

Pursuing 541

Chapter 541

Willow, who had been hiding in a corner the entire time, grew green with envy when she overheard the conversation.

What the hell? I've become a joke in Jipsdale, and even my classmates look down on me, yet Grandpa has never spared a thought for me! I'm the one who needs Tanner Group the most, not Sophie! Argh! Does he intend to give her all his assets?

What Willow didn't realize, however, was that the more she seethed, the uglier her scowl became.

Unfortunately, she was so engrossed in her thoughts that she knocked over a vase beside her and sent it crashing onto the floor.

In a moment of panic, she stepped on the broken shards, only to cut her foot so badly that it started to bleed.

Josiah quickly walked toward the source of the commotion with Sophie and Tristan, and it wasn't long before they found Willow standing in the corner.

Upon seeing her in such a wretched state, the old man couldn't help but frown. Why is she behaving so sneakily? Isn't she also a member of the Tanner family? Such behavior is just downright embarrassing!

"How long have you been here?"

Willow clenched her fists.

"Grandpa, isn't this also my house? Why can't I be here?" she snapped, annoyed at how biased her

grandfather sounded.

“Yes, this is your house, but if there's anything you want to know, you should be joining us in the living room instead of eavesdropping!”

Josiah hadn't wanted to be so blunt, but he could tell from Willow's expression that any attempt to knock sense into her would be futile.

The grimace on Willow's face deepened.

“Morgan!” Josiah shouted.

Within seconds, the butler hurried over with a concerned look. “What's the matter, Old Mr. Tanner? Are you not feeling well?”

“I'm fine. Send Willow to the hospital.”

Willow immediately flinched and took a step back.

“No. I refuse to go to the hospital. Since none of you like me, why do you even care if I live or die? Leave me alone!” she thundered.

Now that she had been caught in a painful predicament, Willow felt as if the whole world was against her, and she was the one who had suffered the most.

Even then, I don't need anyone's pity! I'll rise to the top one day and prove my worth to everyone!

Just then, Charmaine walked down the stairs and gaped at the sight of Willow bleeding.

“Willa, what happened to you? Let's get you to the hospital!” she exclaimed as she ran up to her daughter.

Alas, Willow flung her mother's hand away.

“Leave me be! Is everyone ashamed of me? Am I just a huge letdown to you?”

I did everything I could to be with Clayton, but look what happened to him... I'm now the biggest joke in town!

“I'm sure you think I deserve all of these, Sophie. You must be happy to see me in such a pathetic state!” Willow added.

Sophie instantly furrowed her brows.

“What has your plight got to do with me? Do you think I'm that free to keep a constant eye on you? You're the one who has been making me out to be your imaginary enemy, Willow. I've never bothered myself with your affairs before!”

“Ha! What a way to put it!” Willow scoffed, not at all believing her sister's words. “I think we've all heard enough. You and Tristan can head home first!”

Is Sophie really that powerful that she doesn't care at all? No, I doubt it. I'm sure she's afraid that I'll outshine her! In any case, it's not like she needs to come back here. Why can't she be contented with

her life and leave us alone? She doesn't need to lord over us again!

The next second, Willow glanced at Tristan. For a man of his caliber and status, he seemed perfectly happy to stand quietly by Sophie.

He was undeniably brilliant and outstanding, yet he had no qualms about staying out of the limelight and being Sophie's silent protector.

Naturally, that only made women even more jealous of Sophie.

To make matters worse for Willow, Tristan had never once bothered to look at her.

Oh, he must also think I'm a piece of trash! How infuriating!

"Get some rest, Grandpa. Willow doesn't seem to be in pain, so let's not worry about her. Besides, she won't die from such a minor injury!" Sophie uttered.

Why fret over her when her life's not in any danger? Ha! I've suffered far worse injuries than this. She'll be fine...

"Sophie, how could you say that? Who caused Willow to end up in this state?"

"Are you insinuating it's me?" Sophie retorted. "Oh, right, I was the one who sent Clayton to jail! Your daughter tried everything she could to marry a murderer, and if it weren't for me, she'd have become a murderer's wife! Shouldn't she be thanking me instead?"

Even though the mention of Clayton's name drove Willow even further up the wall, she didn't dare say anything else.

After all, Clayton Zales was the one mistake she had to live with for the rest of her life.

"Let's go!" Sophie said. I wouldn't have come home if it weren't for Grandpa. This family is the absolute worst!

"Okay," Tristan replied before wrapping his arm around her shoulder and walking toward Josiah. "We'll be taking our leave now, Old Mr. Tanner. Do rest early."

"Go on! And don't come back here in the future. I'll look for you guys if you miss me. This family isn't worth your trouble."

Seeing how upset Josiah was, Sophie felt an ache in her heart.

“Grandpa, why don't you come live with me?” Not only will Grandpa have me to take care of him, but he will also be away from these ridiculous people. It's a win-win situation!

“That's enough, Soph. This is my house, and I can't just up and leave it.”

“You should go, Ms. Sophie. Don't worry about Old Mr. Tanner. He'll be fine with me looking after him,” Morgan said.

Poor Ms. Sophie. She finally paid a visit, yet Ms. Willow has to lash out at her. These sisters don't get along well at all...

Thankfully, Sophie promptly agreed.

In all honesty, Morgan was the only person she could trust Josiah with. Otherwise, she'd have whisked her grandfather away a long time ago.

With that, Tristan left with Sophie while Willow remained frozen in her spot.

H-Have I become a joke yet again?

“Clean up your wounds if you refuse to go to the hospital! Sophie's right about it being a minor injury. You'll live. Also, don't forget that Sophie's paying for everything now. You get to eat and stay here comfortably because of her hard-earned money! The least you can do is show some gratitude!” Josiah scolded before letting Morgan lead him upstairs.

Willow still doesn't know how to be grateful, so I'll have to teach her a lesson. She has to learn that not everyone will give in to her. Once she steps into society, she'll realize what a cruel place it is. But more importantly, she'll see that everything she has endured is merely the tip of the iceberg!

Meanwhile, Sophie had been lost in her thoughts since leaving the Tanner residence. Noticing that, Tristan decided to drive to the hot spring resort.

It was only when they had reached the resort that Sophie finally snapped out of her daze.

“What are we doing at the resort? It isn't the weekend yet! Didn't we agree to come here once a week on the weekends?”

“I think you could use some relaxation, so that's why we're here. Besides, the resort is ours. We can come whenever we like!” Tristan said with a chuckle. What Sophie needs the most now is a nice, long

dip in the hot springs.

“Are you worried about me? Is it because of Willow?”

“Oh, I know you can't be bothered with Willow. The only Tanner family member you care about is your grandfather!”

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Willow didn't deserve anyone's concern.

She only had herself to blame for the quagmire that she was in.

“Yeah. I think something's off with my grandpa!” Sophie said.

“Didn't you and Arius operate on him last time? There shouldn't be any problem.”

“Yes. The surgery was very successful. But although the surgery could fix his illness, it was useless against his aging organs.”

She knew it better than anyone else. However, it was one thing to know, but another thing to let go.

The suite in the hot spring resort was exclusively reserved for Sophie and Tristan.

“Go on and enjoy yourself so that you can have a good night's sleep. You've been working really hard recently. You should relax tonight,” Tristan said.

“Aren't you going to join me?” Sophie asked.

“Do you want me to?” Tristan's eyes glinted.

“Join me.”

After all, it was better to enjoy the hot spring together.

Sophie enjoyed spending time with Tristan.

“All right if you insist,” Tristan said with a grin.

After stepping into the hot spring, he could feel his muscles relaxing.

“It was really wise of you to purchase this property. I really like it here,” she commented.

Tristan used to think that he was too busy to enjoy life. However, he then realized that he had only been working hard so that he could live a good life.

Since he could afford to enjoy luxuries in his life, he reckoned he ought to make the best of it.

“I'm glad you like it,” Tristan replied. He thought that the place was great too.

Most importantly, they could have the private hot spring experience all to themselves.

“Yeah,” she mumbled.

Tristan ordered someone to fetch a bottle of red wine as well as two wine glasses.

The bottle was already open, and Tristan poured a glass for himself, and another for Sophie.

“Have some. This red wine is quite good.”

He had spent a small fortune on the bottle of red wine.

However, it was not the money that mattered, as he had spent a lot of effort to get that bottle of red wine.

Sophie took the glass and had a sip. As expected, the taste was exquisite.

Tristan raised his glass to clink it against Sophie's.

Then he took a sip as well. His Adam's apple bobbed up and down as he drank.

Sophie had to admit that Tristan looked really handsome when he drank the wine.

It was a treat to watch him drink.

“What's the matter?” Tristan asked.

He noticed Sophie was gazing at him intently. Is there something on my face?

"Nothing. I was just wondering, how is it possible that you're so good-looking, and what are the odds that I'd get to know you? I consider myself really lucky to have met you," Sophie said.

Tristan burst into a chuckle at her forthright praises.

"I'm glad that you find my face pleasing," he teased.

"Tristan, can I ask you something? Why do you like me?"

"I'm not sure. I guess it was love at first sight."

"Love... or lust? Haven't you heard the saying that love at first sight is actually lust at first sight?"

"Do you think I'm that shallow?"

"Yes!"

"All right, I'll admit that I was attracted to your face at first. Surely, you have to agree that it's a plus point that the person you like coincidentally has an attractive look?"

The two of them chatted as they drank, and unknowingly, they finished the bottle of red wine.

Sophie felt a bit dizzy, and she reckoned it could be from the wine, or simply because she was in the hot spring for too long.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm feeling dizzy."

"Let's go. We can't be in the hot spring for a long time anyway. It's not good for our health."

“Okay.”

Just when Sophie stood up, she felt her legs giving out and almost stumbled.

Fortunately, Tristan caught her just in time.

He frowned and asked, “Why? Are you not feeling well?”

Sophie recollected herself and said, “I'm all right. Maybe I got up too fast.”

Tristan swept her off her feet, and she immediately circled her hands around his neck.

“I'm really okay. I can walk.”

However, Tristan wouldn't listen as he carried her all the way back to the presidential suite.

He headed straight for the bathroom and turned on the shower.

“I'm really all right,” Sophie reiterated.

Still, Tristan wouldn't listen.

“All right, stay still. I promise not to do anything to you. Don't worry.”

“That's not it...”

Before she could say no, he took off all her clothes.

Sophie's face turned beet red instantly.

She was so embarrassed that her ears turned bright pink as well.

“Mr. Tristan...”

She was completely naked right then.

Truth be told, it was Tristan's first time seeing her like this, and he had to admit that she had a great body.

Her body was slender and toned, with no flab whatsoever, especially her waist.

She must have worked out frequently to maintain her waistline. It was an enticing sight to behold.

Tristan thought he could refrain himself. However, he was on the brink of losing control just after taking a glance.

He even forgot to breathe.

Sophie dared not look at him either.

“Could you please head out for a moment?” she asked in a small voice.

It was a really peculiar feeling to be fully naked in front of him.

She was so overcome by abashment that her toes were curling up.

“No,” Tristan rejected her outright. Nothing could make him get out of the bathroom right then.

He took over the showerhead and started to rinse her body.

He was only wearing swimming trunks. In other words, the swimming trunks were the only piece of fabric separating them.

After getting Sophie out of the shower and getting her dressed, Tristan headed right back into the bathroom.

He turned down the temperature of the water and let the cold water run through his whole body. However, it failed to cool down the fire burning inside him.

Meanwhile, Sophie curled up in bed. As she thought about what had happened back in the bathroom, she quickly pulled the covers over herself.

She could still feel his touch lingering on every inch of her skin, sending little tingles to every corner of her body.

Why is he taking so long in his shower? He's going to get a cold this way. Well, I'm sure him continuing to restrain his urge will not do him any good either. Tristan really treats me well.

Sophie thought that maybe, for the sake of his health, she could actually consider agreeing to have premarital sex with him.

However, she wasn't sure if she was going to initiate.

After all, she didn't feel comfortable initiating as a woman.

Right then, Tristan finally came out of the shower. He was only wrapped in a white towel.

At the sight of Sophie wrapping herself up like a cocoon, Tristan made his way over and gently pulled away the blanket.

“What's the matter? Did I scare you?” Was I being too obvious? But I've really tried to keep myself in check.

Sophie's face was still crimson. However, she shook her head.

“Are you feeling really uncomfortable?”

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Tristan was stunned by her question. It turns out that she's worried about me!

As a warm and fuzzy sensation swirled in his heart, he felt that his restraint all this while was worth it.

Grabbing her hand, he broke into a smile.

“I'm good. I really like how we are currently.”

Being much older than her, he was willing to be patient and proceed at her pace.

With the rest of their lives ahead of them, anticipation filled him as he thought about the day she would truly be his.

“Actually, I can also...”

Tristan shook his head.

“I told you before that you're different from other girls. You're going to be my wife. I will only make you mine when we get married!”

That was his way of making her feel secure.

Even though they were fated to be together, he wasn't going to take advantage of the fact until they were officially husband and wife.

In the event something untoward happened to him, he didn't want her to feel sad for the rest of her life.

Sophie knitted her brows, baffled by his response.

It's clear that he wants it but ends up rejecting me. I can't make sense of what's going through his mind. If I continue to insist, it will feel like I'm forcing him into it, which doesn't reflect well on me. It's better to just forget it.

"Don't let your imagination run wild. I just want to save the moment for our wedding night." He didn't want her to have the wrong idea.

"Mmm-hmm, I understand."

After all, she wasn't someone who would kick up a fuss over nothing.

Since he feels that this is for the best, we'll just maintain the status quo.

Upon getting into bed, Tristan spooned her from behind. He still wanted to hug her to sleep despite the risk of losing control of his urges.

After all, he enjoyed the feeling of holding her in his arms.

"Since you know how uncomfortable it feels, why do you insist on lying together with me in bed?" Isn't this obvious from the start?

"I enjoy losing my mind over my lust for you!" Tristan murmured beside her ear.

At that moment, no one could resist his charms.

Turning around, Sophie buried herself in his embrace before raising her head and giving his chin a bite.

“In that case, your suffering is well deserved.”

In spite of her words, she still sympathized with him.

“Mmm-hmm. I know this is all my fault. It has nothing to do with you.”

What's wrong with her? I'm obviously concerned about her, and yet, she insists on responding so coldly. It breaks my heart to see her this way. Even though she attempts to show that she cares, she doesn't know how to express herself at all.

“I didn't say that. Anyway, I'm sleepy now.” She was indeed exhausted by their tryst in the shower.

“Okay. Go ahead and sleep if you're tired. I'll stop bothering you already.” I had better stop talking.

Thereafter, he kissed her gently on her forehead. Although the kiss was clearly devoid of lust, he still managed to fill it with affection.

Initially, Sophie still wanted to continue with their idle chatter, but sleepiness gradually set in and sent her into a deep slumber.

As the scene in the bathroom was seared into her mind, she even relived it in her dreams, which was the first time she had an amorous one.

Tristan will be the only man I have for the rest of my life. There's no way I can accept anyone else other than him.

Meanwhile, Jennifer was intent on sabotaging Tanner Group. However, from her numerous attempts, she quickly learned that they were not to be trifled with.

Every single plot of hers ended up backfiring badly, causing her much distress.

One day, she was at Monarch Mall, shopping for a present for William's upcoming birthday.

It was an event she endeavored to attend.

Since she couldn't get her way around Tristan, she used the biggest advantage she had—William's favor for her.

Little did she expect to run into Sophie and Ysabelle at the mall.

Sophie, despite dressing casually and looking like a university student, still attracted plenty of attention there.

Her features were so attractive that both men and women were equally captivated.

Moreover, that was the same face that Tristan was mesmerized by.

Jennifer thought insidiously, Would Mr. Tristan still fancy her if she's no longer a beauty? If she somehow becomes disfigured, Tristan might lose interest in her. Even an ordinary man can't stand to have an ugly girlfriend, let alone someone like Tristan.

At the same time, Sophie had already spotted Jennifer.

However, she didn't feel obliged to greet the latter since both of them barely knew each other.

Instead, it was Jennifer who ended up approaching them.

“Ysabelle, I'm surprised to see you shopping here too! Since your grandfather's birthday is around the corner, I'm looking to get him a gift. Unfortunately, I don't know what would make a good one. Can you give me some pointers?”

Jennifer knew that she had to maintain a good relationship with Ysabelle after she was married into the Lombard family.

Thus, she went out of her way to be cordial to the latter.

“Since you're the one buying the present, you obviously should make the decision yourself. Why do you expect me to make it for you?” Ysabelle retorted instead, “Do you think the Lombard family needs to resort to such desperate methods to demand something of you?”

Ysabelle just couldn't bring herself to like Jennifer.

She didn't feel that way previously, but after observing the latter's attitude toward Sophie, she knew that Jennifer was just as condescending as the other rich girls in the city.

Although Jennifer felt awkward at being criticized, she didn't retaliate because of Ysabelle's status.

“Ms. Tanner, are you shopping for something too?” Her initial intention was to give Sophie the cold shoulder, but after sensing Ysabelle's disapproval over her behavior, she quickly greeted the other girl.

Unfortunately, Sophie didn't even spare her a glance.

Is she nuts?

While greeting Sophie, Jennifer coincidentally caught a glimpse of the hickey on the latter's neck.

The moment she realized who had given it to Sophie, Jennifer felt a squeeze in her heart.

Have both of them slept with each other already? It wouldn't come as a surprise, as Sophie's body is her most potent weapon. Someone as unscrupulous as her would have no qualms about using it to seduce men.

"Wait for me. I plan to try that dress on." Ysabelle had found a dress that caught her eye.

"Mmm-hmm. Go on ahead."

While Ysabelle headed to the changing room, Sophie settled on the couch and flipped through a magazine.

When the salesperson saw that the two were just sitting there instead of browsing through the clothes, she served them two glasses of warm water.

"Ms. Tanner, isn't it unbecoming of you to leave the hickey on your neck exposed?" Jennifer spoke candidly. "As a girl, you should behave prudently before marriage!"

Sophie was rendered speechless.

Is she crazy or what?

"What does my business have anything to do with you? Do you think you're my mother? She doesn't even care, so why are you being a busybody? What's wrong with you? Have you been driven crazy by jealousy? Are you upset that you're not the one Tristan kissed?"

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Why is she even pretending? Does she think her intentions aren't obvious to me?

"You—"

Jennifer was livid.

“What about me? Am I not speaking the truth?”

The gall she has to try and lecture me! Who does she think she is? What gives her the right to spew such nonsense at me?

“You're utterly shameless.”

“It's none of your f*cking business!” Sophie cursed.

“Stop trying to act holy in front of me. I've seen plenty of your type!” Sophie sniped back.

Right then, Ysabelle emerged from the changing room and walked up to Sophie.

“Sophie, do you think this dress suits me?” She liked the outfit but wanted a second opinion on whether she looked good in it.

“Ysabelle, you look great in it, as it brings out your charm.”

Jennifer preempted Sophie's reply, rendering Ysabelle speechless.

Since when did I ask for her opinion? She's such a busybody!

“It looks really good on you. Since you like it, why don't I buy it for you?” Jennifer intended to pay for it.

From her perspective, building a good relationship with other girls was just a matter of giving them presents.

Instead, Ysabelle responded with a frown.

“Ms. Whitley, you should mind your own business. We'll buy whatever we want, as the Lombard family has no problems affording something as trivial as this!”

“Try something else! This dress makes you look old.” She's only nineteen. The color doesn't suit her age.

“Okay.”

Ysabelle had already felt weird wearing the dress. Hence, Sophie's words further cemented her apprehension toward it.

“But Ysabelle, it's such a gorgeous dress!”

“Since you like it so much, shall I buy it for you instead?” Ysabelle snapped back.

Cognizant that Ysabelle was upset, Jennifer held her tongue.

Thereafter, the former returned to the changing room, leaving Sophie and Jennifer outside.

“You did it on purpose! You had to go against me just because I said it looked good, am I right?”

“Who do you think you are?” Why should I be bothered on her account? “Anyway, I have to remind you that Tristan is mine, and I'm not going to allow anyone else to wrest him from me.”

“Haha, yours? Who gave you the right? Do you really think you can marry into the Lombard family?”

“Why can't I? Do you think it's impossible just because you have the support of the Whitley family?”

“You're welcome to try!”

There's no way Old Mr. Lombard would approve of a girl like her. Her efforts will be nothing but futile.

"In that case, you'll have to eat your own words soon." She's such a deluded person.

Upon emerging from the changing room, Ysabelle returned to Sophie's side.

"All right now, let's take a break. I'm exhausted after shopping for so long."

"Sure!"

"Ysabelle, let's have afternoon tea together."

Ysabelle's brows furrowed at Jennifer's refusal to leave.

"Jennifer, isn't my resentment for you not obvious enough? Do you think I can stomach my food at the sight of you?"

Jennifer's treatment of Sophie had decided Ysabelle's attitude toward the former.

Naturally, Jennifer was bereft of words.

"Let's go."

Without giving Jennifer a second glance, Sophie left with Ysabelle.

Once they were gone, Jennifer smashed everything in the shop hysterically, to the extent of paying millions in compensation before she was allowed to leave.

At a milkshake bar, Ysabelle bought some cake and two milkshakes.

"Jennifer is such a disgusting woman. Women who are jealous of you are truly terrifying!" Ysabelle remarked with disdain.

"She does make me nauseous." To have the cheek to accuse me of being improper? Who does she think she is to judge me from her high horse?

Coincidentally, Ysabelle noticed the hickey on Sophie's neck.

"Where did you go with Uncle Tristan last night? You didn't return to the condominium, did you? Also, I can clearly see the hickey on your neck!" With a lecherous glint in her eyes, Ysabelle questioned, "Come clean with me. Have you both done it?"

Sophie was stumped for words.

Why is everyone so sensitive to hickeys? It's not like I'm flaunting it on purpose.

"Why aren't you saying anything? I'm really curious as to whether both of you have done it?" Even though she's almost twenty, she still hasn't lost her virginity yet. Is she being too conservative?

"No!"

"Really? I'm surprised Uncle Tristan can hold himself back." This is truly mind-boggling.

"Why would I lie to you? Enough about that. Let's eat!"

Meanwhile, Jennifer headed straight to the Lombard residence after leaving the mall.

There, William received her in the living room.

“Jennifer, I hope you don't mind what happened the last time. It was my fault for not preparing properly.”

“Old Mr. Lombard, don't say that. I have no reason to blame you for the incident back then. It's just that Tristan likes Ms. Tanner very much. Today, at the mall...”

Jennifer twisted the facts as she related what happened earlier to William.

“Jennifer, didn't I tell you that you're my daughter-in-law of choice? Therefore, you shouldn't be too focused on the present.”

“Old Mr. Lombard, is it really possible? Mr. Tristan, he—”

“Have some faith in me. All right, off you go. Otherwise, Tristan will resent you more if he learns of your visit.”

What's wrong with this girl? Does she need me to handhold her in pursuing a man?

“Of course.”

Jennifer had no choice but to leave when she sensed William's reluctance to continue the topic.

In spite of that, she didn't walk away empty-handed—she left with the knowledge that William would definitely not accept Sophie.

Sophie's smugness will be short-lived.

When Sophie and Ysabelle emerged from the milkshake bar, they ran into Nicholas.

“We have met this man before.” Nicholas was someone who wasn't easy to forget.

“Yea.”

Just when I enjoyed a few days of peace, he insisted on making his presence felt again.

Intent on avoiding Nicholas, Sophie led Ysabelle in a different direction. Along the way, her attention was captured by a man's suit displayed in the shop window.

Noticing that Sophie had stopped abruptly, Ysabelle turned around and saw her staring at the display.

“What is it? Do you want to get Uncle Tristan something? Why don't we go in and take a look?”

The suit does look appealing. However, Uncle Tristan's clothes are all tailored by luxury brands. Hence, I'm not sure if he's into this style.

“Sure!”

Sophie readily agreed. Ever since we got together, I have never bought him a gift before.

As for Nicholas, he felt unsettled watching Sophie enter a men's boutique.

I have never received a gift from her before. I'm surprised someone as reserved as she even knows how to get one for her boyfriend.

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“Miss, you have a good eye indeed! This suit, the pride of our store, was personally designed by our designer.”

The suit had caught the eye of many, but all of them were shocked by its price.

As Sophie's fingers ran over the suit, she could feel the quality of the fabric.

Captivated by the design, she could imagine how good Tristan would look in it.

"I'll take this."

"Sophie, do you know what size Uncle Tristan is?"

"I do."

I wouldn't deserve to be his girlfriend if I didn't.

After giving the salesperson Tristan's size, she handed over a black card to pay for it.

Sophie's decisiveness took the salesperson by surprise, for the latter didn't expect to close the sale before explaining the suit's design philosophy and the materials used.

Nevertheless, she wasn't going to miss such a God-given opportunity.

Without a moment's hesitation, she took the card and swiped it.

That sale alone was enough to elevate her pay for that month significantly. The commission alone could sufficiently pay for a few months of her living expenses.

"Why don't I get Felix one, too, as I have never bought him clothes before." Ysabelle was swept up by the moment.

"Of course."

She can buy as many as she fancies.

After browsing through the other suits, Ysabelle came upon one that she liked.

Unfortunately, she fell into a dilemma when she realized she didn't know Felix's size.

“What's wrong?”

“I don't know what size Felix wears. Let me call him and ask.”

With that thought in mind, Ysabelle rang Felix up, but no one answered for a long while.

“Forget it. He's not answering. If I get the wrong size, I'll still have to waste time coming back here to return it.”

“That's true.”

At that moment, the salesperson returned with the suit all packed up.

“Miss, here's your suit. Is there anything else I can assist you with?” Initially, the store's staff assumed that Sophie was just window shopping and was reluctant to entertain her.

Little did they expect her to buy something so expensive, and they were all jealous of the salesperson who closed the sale.

“No, thanks.”

Upon receiving her black card, Sophie grabbed the shopping bag and left.

However, the moment they stepped out of the store, Ysabelle had a stomachache and had to use the restroom. Consequently, Sophie had no choice but to wait for her outside.

It was during that lull that Nicholas appeared again.

“Did you buy it for Tristan?”

Despite the raging jealousy within him, his calm facade hid it well.

“It's none of your business since I didn't buy it for you.”

There was no way she would get Nicholas a gift in her lifetime. The only thing she would ever consider buying him was a funeral wreath.

“Sophie, I don't understand why you're so hostile to me. Haven't I always been good to you? Even if you don't like me, such treatment is uncalled for. Is there some sort of misunderstanding between us?”

Something must have happened for things to turn out this way.

“There's no misunderstanding between us. I just don't like your face.”

Are my words candid enough to deter him?

“If it's because of my father, I swear to you that he will never pose a problem.”

That was the only possibility that came to his mind.

“It's clear to me that nothing can get through that thick skull of yours.”

Sophie had no desire to entertain him any further.

"How shall I put it? If you don't want to die, you should return to Anglandur at once. This place isn't for you."

"I can say the same thing to you too. Even in death, I won't go back unless you come with me." I'm more than prepared to die here.

"Nicholas, I don't understand why you're being so stubborn. There has never been anything going on between us."

All this while, he has been deluding himself, and it's no one else's fault. He just has a mental sickness that causes him to cling desperately to me.

"Is that so?"

Has it always been one-sided on my part?

"I don't believe that you never had any feelings for me before."

I'm sure she must have harbored feelings for me at some point in the past. Otherwise, why would I be so persistent for such a long time?

"No, I never liked you before." I'm sure I've made myself clear. If not, I still have more scathing words to spare.

"Sophie, you're generally nice to everyone, so why are you only hostile to me?"

Doesn't she value her relationship with Mark and Arius a lot too? Why am I the only one to receive such treatment?

"Doesn't that make the answer even more obvious?"

Nicholas staggered back, losing the courage to hear the truth.

As for Sophie, she didn't spare him a glance still.

"Nicholas, you should go back to where you come from. This place isn't for you, and no one likes you here."

"I refuse. I'm sure my sincerity will move you one day!"

I have within my power to give her everything in this world.

"There's nothing you can do that will change my mind because my heart already belongs to someone else. Moreover, even if there's no one in my life, I still won't fall for you."

Sophie's words were merciless, for she wanted to drill the fact into his head.

With Ysabelle about to return, Sophie decided to look for her instead of wasting any more time with Nicholas.

The latter was frozen at his feet after being dealt a devastating blow.

Even as he watched Sophie's leaving silhouette, he didn't bother to give chase.

Meanwhile, Ysabelle had emerged from the ladies with her stomach feeling a lot better.

"There must have been something wrong with the cakes we just ate. My tummy hurts really bad," the grimacing Ysabelle remarked.

"Really? I still feel fine. I think you just had too much to eat." I couldn't stop her just now despite trying my best. "As an artiste, you're being too liberal with your body!"

Although Ysabelle was far from being fat, an actress would always look relatively plumper on camera.

“Are you saying that I've gotten fatter?”

If that's the case, I need to control my diet right away. I'm still capable of resisting the temptation of desserts for the sake of becoming a professional singer.

By the time they stepped out of Monarch Mall, it was already late.

“Where else do you want to go?” She didn't feel like going home still, as going out was a rare luxury, given how busy she had been.

“I'm planning to go over to Lombard Group. Do you want to come along?” I still have to present him with the gift, don't I?

“Sure, I miss Felix too!”

It was true that Ysabelle was previously more reserved, but now that her feelings for him were clear, she didn't see the need to hide it.

With that, both of them got into a taxi and headed to Lombard Group.

At the same time, Nicholas tailed them there.

All he did was follow them from a distance and observe them from the shadows.

Until then, he still couldn't figure out what Tristan had that he didn't for her to love the latter while hating him.

It wasn't until he arrived at the lobby of Lombard Group and wanted to follow them upstairs that Alex grabbed his arm.

“Mr. Nicholas, you can't go any further!”

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If Tristan learns this, he definitely won't let him go! Alex thought.

Nicholas glanced at Alex's hand. “Are you begging to have your hand disabled permanently? Was the lesson last time not enough for you to learn from your mistake?”

Alex had always been by his side. While he did “lecture” Alex last time, he wasn't trying to take the latter's life. What the heck is Alex doing? I can't believe he still doesn't know how to appreciate his life after getting another chance to live.

Staring at him pleadingly, Alex questioned, “This is Lombard Group, Mr. Nicholas. Have you thought about what'll happen to you if you enter the building? Do you really think it's going to be a simple matter? I know you've always thought I'm disloyal, but I always have your best interest at heart! Sophie will only harm you! She won't show you any mercy! Why don't you understand?”

It was then Ysabelle and Sophie arrived at Tristan's office. At that moment, Tristan was discussing the details of a case with Felix in the room.

When the men noticed the arrival of the women, their eyes lit up.

“You went shopping today?” Tristan asked Sophie when he saw the bags in Ysabelle's hand. “Don't dote on her too much. I know you don't like shopping.”

Ysabelle tended to forget the time when she shopped. Thus, he was certain Sophie felt very tired at the moment.

“Mhm. We went to buy some stuff, including a suit for you. Have a look and tell me if you like it.” Sophie

handed the bag in her hand to Tristan.

“What? Did you learn something when you were spending time with Sophie, Ysabelle? She bought a suit for Mr. Tristan, so where's mine?” Felix inquired.

Ysabelle shook her head. “I thought about buying one for you too, but I don't know your size, so I didn't. Next time I'll buy one for you!”

His words made her feel a little awkward.

Felix was rendered speechless.

Then, he questioned with suspicion, “You don't know my size, yet Sophie knows Mr. Tristan's! Do you really love me?”

As the saying goes, one shouldn't make any comparison, as doing so would only make oneself upset.

Ysabelle felt even more embarrassed as she retorted aggrievedly, “But I really don't know your size! Can you blame me for this?”

“All right, all right. I didn't mean to blame you. Let's go to my office instead of staying here and being a bother!” Felix suggested as he was aware their presence would only inconvenience himself and Tristan. She's blaming herself right now, which is the perfect opportunity for me to ask her for a kiss!

“Mhm! Remember to call for me when you're about to leave, Sophie!” Ysabelle reminded before she followed him to his office.

Only Tristan and Sophie were left in the former's office.

"I know your clothes are custom-made. However, I thought the suit would look good on you, so I bought it. You can choose not to wear it if you don't want to." She wasn't going to force him to do anything he didn't want to.

In response, he pulled her closer to him and made her sit on his lap. "What are you saying? Of course, I'll like and wear the clothes you bought for me. Why won't I?"

"Really? You haven't even seen the suit yet!" As she spoke, she wanted to leave his lap because they appeared awfully intimate in that pose.

While she wasn't heavy, she didn't feel wholly comfortable sitting on his lap like a child.

It made her feel quite embarrassed.

Tristan didn't stop Sophie as he watched her open the bag, remove the suit from it, and present the garment in front of him. "What do you think? Do you like it?"

It was the first time she had bought him a gift, so she hoped he would like it.

The suit looks good! It's a type that I've never worn before. He praised, "I like it a lot! My girlfriend sure does have excellent taste in clothing."

That elicited a smile from her. "Oh, you. Still, with how amazing your figure is, I bet you'll look good even in a shabby piece of clothing!"

"Mhm, but I think I'll still look great without it."

"No can do. I don't want anyone else to see you!" Sophie pouted slightly. He's mine and mine alone! I won't give anyone a chance to covet him!

"Oh yeah, is Jennifer targeting Tanner Group recently?" Rumors about it reached Tristan some time ago, which roused his desire to teach Jennifer a lesson.

"You don't need to pay attention to her. Just let her be for now. The happier she is now, the more upset she'll become in the future. I'm not that easily bullied," she uttered casually. "Although, your dad seems to like her a lot. Will he be upset if I ruin her?"

"You don't need to mind what other people think as long as it makes you happy," he responded. Jennifer's no pushover. Although, if she thinks she can do anything she wants because my father likes her, she's severely mistaken. If she upsets Sophie, I can remove her from Jipsdale with little effort.

"I met her at the mall earlier. I don't like that woman, so you better leave far away from her, got it?"

"Mhm."

"Also, I disallow you to let others get their hands on you, okay? Otherwise, I won't want you anymore!" It was pretty rare for Sophie to act willfully. No one is allowed to get their hands on my man!

She was quite particular when it came to relationships.

"I promise you, my queen, that I won't give anyone a chance to get their hands on me!" Her words amused him a little. I'm Mr. Tristan of Jipsdale! No one will have the guts to do that.

Holding Tristan's chin, Sophie examined him closely. "Don't forget what you said. If you let any other woman touch you, I'll ditch you, no matter how much I like you!"

It wasn't that she didn't trust him. She just thought it was necessary to clarify things.

"Mhm. I won't give anyone a chance to do so." As he stood, he put the suit in her hand back into the bag, pulled her to the spot next to him, and sat her down.

After they sat, he asked, "Are you busy lately? Do you need my help in regard to Tanner Group's matter?" He knew she wanted to expand the company.

"No need. Victor's pretty good. I trust him." The people she handpicked were naturally the best in their field.

Victor was a very talented person.

She was certain he could do even better with a little help.

"Victor, huh? It seems like you trust him a lot." Tristan sounded a little jealous.

"Mhm. What's the matter? Didn't you say Victor's a person worthy of my trust?" Sophie wondered.

"Well, yes, but I'll still get jealous!" He didn't like it very much when she complimented other men.

"What else do you suggest, then? Are you going to abandon Lombard Group and help me manage Tanner Group?"

After a brief moment of contemplation, Tristan replied confidently, "That's not impossible. I can do whatever you want me to do!"

In response, Sophie shook her head. "No, I don't want other people to say that Tanner Group is relying on you. I want to turn Tanner Group into an empire by myself!"

"You spend too much time on unimportant things like this!"

"Then what do you think is important?"

"I want you to marry me and give me a child!" It didn't matter to him whether it was a boy or a girl. As long as it came out of her womb, he would love them.

“That's my goal for when I reach twenty-five years old!” At the moment, Sophie still had plenty of things she wanted to do.

“But that means I still need to wait for you for five years!” Hugging her, Tristan gently ran his finger through her long, soft hair.

“What's the matter? Is that no good? I think it's an appropriate timeframe. It's just five years. After all, I'm not at the age of marriage yet.”

“No, I don't think it's bad. In fact, I think it's great!” he responded with a smile. After all, he was fine with any decision of hers.

“Since you're satisfied with it, then that is what I'll do.”

The next day, after Tristan put on the suit Sophie bought for him, she stared at him and admired his handsomeness.

She was very pleased with her impeccable taste. As I expected, the man I love is just that dashing! Whether in terms of his figure or looks, it's the best in the world! His charm really moves me beyond words.

Seeing how stunned she was as she stared at him, he felt like he had gained a confidence boost. As I expected, she also cares about appearances. Still, I'm happy she likes how I look.

“What do you think? Do you like it?” Tristan asked with a smile.

Sophie grabbed a tie, stood on her toes, and put it on for him. Then she tidied his clothes. “Of course, I'll like what I like!”

The next moment, she grabbed his tie with one hand, pulled him toward her, and kissed him without hesitation.

Oh crap! This feeling... It's so intoxicating, he thought.

"I also want to keep you locked up in the house and forbid you from leaving. This way, other women won't be able to see you!" Sophie exclaimed.

Isn't she being way too possessive? Still... When Tristan saw her red lips, he didn't want to hold himself back anymore.

Hence, he leaned forward before kissing her deeply and passionately.

Suddenly, she felt her kiss earlier was super weak. When it comes to intimate acts, men, indeed, tend to be the more skillful ones. Even though he has never fallen in love, he's great at seduction.

At that moment, he wanted to strip her naked and dominate her forcefully.

However, in the end, his rationality triumphed over his emotions. So, instead, he hugged her for a very long time. What do I do? It's getting harder and harder to control myself. I think once our wedding night arrives, I'll make sure she won't be able to leave the bed for three days and three nights. My lust for her is driving me insane!

"Can we get married a little earlier?" Tristan inquired. I don't mind if we have children a little later as long as I won't have to continue to suffer.

"Mhm. When do you want to get married?" Sophie was willing to consider speeding things up for him because he was very nice, and she also didn't want to wait that long.

Eagerly, he blurted, "As soon as possible!"

That was because he was genuinely worried he would die of dissatisfaction and become the first in the Guinness World Record to pass away in that manner.

“How about we register our marriage first?” Despite her suggestion, she still needed to wait two more years for that to happen.

“Sure. Once you reach the age of marriage, we'll register first. We can talk about other stuff when the time comes,” he replied.

“Mhm!”

Sophie was supposed to leave already, but because of the kiss, she missed the first class.

At the moment, she was already the center of attention at the University of Medicine. Her tardiness only brought her back into the spotlight.

For some reason, a few women in the class just disliked Sophie no matter what.

Simon, who was beaten up by Sophie last time, intentionally approached her when he saw she had

arrived and mocked, “It seems like Ms. Tanner is quite willful. She comes and leaves as she pleases, as though this university is her home!”

In response, Sophie spat coldly, “Was the lesson I taught you last time not enough for you to learn from your mistake?”

After all, she was there to study.

She would rather not waste her time on a wastrel like him and wished he could stay as far away from her as possible.

Her words enraged him. “You—”

“What's the matter? Am I wrong? If you want to keep breathing, I suggest you stay quiet. Otherwise, don't blame me for what I'll do.”

“You're arrogant! What is it that gives you such confidence? You know, I can make it so that you won't be able to stay at this university anymore.”

“Sure you can. Give it a try if you like.” Then Sophie returned to her spot as she was too lazy to deal with him.

Whether the others wanted to admit it or not, she was the most talented student in the class.

All of her teachers loved students like her because they had never seen such a talented student before.

They had basically placed their hope for Chanaea's medical advancement on Sophie.

After the class ended, the professor summoned her again to research a question with her together. The other students were very jealous of her when they witnessed the treatment she was receiving.

“Why does every professor like Sophie? She's only good-looking! Does this mean all our efforts are pointless?”

“Yeah! Even though we're in the same class, every professor likes her and will keep her by their side! What about us, then?”

The women in the class began to target Sophie again.

“Everyone here was admitted based on our merits, so why is she the only one getting treated like this? No, we can't just sit here and do nothing. We must find an opportunity to teach her a lesson so she'll stop being so arrogant!”

“In that case, let us discuss what we should do. It'll be fine even if we can only embarrass her!” The women then started to devise a strategy in whispers.

Sandra heard what they were saying as she waited in the corridor outside the classroom for Sophie.

When Sophie returned, she wondered why Sandra was standing there.

“What are you standing here for? Why don't you go in?” Sophie quite liked Sandra.

“You're hogging the limelight too much, Sophie! Right now, the women in our class are very envious of you, so much so that they're currently planning how to mess with you!” The reason Sandra told Sophie that was because she sincerely saw the latter as a friend.

“You need to be more careful. These women are from prominent families. They won't show your mercy,” she informed with worry.

Instead of getting concerned, Sophie smiled when she heard that.

Upon gently patting Sandra's cheeks, she assured her, “Don't worry! I'll be fine. They can't do anything to me.” These women are nothing compared to the people I had to deal with. I've seen plenty of nasty acts before.

“I still think you need to be more careful. After all, there are a lot of them!”

“All right, I get it. Let's head inside!”

As Sophie expected, when she went to the restroom after the third class ended, she noticed a few women from the class following her.

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When Sophie turned on the tap to wash her hands, the other girls crowded around her instead of heading into the cubicles.

“Sophie, what did you do? Why do so many of the professors love you? Did you sleep with them?”

“That's right! If not for her skills in bed, how did she become every professor's favorite?”

Rendered speechless, Sophie flicked the water off her hands before turning to face them.

“Have you said enough?”

“If you dare do it, why don't you dare hear it? Let me warn you; you had better stay away from Simon. He's mine!”

Sophie couldn't help but snigger.

“He's just a piece of trash, and only trash like you are taken in by him!” He's nothing but a rich playboy and probably doesn't have any redeeming qualities other than his money.

“You—”

“Get her!”

Not wanting to waste words with Sophie, the five girls, cognizant of their numerical advantage, decided to teach her a lesson.

Sophie's brow cocked in response.

It turns out that they're here for a fight!

“You should've said so if a fight is what you're looking for. Why did you have to beat around the bush? Sheesh!”

No sooner had she finished than she grabbed the long hair of her first attacker and gave it a forceful tug, immobilizing the latter at once.

“Argh!”

“You're so noisy!” Sophie was annoyed by the girl's agonized scream. What's with the overreaction? I only pulled her hair.

Given Sophie's skills, the girls were naturally no match for her.

In the end, they were all beaten to a pulp, but their injuries were located in discreet places, causing them to appear unscathed from the outside.

As for Sophie, she washed her hands again.

“Why do you insist on getting on my nerves when I specifically warned you not to? Next time, stay out of my way, as I have no time to entertain any of you!”

Considering that violence was the fastest solution, she didn't mind giving them a piece of her mind.

The matter concluded with the girls sprawled on the floor of the washroom, wallowing in their defeat.

Meanwhile, Sandra had seen the group of girls following Sophie into the restroom. Hence, she rushed over with the intention of helping.

Little did she expect to see the girls strewn across the washroom floor, juxtaposed against the standing Sophie washing her hands calmly.

“Sophie, are you all right?” There are five of them, and yet, she looks unharmed.

"Don't worry. I'm fine. Let's go now. I'll buy you a drink." I've had enough of this weather and the scorching heat.

With that, she led Sandra out under the latter's gaze of admiration.

"And here I was, thinking of helping you out, but you ended up surprising me by taking care of them!" Despite her initial hesitance, Sandra decided to head to Sophie's rescue when she remembered all that the latter had done for her.

"You sound as if it was a shame that you missed it. I'll definitely seek out your help the next time there's trouble."

Sandra shook her head.

"Forget it. Fighting is not my thing. I was just worried about you." Sandra made her stand clear immediately.

"Sophie, after what you have done to them, they're not going to let it slide." Sandra was still worried.

She knew that Sophie was good and wouldn't offend others without cause.

Therefore, it was clear to her that the group of girls crossed the line by attacking Sophie for no reason.

Just as expected, the girl who fancied Simon went crying to him.

"Simon, the rumors about Sophie being a hooligan are true. She has really gone too far by beating up the five of us girls!"

As she had a crush on Simon, she naturally hoped that he wouldn't pay attention to other girls, especially Sophie.

The latter was her worst nightmare, given her talent for seducing men.

“Greta, didn't I tell you before that I don't like you at all?” Simon asserted in a scathing tone, “What goes on between Sophie and I is none of your business.”

Simon's feelings for Sophie had grown stronger by the day.

She's such a talented girl. If I can make her my girlfriend, my family's hospital will have a fitting heir to run it.

In response, the defiant Greta questioned, “Are you not going to hold her accountable for beating you up so badly?”

“Didn't I just say that it's none of your business?” Simon was in no mood to listen to anything Greta had to say.

When he subsequently left in a huff, leaving her all alone, Greta's indignance intensified.

Meanwhile, William had personally gone to see Sophie, and it was to be their first-ever private meeting.

Even though she was caught off-guard by it, she still agreed to meet him.

The moment she appeared, the Lombard family's driver opened the car door to let her in.

Thereafter, he stood guard outside.

“Old Mr. Lombard, it's a pleasure to meet you,” Sophie greeted politely.

At the end of the day, he was still Tristan's father.

She still had to give him due respect in spite of his disapproval of her.

“Given how smart you are, I'm sure you know why I'm here.”

“Old Mr. Lombard, what might that be? Are you going to ask me to leave Tristan?”

“That's correct. I don't want you to be a burden to him. He lives in an environment that is filled with dangers that might cost him his life at any moment. Hence, I hope he finds someone who is capable of doing battle by his side instead of a high-maintenance girl like you.”

He intended Tristan to have someone who could take care of him and not one who would cause him to lose his own principles.

“Be a burden? What if I tell you that I won't drag him down? Furthermore, when the need arises, I'll be his best comrade-in-arms?”

This was something she had absolute confidence in.

In fact, there was no one on earth more qualified than her to fight shoulder-to-shoulder with him.

Nonetheless, William burst into laughter.

“I know you're a smart young lady, but you're really not suited for such a vicious world.”

“Old Mr. Lombard, give me a chance, will you? I'll prove to you that I'm the best person to be by his side.”

Although she didn't need to prove herself to anyone, she was willing to do so for William solely on the account that he was Tristan's father.

“Is that so? What will you do if someone tries to assassinate Tristan?”

"I'll kill them."

William's brows furrowed after the answer blindsided him.

"In fact, I'll eliminate them before they make their move."

That's the right answer, isn't it? Or am I expected to take a bullet for him? Only an idiot would do that!

"Is that so?"

William narrowed his eyes as he scrutinized the girl in front of him, trying to discern if she was telling the truth.

"I believe I'm more than capable of doing so after saving Tristan twice." Only her presence can stop Tristan's enemies from laying a finger on him.

"Really? What about your past? Do you think that Tristan won't be disgraced by a girlfriend like you?"

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"Old Mr. Lombard, the wise are not taken in by rumors, so why are you? Since Tristan has chosen me, do you not have faith in his decision?"

Do the malicious rumors really matter that much?

"The rumors might seem trivial to you, but that's not the case in reality. It doesn't matter whether I believe them or not. What matters is that people will be gossiping about you behind our backs!"

As the Lombards were the most powerful family in Jipsdale, this was an unacceptable fact.

"In that case, I'll make sure that they don't dare utter a single word about me."

Although the rumors were unfounded, she would put a stop to them if the Lombard family found them unsettling.

"Sophie, you're really not compatible with Tristan. Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?"

"Old Mr. Lombard, as I said before, whether we're compatible or not isn't for you to judge. I won't leave him just because you don't approve of me."

There was no way she would do such a thing.

"Tell me then, what will it take for you to leave him?" I'm willing to agree to any of her demands.

A smirk flashed across Sophie's face. She had always assumed that such situations would only appear on TV. Little did she expect herself to be embroiled in one.

"I won't leave him no matter what." Sophie declared with conviction, "From the moment I decided for us to be together, breaking up never crossed my mind."

"You—" What a persistent girl. "Fine. I have nothing more to say to you. Your capabilities will determine whether you can keep your place by Tristan's side."

Words alone won't count for much.

"If you think that the only way for me to be qualified is to have Tanner Group outdo the Whitley family, give me three months, and I'll make it happen."

Outdo the Whitley family? Is she deluding herself? Does she know the Whitley family's place in Jipsdale?

Sophie gave him an earnest nod.

“Mark my words. Tanner Group will surpass the Whitley family in three months.” As for Jennifer, who has challenged me relentlessly, there's no need for me to show her any mercy.

“Really? In that case, I'll be waiting. If you fail, you'll have to leave Tristan!”

“What if I succeed?”

It was clear from William's expression that he didn't believe she could accomplish such a feat.

“We'll discuss this again when you actually succeed.” He didn't want to waste time dwelling on improbabilities.

Sophie didn't respond further, for certain problems could only be solved with actions instead of words.

Since he didn't have any faith in her, she would have to prove herself to him.

Thereafter, Jennifer headed to the Lombard residence after being summoned by William.

“Old Mr. Lombard, what did you want to see me about?” Jennifer put on a prim and proper demeanor.

Cognizant of what William wanted in his daughter-in-law, she attempted to play the role to perfection.

“Jennifer, you have to work hard, all right? I really hope that you can become my daughter-in-law!” William exclaimed.

I'm willing to accept Winter or Jennifer; anyone but Sophie.

Jennifer responded with a graceful smile.

"I understand, Old Mr. Lombard. However, despite how much effort I put in, Mr. Tristan continues to ignore me."

Considering how much she loved Tristan, she obviously hoped to marry him.

"Are you telling me that you're giving up?" William spoke candidly. "Of course, if that's what you desire, I won't force you into this."

Jennifer shook her head at once.

"Give up? Never. I've had a crush on him for ten years. There's no way I'm giving up that easily."

"Good. Sophie has proclaimed that she will outdo the Whitley family in three months. You had better watch out." At the end of the day, William was responsible for getting the Whitley family involved. Hence, he felt obliged to warn them of what was coming.

"What?" It sounded like the most ludicrous joke to Jennifer. "What an audacious girl."

The Whitley family's business, which has been operating for more than a century, won't be outdone by some bravado of hers.

"I'll definitely teach her a lesson so that she learns her place."

"Good." William, too, agreed that Sophie's brazenness had crossed the line.

She might be a genius in medicine and one who excels in her studies, but to think that she can surpass the Whitley family is nothing but a joke.

Meanwhile, Tristan rushed home upon learning of William's meeting with Sophie. The moment he arrived, he was greeted by the sight of Jennifer.

"I'm surprised to see you home. And here I was, thinking that you had forgotten your way back." Sipping coffee, William wasn't bothered to spare Tristan a glance, for he greatly disapproved of the latter's choice for a partner.

"Mr. Tristan, you're back!" The sight of him triggered a bashful expression on Jennifer's face.

Her love for him was true, and he was all that mattered to her.

"Did you go and see Sophie today?" Tristan questioned without holding back. "Didn't I tell you not to interfere in my affairs? What did you say to her?"

"Hah!" William couldn't help but sneer. "Are you interrogating me now? Do you not see me as your father anymore? What's the big deal about me meeting her? Since you don't allow me to interfere in your affairs, why are you sticking your nose into mine now?"

"As I said before, I don't want Sophie to be put in a difficult position. Therefore, there's no need for you to ever meet her alone. Also, I will only accept her as my wife and no one else!"

"Are you threatening me now?" the angry William questioned. "Let me tell you—"

"You don't have to tell me anything. You know my character better than anyone else, so stop trying to stuff some lowly person into my arms! I don't want them!" Tristan wasn't going to tolerate being manipulated.

"Lowly person?" Jennifer stared at him in disbelief. Is he talking about me? How can he call me that?

"Tristan, you have gone too far," William criticized him.

"Have I? There's a lot more from where that came from." Upon learning that William had gone to see Sophie unilaterally, Tristan was so infuriated that he rushed home at once.

There's no way I'm going to tolerate having my little darling criticized by someone else.

"You—"

"Old Mr. Lombard, I'm fine. You should calm down, as anger is bad for your health," Jennifer pacified him at once. She wasn't keen on seeing father and son falling out with each other.

"Jennifer, as the eldest daughter of the Whitley family, you should have some principles. Going forward, I don't want to see you again. You're nothing but an eyesore to me!"

He resented anyone who tried to come in between him and Sophie.

"Mr. Tristan, what in the world have I done wrong?" I didn't even do anything!

"You don't even have to do anything. Your existence itself annoys me!"

Chapter 550

All this while, Tristan wasn't even bothered to say such words. A single look in his eyes was enough to communicate his intentions.

However, it was Jennifer who persisted in barging into his life.

"Old Mr. Lombard, calm down. I'm taking my leave first." Regardless of how thick-skinned Jennifer was, she was incapable of staying any longer.

"Mmm-hmm. Go on ahead. Ignore whatever he said. He has gone mad." William didn't know what else to say.

Upon Jennifer's departure, William got to his feet.

"Tristan, you have disappointed me today."

"I, too, am disappointed in you. I have told you loud and clear not to cause Sophie any trouble, and yet, you refused to listen!"

"So what if I went to see her? It's not like I harmed her!" William didn't feel that he had done anything wrong.

"How can you even let that cross your mind?" William meeting Sophie had already crossed Tristan's threshold, let alone if the former had other plans.

"Hmph, is she really that fragile?" Even Ysabelle isn't pampered to that extent!

"That's right. I don't want her to experience even the slightest bit of suffering!"

Have I made myself clear?

"Do whatever you want! I can't be bothered with you anymore."

When Sarah came home to the hostility between father and son, she pulled Tristan aside upon learning what happened.

"What's wrong with you?" Sophie remarked disapprovingly, "Doing so will only make Father dislike Sophie even more."

"So what if it does? It's not like I need him to approve of her. At most, I won't bring her back home."

"You—" Sarah shook her head in resignation.

He spoils Sophie too much.

"To be honest, you should let Sophie deal with the matter herself. It's not like she's incapable of doing so."

His relentless protection of Sophie will only antagonize Father further.

"With the attitude Dad has displayed, Sophie will definitely suffer if she faces him alone. Why should I allow my woman to go through that?"

This is totally unnecessary!

"Jeez..."

Truth be told, Sarah was envious of Sophie for having Tristan stand up for her.

"What about your relationship with Father? Are you going to let it go to the dogs?" Has he forgotten that Mother left us early, and it was Father who raised us?

"Can you not hurt Father's feelings for Sophie's sake? Promise me that you'll resolve this in a better way instead of direct confrontation.

"I just can't stand anyone who's trying to hurt Sophie. That's where my threshold lies, and not one is allowed to cross it."

Everyone has their limits, isn't it?

"Dad only went to see her and didn't do anything, right? It's not as serious as you're making it out to be."

"Enough talk about this. I'm going back."

He couldn't bear to stay there for a second longer.

All he wanted to do was be by Sophie's side.

"Since you're back, stay for dinner before you go." Leaving now would only make infuriate Father further.

"Both of you should go ahead without me." With no desire to do so, Tristan left in a huff.

Just as expected, William was enraged to learn that Tristan didn't stay for dinner.

Sarah had no choice but to assuage him.

"Dad, there's no need to be angry. Don't you know how Tristan is by now? He has never liked others to interfere in his affairs, especially since his feelings for Sophie are true."

William wasn't in the mood to comment.

"After painstakingly raising the two of you, neither of you grow up to obey me. It makes me wonder what's the point of my life."

"Dad, that's not true. Don't I always listen to you all the time?" Sarah answered gleefully.

"Hmph! Look at how old you are, and yet, you refuse to get married when I asked you to. As long as you're willing to do so, there are plenty of men queuing at the door for your hand. What's the big deal about this Juan?"

The mention of Juan's name caused Sarah's mood to change.

"Dad, didn't I tell you not to bring the matter up? Juan and I have long severed ties with each other. Furthermore, I was the one who harbored unrequited feelings, and it isn't his fault at all."

The fact that he never liked her back was what saddened her the most.

At the end of the day, William's reluctance to see his daughter hurt stopped him from continuing with the topic.

"All right, all right. Stop giving me that look. Do whatever you want. After all, none of you listen to anything I say."

"Dad, I really hope that you can understand how difficult it is to find someone I like." It's hard to find someone who will reciprocate our love.

"Really?" William didn't agree with her, as he felt that compatibility between a couple's family background was more important. Can love last a lifetime?

Furthermore, he couldn't stand Tristan challenging his authority for the sake of an outsider.

Meanwhile, Tristan had returned to the condominium near the university. He found Sophie writing her thesis and wasn't sure if she had eaten yet.

When Sophie lifted her gaze to greet his arrival, she looked as if nothing had happened at all.

"You're back. Have you had your dinner?"

Taking his seat beside her, Tristan could tell how busy she was from the pile of foreign language books on her table.

"You're just in your freshman year. Is there a need to push yourself to this extent?" Tristan asked

curiously.

As Sophie's fingers danced across the keyboard, she replied, "Considering that I want to marry you as soon as possible, it goes without saying that I have to work hard!"

Hearing her words, Tristan couldn't help but put his arm around her shoulder.

"There's no need to be in such a hurry. Watching you slog breaks my heart." It's more important that she takes her time and gets enough rest.

"I'm just kidding. I'm not tired at all." She enjoyed a fast-paced life and didn't see anything wrong with it.

"Okay. Even though I can't wait to marry you, you're still young, and I'm prepared to wait. All that matters is your commitment to our relationship."

"I'm more committed than you can imagine, so don't you worry. I won't leave you for any strange reasons. Besides, it's not like we're in some sort of movie drama."

I want to always be by his side and won't abandon him for some nonsensical reason.

"Um, I'm sorry to have put you in a spot." Despite how amazing she was, his father still disapproved of her.

"What's wrong?" Sophie had sensed that something was amiss. "You found out about my meeting with your dad?"

I suppose it's about that.

"What did he tell you?" She had hit the nail on the head.

"Nothing much. Don't worry. I can handle it." It's no big deal. I'm not a people-pleaser. I can't make everyone like me.

Tristan held her face.

"You're so wonderful!"

A radiant smile flashed across Sophie's face.

In his eyes, she was indeed the epitome of perfection.