing towards her. In the next moment, she was firmly held by Daniel.

He felt regretful in his heart, wondering why he wasn’t the one who saved her, but at the same time he was also relieved that she wasn’t hurt.

But then, he thought she would push away Daniel, but she didn’t!

She did not push Daniel away.

This made him feel like there was a needle piercing his chest,
accompanied by a dense and painful sensation.

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What is this pain he's feeling? He's **not** sure, but **a** sense of fear is spreading throughout his body.

He's afraid that she'll care about Daniel, that her eyes will only
see Daniel's existence, and that in her heart, she'll eventually only have room for Daniel.

No! He doesn't want this!

He wants her to only care about him! He wants her heart **to** be filled with only him!

The car drives towards the Barlow family, and Mason's hands hanging by his side become tighter and tighter...

When Veronica returns to the Barlow family, the house is quiet and
the lights are off.

So, there's no one home? She thinks to herself as she takes off her
shoes and puts on slippers, walking towards her room.

Her face is a little flushed, even though she's separated from
Daniel, that shy feeling still exists because of Grace.

When Daniel
hugged her earlier today, she felt her heart beating unusually fast, just like in a teenage comic.

Does this accelerated heartbeat mean... she likes him?

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Does Veronica like Daniel?

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Thinking about this, Veronica's face grew even redder.

As she walked to the door of the room, she pushed it open and was about **to** reach for the light switch when suddenly a hand pressed down on hers, stopping her movement.

Veronica was startled and turned her head to see that Mason had
somehow appeared beside her. "Mason, you scared me. When did you come back?"

"A little earlier than you," he said in a low voice.

www

"If you're going to stay in my room alone, at least turn on a light," she said, trying to reach for the switch again.

But his hand pressed hers against the wall.

"Mason?" she asked in confusion, but her other hand was also pressed against the wall by him.

Suddenly, her whole body was pressed against the wall, and his hands were pressing down on hers, as if he was imprisoning her.

Veronica's already slightly red face turned even redder.

This posture exudes a kind of ambiguity, like the scenes of the male and female protagonists in a teenage comic book, which

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suddenly made her feel flustered.

"Mason, what are you doing? **Let** go quickly!" she exclaimed, trying to ease her current anxiety and embarrassment.

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"I've been waiting for Sister Ah for a while now," he said, but he didn't let go of her hand. Instead, he moved a little closer to her, his face approaching hers. His black and white eyes reflected her somewhat bewildered expression.

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"Mason, if you have something to say, just say it nicely. Don't grip my hand like this," she said. At the moment, they were standing **too** close to each other, and it made her feel a bit uneasy.

It's like having a bad feeling about something.

"Do you not like it this way, elder sister?" He lowered his head even more, and his lips lightly brushed against her ear.

"How could she possibly like him?" Veronica bit her lip and asked, "This feels awkward, what's wrong with you?"

"I really want to know what's wrong with me!" he said softly. "Sister, were you really shopping with Pamela today?"

Veronica trembled as she met his cold gaze.

His gaze... it was as if he knew who her real date was today.

No, he... he couldn't possibly know! She should say "yes" at this point, but the word seemed to be stuck in her throat and she couldn't say it no matter what.

"Yes... or no?" he continued.

Veronica took a deep breath. "I'm sorry, Mason. I lied to you

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earlier. I didn't go shopping with Pamela today. I went with Daniel."

Their eyes met, and the air seemed to freeze.

"So, you lied to me before," he said softly.

"I'm sorry," she apologized.

"Why did you lie to me? Was it for Daniel?" he asked.

Why? Actually, Veronica couldn't even explain to herself why she had to lie!

"Maybe... it's because you had a conflict with Daniel before, so I didn't tell you the truth all of a sudden," Veronica thought for a moment and said, "I'm sorry, I won't do this again in the future."

"In the future..." his voice trailed off, "So, are you planning to go on another date with Daniel, Sister Ah?"

She suddenly choked up, thinking about the moment when she parted ways with Daniel earlier that day. He had asked her if she would like to go watch a basketball game between their school team and another school's team the next time they had the chance. She remained silent, which was essentially her way of agreeing **to** go.

This default setting just makes him even more uncomfortable.

"If I were to ask you, Sister, **to** stop seeing Daniel altogether, and

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not even give him a second glance, would **you** agree?" he said

softly.

She looked at him in surprise and asked, "Why?"

"I just don't want to, no particular reason," he said.

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"Is it because of the conflict you had with Daniel? But actually, he was just trying to break up the fight that time. It was his classmate who started the physical altercation. Besides, Daniel is actually a nice person. If you get to know him, you'll find out..."

"I don't want to listen!" he interrupted her, "I just want you, sister, to not meet him alone anymore, to not look at him, and to not talk

to him."

"Can you please stop being unreasonable?" she said. "Mason, I have the freedom to make friends, and I hope you can respect

that. Besides, I've said **it** before, no matter what, you are still my family, my important younger brother. I won't ignore you just because I made new friends!"

She thought he was like when they were children, deeply afraid of being ignored by her.