

The Heart System #Chapter 141 - Read The Heart

System Chapter 141

Chapter 141: Chapter 141

She hesitated for a second, her eyes flicking to mine, a mix of nerves and excitement, but she obeyed, leaning forward, her hands pressing against the polished wood, her thick ass arching out, the short skirt barely covering her. The torn pantyhose clung to her thighs, slick with my cum from earlier, her black lace panties peeking out. I crouched behind her, my face inches from her ass, and inhaled deeply, her scent hitting me like a drug—sweet, musky, intoxicating.

"Fuck, Delilah," I murmured, my hands gripping her hips. I pulled her skirt up, exposing her fully, and leaned in, my tongue tracing her pussy through the thin lace of her panties, tasting her wetness.

She moaned, her body trembling, her hands gripping the table tighter. "Oh god, Evan..." she gasped, her voice soft but needy, her thighs quivering under the effect of my Pleasure skill at 10, amplifying every sensation for her.

I hooked a finger under her panties, pulling them to the side, and dove in, my tongue sliding into her wet folds, lapping at her clit, her juices coating my lips. Her pussy was so wet, pulsing against my tongue, her moans growing louder.

I pulled back for a moment, sniffing her again, her scent flooding my senses. "Now I remember how your panties smelled," I said, my voice rough, a grin spreading across my face. "Just like this—fucking perfect."

"Oh my god, stop it, stop!" she laughed, her cheeks flushing as she glanced back at me, her eyes sparkling with playful embarrassment.

I chuckled, standing up, my cock throbbing, hard as steel. I leaned in close, my lips brushing her ear. "You call me a perv, but you're no less," I whispered, my voice thick with lust. "I'm gonna fuck you on this dining table where you and Ivy eat."

"Just... ugh, you're evil," she replied, half-angry, half-playful, her ass still arched, her body practically begging for me.

I positioned myself behind her, my cock brushing her entrance, her wet folds teasing the tip. With one slow thrust, I entered her, her pussy stretching around me, gripping me tight, so warm and wet. "Oh, yes, Delilah," I groaned, my hands gripping her hips, pushing deeper until I was fully inside her. "Your pussy feels so fucking good, so tight, made for my cock."

She moaned, her head tilting back, her hands bracing against the table as I started thrusting, slow at first, letting her feel every inch. "Evan... oh fuck," she gasped, her

voice bolder now, her shyness fading under the intense pleasure my skill was giving her. "Keep going... just like that..."

I picked up the pace, my hips slamming into her, her ass jiggling with every thrust, the table creaking under us. The sound of our bodies colliding mixed with the rain outside, her moans filling the room, raw and needy. "Fuck, Delilah," I growled, my hands sliding to her ass, squeezing her soft curves through the skirt. "Look at you, taking my cock like this, your pussy so wet, dripping for me. You love this, don't you?"

"Yes... god, yes," she moaned, her voice shaking, her hips pushing back to meet my thrusts, her pussy clenching tighter, the Pleasure skill pushing her senses into overdrive. "Fuck me, Evan... harder..."

I leaned forward, kissing her neck, my lips grazing her skin as I fucked her harder, my cock slamming into her, her pussy pulsing around me. "You feel so fucking perfect," I growled, my hand sliding to her clit, rubbing it in slow circles, making her cry out, her body trembling. "Your ass, your pussy, your moans—you're driving me fucking wild, Delilah."

She moaned louder, her breaths turning to cries, her hands gripping the table so hard her knuckles whitened. "Evan... it's so good," she gasped, her voice raw, her thighs quivering as I pounded into her, her juices dripping down her legs, soaking her pantyhose further. "Don't stop... oh god, please..."

I thrust deeper, my cock throbbing, my hands kneading her ass, flipping her skirt up to watch her curves bounce. "You're a fucking goddess," I said, my voice rough, my lips kissing her shoulder. "This pussy's so tight, so wet, gripping me like it never wants to let go. You're gonna cum for me, aren't you? Let me feel it."

"Yes... Evan, I'm..." she gasped, her voice breaking, her body shaking as the Pleasure skill pushed her closer to the edge. I rubbed her clit faster, my cock slamming into her, the table rocking with every thrust. Her pussy clenched hard, her moans turning to a scream as her orgasm hit, her body convulsing, her juices flooding my cock, dripping onto the table, her ass shaking against me. "Oh god, Evan!" she cried, her head thrown back, her nails digging into the wood.

"Fuck, yes, Delilah," I groaned, thrusting through her climax, her pussy pulsing around me, so tight it was almost too much. "That's it, cum all over my cock, let me feel you lose it." Her moans echoed in the room, her body trembling, her juices dripping down her thighs, pooling on the table.

I kept fucking her, my cock throbbing, my hands gripping her hips as I pounded into her, her pussy still twitching from her orgasm. "Goddamn, you're so fucking hot," I growled, my lips brushing her ear. "Your pussy's still squeezing me, Delilah. You want my cum, don't you? Want me to fill you up right here on this table."

"Evan... fuck," she moaned, her voice softer now, her body still moving with mine, her ass bouncing with every thrust. "You're too much... just keep going..."

I thrust harder, my cock pulsing, the sight of her arched over the table, her skirt hiked up, her pantyhose torn and slick, driving me to the edge. "Fuck, Delilah, I'm gonna cum," I groaned, my hands squeezing her ass, my hips slamming into her. "I'm gonna cum inside you, fill this perfect pussy."

"No... Evan, don't..." she gasped, but her voice was weak, her pussy still clenching around me, pulling me deeper. I couldn't hold back, my climax hitting hard, my cock pulsing as I came, spilling inside her, thick ropes of cum filling her pussy, my body shaking with the intensity. Her pussy twitched, milking me, her juices mixing with mine, dripping down her thighs, onto the table, a small puddle forming on the floor.

- Sexual Activity Completed

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Partner: Delilah

EXP Gained: +88

Star Rating: 4.1 ★★★★★

Reason: -

Fuuck. That was incredible... cumming inside felt... fuck. Wonderful.

- Evan Marlowe (Lvl 8)

=====

- Age: 21

- Height: 180 cm

- Weight: 73 kg

=====

- EXP: [REDACTED] 279/1131

"Evan!" she gasped, turning her head to look at me, her cheeks flushed, her eyes wide. "Are you trying to get me pregnant for real? Stop cumming inside me!"

I chuckled, catching my breath, my cock still inside her as I turned her over gently, lifting her to sit on the edge of the table, her ass on the wood, her legs spread. "Sorry," I said, leaning in to kiss her, my lips soft against hers. "I just can't get enough of you, Delilah. You're like a drug."

She shook her head, a playful smirk on her lips as she kissed me back, her hands on my chest. "You're impossible," she said, her voice low, teasing. "Fucking me on my dining table, cumming inside me... you're gonna ruin me, Evan."

"Ruin you?" I said, kissing her deeper, my tongue meeting hers, my hands sliding to her hips. "I'm just getting started. Your pussy's too perfect, Delilah. Look at you, dripping with my cum, looking like a fucking goddess."

She moaned into the kiss, her hands gripping my shoulders, her pussy oozing with our mixed cum, dripping onto the table, a small trickle hitting the floor. "God, you're filthy," she said, breaking the kiss, her eyes sparkling with a mix of lust and amusement. "Look at this mess... my table, my floor..."

I kissed her again, hard, my hands roaming her body, squeezing her thighs, her ass, her tits through the straining shirt. "Worth it," I murmured against her lips, my voice rough. "Every fucking drop, Delilah. You're worth it."

She laughed, kissing me back, her lips warm, her body pressed against mine.

EVENT

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Delilah's Interest +4

My cock got hard again, but I bit back a groan and took a step back. If I fucked Delilah one more time, I'd have nothing left for the foursome with Jasmine, Kim, and Tessa back at my place. Fuuck. As much as I wanted to bury myself in her again, feel her pussy clench around me, I had to let her go for now. My Libido stat at 10 was screaming, but I needed to save some energy.

WOMEN - INTERACTIONS

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Jasmine: Interest: 30 / 40★

Kayla: Interest: 5 / 20

Tessa: Interest: 22 / 40★

Kim: Interest: 20 / 40★

Delilah: Interest: 37 / 40★

Cora: Interest: 100 / 100★★★★★

Mendy: Interest: 2/20

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Progress:

★☆☆☆☆ - 20 Interest: Milestone reward

★★★★☆ - 40 Interest: Milestone reward

★★★★☆ - 60 Interest: Milestone reward

★★★★☆ - 80 Interest: Milestone reward

★★★★★ -100 Interest: Milestone reward

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Select a woman to track progress.

"I need to go," I said, kissing Delilah's lips again, soft and lingering, her taste still on my tongue. "We don't want Ivy to see us like this, huh?"

"God, yes," she said, resting her head on my shoulder, her body warm as I hugged her on the table, her legs still trembling from our last round. "What are we going to do, Evan? Can we keep hiding... us from her?"

"Of course we can," I said, my voice steady. "We just gotta be... smart, I think."

"That we have to," she said, her voice muffled against my shoulder, her hands clutching my shirt. "I need to clean up this place before she comes back."

"Okay," I said, gently pulling her head back, kissing her forehead before stepping away. I walked to the couch, grabbing my pants from the floor where I'd left them. "See you soon, Delilah?"

She hopped off the table, her skirt still hiked up, her torn pantyhose glistening with our mess. She smiled, a little shy but warm. "See you soon. Hopefully not in this... uniform."

I smirked, pulling on my pants. "Hopefully, in another uniform."

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Chapter 142: Chapter 142

Back at my place, the air was thick with sweat and sex. Kim was on all fours on my bed, her ass arched high, her pussy dripping as I fucked her hard from behind. Jasmine was next to me, on her knees, her lips locked with mine, her tongue teasing as I thrust into Kim. Tessa was sprawled on the floor, her pussy oozing with my cum, her chest heaving, exhausted from the pounding I'd given her. We were all sweaty, and fucking hell, I'd fucked the shit out of them.

I groaned, my cock pulsing as I came inside Kim, my lips still on Jasmine's, my hips hunching forward. I rested my head on Kim's back, exhaling hard, still spilling into her, my body shaking from the intensity.

I slowly pulled out, my cock slick with her juices and my cum. Kim put a hand over her pussy, catching the drip so it wouldn't stain my sheets. I collapsed onto the bed, breathing hard, staring at the ceiling, my chest heaving.

(_____)

- Evan Marlowe (Lvl 8)

=====

- Age: 21

- Height: 180 cm

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"Chinese?" Jasmine said, hopping off the bed, naked and sweaty, her curves glistening in the dim light. "I heard there's a new place just down the street."

Kim groaned, getting up from the bed, her hand still covering her pussy. "Yup."

"Hey," Kim said, pausing at the bedroom door. "You didn't cum that much today. Did you masturbate or something?"

Fuck. I had to keep Delilah a secret. They'd figure out I was seeing someone else eventually, and if my Libido stat was higher, maybe I wouldn't have to lie like that.

A knock on the door jolted me upright. I propped myself on my elbows, frowning. Who the hell was it at this hour, right at dinner time? I got up, grabbed my pants and a t-shirt, and shuffled to the door, peeking through the peephole. Shit. Ivy. I'd ignored her calls when I got home and jumped into the foursome.

"Uh-oh," I muttered, glancing back at the living room. Jasmine was naked, gathering her clothes. Tessa stood by the locked bathroom door, waiting her turn, while Kim was showering. This was not the time for guests.

"Who is it?" Jasmine whispered, clutching her shirt.

"A friend," I hissed back. "She can't know you guys are here."

"Ooh. What you gonna do?" she teased, smirking.

I yanked on my pants and t-shirt, opened the door just a crack, and slipped outside, closing it behind me. "Hey," I said, forcing a smile. "Ivy. What's up?"

"Why'd you ignore my calls?" she asked, crossing her arms, her eyes narrowing. "I was scared shitless you learned something bad from Mom and didn't want to tell me."

"No, no," I said, leaning against the door, keeping it shut. "Just had some business to take care of. Personal stuff."

"Fuck personal stuff," she said, stepping closer. "Tell me, what'd you learn from her?"

Damn. Delilah was hiding that BrightWave bullshit from Ivy—those degenerate assholes bullying her. Ivy didn't know their arrests were why Delilah was so happy now. I had to keep that under wraps.

"I asked what's been going on," I said, my voice steady, Charm stat kicking in. "She said some idiots at BrightWave were giving her a hard time, but it's handled now. She talked to them, sorted it out. No more bullying."

"Is there a connection with those BrightWave arrests?" she asked, tilting her head. "And why aren't we talking inside?"

I ignored the second question. "No connection," I said, shrugging. "The names she gave didn't match the arrested guys. She handled it herself. That's it."

"So that's it?" Ivy asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yep," I said, nodding. "That's it."

She smiled, relaxing a bit, then squinted at me. "Why're you so sweaty? It's not even hot."

"Doing some... push-ups," I said, grinning. "Gotta stay fit, you know?"

"Yeah... I guess," she said, unconvinced. "Mom's been saying she wants to hit the gym too. Been bugging me for three days."

"Hmm," I muttered, exhaling. "I'd invite you in, but, you know..."

"You say 'you know' a lot when you're hiding something, Evan," she said, smirking. "Luckily, I know you well enough not to care what it is. Okay?"

"Huh... thanks... I guess?"

She laughed, giving my shoulder a light shove. "Let's grab a drink tomorrow. On you."

"On me? Fine."

She smiled, gave a small wave, and headed down the stairs. I waited until she was gone, then slipped back inside, opening the door just enough to squeeze through. I froze. Jasmine, Kim, and Tessa were right there, inches from the door, staring at me. Kim was still wet from her shower, barely dried off, her towel loose.

"Oh, come on," I said, rolling my eyes. "Stop it."

"You know, huh?" Jasmine said, nodding, a teasing grin on her face. "Noted. Good to know."

"Ugh..." I muttered. "Whatever."



I couldn't find any sleep after that whole thing at the anime convention. The scene with Nala's brother, that gun, that fucked-up video of him humiliating her—it was burned into my mind, replaying like a bad movie. I stood in front of the kitchen window, Kim sleeping soundly in the bedroom, the rain pattering lazily against the glass, the city's neon lights flickering through the haze. Smoke from my cigarette curled in the air, my eyes fixed on nothing, just staring into the distance. Not a single thought behind them. Huh... maybe I was that "melancholic detective who likes to stare out the window" type the girls always teased me about.

I didn't notice the cigarette burning down until the long ash fell to the floor, snapping me out of it.

"Shit," I muttered, grabbing a tissue, wetting it under the faucet, and crouching to wipe up the mess.

As I scrubbed, I blinked and froze—two bare legs stood in front of me, smooth and perfect, like they belonged to a goddamn statue. I jumped, stumbling back, landing on my ass with a thud. There she was. Dierella. Arms crossed, looking down at me with those piercing eyes, her hair catching the neon glow, her body wrapped in some ethereal, barely-there dress that shimmered like moonlight.

"Evan Marlowe," she said, her voice calm but commanding, like she owned the fucking room.

"My god..." I gasped, clutching my chest. "I nearly jumped out of my skin."

"You'll get used to it," she said, leaning against the wall, peeking out the window. "Does it always rain in this city?"

"Yeah..." I said, standing, tossing the tissue in the bin. "It does."

"Sucks," she said, her tone flat, her eyes scanning the city like it was beneath her.

"Hmm..." I grunted, brushing off my pants. "You... are here. Why?"

"Wanted to talk to my subject," she said, shrugging, her gaze still fixed outside. "Didn't know I needed to book a reservation."

"No, no," I said, shaking my head. "It's just... why?"

"No reason."

I leaned against the kitchen counter, glancing at the bedroom door. Through the crack, I saw Kim lying on her side, her chest rising and falling, deep in sleep. Thank fuck—she'd lose her shit if she woke up and saw me with Dierella, a literal goddess standing in my kitchen. My eyes flicked back to Dierella, her curves unreal, her presence making the room feel smaller, heavier.

"When you... gift someone this system," I said, keeping my voice low, "what happens? Like—what's in it for you?"

"Without their subjects, goddesses are useless," she said, her eyes still on the window, like she was watching something I couldn't see. "Basically, every chick you have sex with grants power to us."

"Then what?"

"What do you mean, then what?" she asked, turning to me, her eyes narrowing, sharp enough to cut.

"Then what happens? What happens when you get power?"

"Six of us scale our power," she said, her voice cool, calculated. "The winner gets to sit on the throne, Henrik."

"How do you know my second na—"

"But," she cut me off, her lips curling slightly, "we choose our subjects carefully. Miko's subject is a known playboy. A Casanova. Girls love him. Plus, he's bi—fucks girls and guys. Double the points for her."

"There are more system users?" I asked, my heart racing.

"In this country? Only you," she said, her tone matter-of-fact. "Miko's guy is in Europe. Others are scattered. We don't overlap territories... usually."

"Why... didn't you choose anyone else, then?" I asked, leaning forward, my voice dropping. "You stole me from Karamine, right?"

"To knock her out of the game, obviously," she said, turning to the window again, her silver hair shimmering. "Fewer competitors, better odds for me to ascend and claim the throne."

"What happens when you sit on the—"

"Enough questions," she snapped, her voice sharp but not angry, her eyes flicking to mine, holding me in place. "Keep doing what you're doing, Evan. Fuck your way through those women, rack up points. We might have a shot."

"Wait—"

I blinked, and she was gone, like she'd never been there. The air felt lighter, the room emptier. "Fuck," I muttered, rubbing my face.

A throne? Ascending? She thought this was a game? She stole me from Karamine just to boost her chances? I needed more answers, but she'd vanished, leaving me with more questions than I started with. That was for later, I guess.

I glanced at the bedroom door again, Kim still asleep, oblivious to the goddess who'd just popped into my kitchen. My cigarette was out, the tissue in the bin, the rain still falling. I sighed, my mind spinning—Nala, Delilah, the foursome, now this throne bullshit. I needed a drink. Or maybe another cigarette.

♥◻♥◻♥◻

Chapter 143: Chapter 143

Someone nudged my shoulder, but I groaned and turned to my side, desperate to steal a few more minutes of sleep. The nudge came again, harder this time, like an earthquake rattling my bones. I blinked, my eyes snapping open, and saw Kim standing over me, her face a mix of shock and panic, her dark hair messy from sleep.

"Evan," she said, her voice low, urgent.

"Y-yeah?" I mumbled, rubbing my eyes, still groggy.

She glanced over her shoulder, her hands fidgeting. "Anotta fucking Anotov is here."

"What?" I bolted upright, my heart kicking into overdrive.

I rubbed my eyes again, trying to clear the haze, and peered through the open bedroom door. There she was—Anotta, sitting in my living room, legs crossed, looking like she'd stepped out of a magazine. Her blue dress hugged her curves, crimson high-heels catching the dim light, her blonde hair pulled back in a sleek ponytail.

"Holy shit," I muttered, my pulse racing.

"Holy shit indeed," Kim said, her voice barely above a whisper. "What do we do? That guy with her—bodyguard?"

"I... don't know," I said, swinging my legs off the bed, my mind scrambling. "Did she say anything?"

"Just told me to wake you up," Kim said, her eyes wide. "Why's she here, Evan?"

"Fuck if I know." I stood, glancing down at my ratty shorts and faded t-shirt. Not exactly guest-ready, while Anotta looked like a goddamn model. "I'll go talk to her."

"Careful," Kim said, grabbing my arm. "What does she want with you? Why'd she ask for you?"

"No idea..." I said, shaking my head, my gut twisting. I stepped through the bedroom door, shutting it behind me to keep Kim out of this mess.

There was also someone else... he wasn't her fucking bodyguard. It was that cunt—Nala's brother. The CEO, leaned against the window sill, arms crossed. Guy was his name... bastard.

"The fuck is he doing here?" I asked, pointing at Guy, my voice sharp.

"Guy Nolin," Anotta said, her voice smooth but firm, her eyes locking onto mine like she was sizing me up, "is the CEO of TechForge, Evan. I'd suggest you choose your words carefully."

"I know who he is," I snapped, my eyes flicking to the gun on his belt, my army training kicking in, calculating how fast I could disarm him if it came to that. "What's he doing in my apartment?"

"And," Anotta continued, her tone hardening as if I'd interrupted her at the wrong moment, "he's your new landlord."

"What?" My stomach sank, my mind racing. Landlord? My lease was with some faceless property company, not this prick.

Guy smirked, stepping away from the windowsill, his arms still crossed. "I took a look at your lease, Evan. Month-to-month tenancy, no fixed term. Lucky for me, I bought the building last week."

"You what?" I said, my voice rising, my fists clenching.

"TechForge has been diversifying into real estate," he said, his sneer growing. "This dump was a steal. And your lease? It's flexible. I can raise your rent whenever I want, with proper notice. So, I'm increasing it. Let's say... 200%. No, fuck it, 300%."

"You can't do that!" I shouted, stepping forward, my blood boiling. "That's insane!"

"Oh, I can," he said, pulling a folded document from his coat pocket, tossing it onto the coffee table. "Check the fine print. Month-to-month leases in this state allow rent increases with 30 days' written notice. I filed it with the property manager yesterday. You'll get the official letter tomorrow. Rent's going from \$1,200 to \$3,600, effective next month. Good luck, kid."

I stared at him, my jaw tight, my mind scrambling. I didn't know shit about leases, but I grabbed the document, scanning it. There it was, in black and white—month-to-month tenancy, no cap on rent increases, just a 30-day notice requirement under state law. He wasn't bluffing. The bastard had found a loophole, and he was screwing me with it. Probably because of what went down at the convention—disarming him, punching him, humiliating him in front of security. This was revenge.

"Why the hell are you doing this?" I asked, my voice low, trying to keep my cool. "This about the convention?"

Guy's eyes narrowed, his smirk fading. "You think you're clever, don't you? Disarming me, playing hero for my sister. This is business, Marlowe. Nothing personal."

"Bullshit," I said, stepping closer, my Charm stat keeping my voice steady despite the rage. "You're pissed because I called you out for being a piece of shit to Nala."

"Evan," Anotta said, her voice cutting through, sharp and cold. "Enough. Guy's within his rights. You can either pay the new rent or move out in 30 days. Your choice."

I turned to her, my heart pounding. "And what's your deal in this? Why're you here with him?"

Anotta tilted her head. "We'll talk about it. Later."

Fuck... playing dirty, huh? Kicking me out of my house? This was a full-blown war now. And I had only a month to win. Oh, I'd fuck him up. Get him out of that fucking company. I just needed a plan... a plan not even his billions or his army of lawyers could fight against. That meant I had to play dirty too.

"Goodbye, tuxedo boy," Guy said, his voice dripping with smug satisfaction as he walked toward the door and opened it. "See you later."

He closed the door behind him, and silence swallowed the room. My teeth ground together, anger boiling in my chest like a furnace. I kicked the coffee table hard, the wood rattling, a guttural noise escaping my throat as I fought to keep it together. Fucking bastard. BASTARD!

"FUCK!" I yelled, my voice echoing in the small apartment. "Cunt! Cunt! Cunt!"

"Calm down," Anotta said, her voice sharp but composed, still seated on my couch, legs crossed.

I spun to face her, my fists clenched. "You're with him?" I asked, my voice low, barely containing my rage. "Why?"

"He asked me to find a 'rude bitch' from an anime convention," she said, her tone cool, professional, like she was discussing a business deal. "Showed me your photo."

"Why'd he come to you?" I demanded, my eyes narrowing.

"I have connections all over this city, Evan," she said, leaning forward slightly, her eyes locking onto mine. "And I owed him a favor."

"Shit..." I muttered, running a hand through my hair, pacing. "He'll regret messing with me. He'll regret it. I swear."

"I've seen what happens to your... 'enemies' firsthand, Evan," Anotta said, a faint smirk playing on her lips. "That stunt at the gala? Putting Vanessa behind bars? Admirable."

"What's that got to do with this?" I snapped, stopping in my tracks, my heart still pounding.

Anotta stood, smoothing her dress over her legs with a deliberate grace, her heels clicking softly on the floor as she stepped closer. "It's about opportunity, Evan," she said, her voice measured, professional, but with a glint of something calculating in her eyes. "After BrightWave's stock plummeted due to those arrests, investors scrambled. TechForge became the next big player in the tech sector, soaking up the market share BrightWave lost. Guy Nolin's company is riding high—his stock value's doubled in the last month alone."

I stared at her, my mind racing. "So what? You're saying I should go after TechForge?"

"Precisely," she said, folding her arms, her posture relaxed but her words sharp. "If you can find a way to oust Guy from TechForge—discredit him, expose him, force him to step down—the company's stock will take a hit. Investors will panic, sell off their shares,

and look for the next safe bet. Smaller tech companies, ones currently overshadowed by TechForge, will see a surge in interest."

"And let me guess," I said, my voice low, a bitter edge creeping in. "You've already got your money in those smaller companies."

Anotta's smile was thin, professional, but her eyes gleamed with ambition. "I've acquired significant stakes in several promising startups—Intellicore, QuantumLabs, and Nexgen Dynamics, to name a few. If TechForge's stock dips, investors will flock to these alternatives. I've positioned myself to capitalize on that shift. A single well-timed move against Guy could net me a considerable return."

I scoffed, shaking my head. "Of course. You're using me."

"Using you?" she said, raising an eyebrow, her tone cool but not unkind. "Your home is on the line, Evan. Your rent's about to triple. Guy's coming for you, and he's not playing fair. I'm simply suggesting a mutually beneficial strategy. You take him down to save your place, and I profit from the market ripple. Do what you will."

"Will you help me, then?"

She shrugged. "Maybe. But I won't risk myself or my brand for it."

Anotta gave me a final nod, her crimson heels clicking as she walked to the door, her blue dress catching the neon glow from the window.

"Good luck, Evan," she said, her voice cool, professional, like she hadn't just dropped a bombshell on my life. She opened the door and stepped out, the click of the latch echoing in the silent room as she disappeared into the night.

I sighed, collapsing onto the couch, my hands rubbing my face, elbows digging into my knees. My mind was a mess—Guy Nolin, that smug bastard, jacking up my rent to force me out, Anotta playing her own game, and Nala stuck in the middle of her brother's fucked-up control. The rain outside kept its lazy patter, the city's neon lights flickering through the window, mocking me. I felt like I was drowning in it all.

The bedroom door creaked, and Kim stepped out, her dark hair still messy from sleep, wearing one of my oversized t-shirts that barely covered her thighs. She sat beside me on the couch, her hand sliding over my shoulder, pulling me into a half-hug, her touch warm and grounding.

"We'll figure something out," she said softly, her voice steady despite the worry in her eyes. "You're not alone in this, Evan."

I stayed quiet, my jaw tight, staring at the floor. Her words helped, but the weight of it all—Guy, the rent, Nala's situation—sat heavy on my chest. I needed to act, to do something, not just sit here like a fucking victim.

I grabbed my phone from the coffee table, my fingers moving fast as I pulled up Nala's contact. I typed out a quick message: 'We need to meet. Soon. You okay?' My thumb hovered over the send button for a second before I hit it, my heart pounding. If I was going to take Guy down, I needed to know more—about him, about Nala, about what the hell was going on.

Seconds later, my phone buzzed. Nala's reply was short: 'Tomorrow. Steam and Maple. 2pm.'

I exhaled, setting the phone down, my mind already racing with what I'd say to her. Tomorrow couldn't come fast enough.



Chapter 144: Chapter 144

I walked into Steam & Maple like I was trying to disappear into the steam. The place smelled like burnt sugar and wet wood, that thick cozy stink that makes city people pretend they are somewhere softer. She was where I left her in my head, same corner table, hoodie up, no makeup, fingers curled around a cup gone cold enough to have forgotten it was ever hot.

"Didn't think you'd actually reply," I said, sitting down opposite her. My voice sounded too loud in that small space.

"Didn't think you'd actually show." She kept her eyes low. They looked like someone had taken a flashlight to the inside of her skull and left it on. Her hands would not stop moving, rubbing little circles on the rim of the cup like they could wipe the inside of her out.

I ordered a coffee I had no intention of drinking just to have something to do with my hands. The waitress smiled like she'd seen our kind of scene before, like it was some recurring show. I didn't mind the audience. I liked that people were oblivious. It made it easier for us.

"How've you been?" I said, because the usual dumb questions can work as a rope sometimes.

She let out a noise that could have been a laugh or could have been a ragged breath. "You mean since my brother pointed a gun at you? Peachy."

"Right," I said, low. "Sorry."

She shrugged like sorry was a currency he never accepted. The rain outside ran slow down the glass, streaking the city into watercolor. I watched it because I was good at staring at things until someone else had to look away.

"He's always been like this?" I asked.

She gave a brittle, small smile that cracked immediately. "Since forever. When our parents died he decided I was his charity case. Controlled every step I took. Grades, clothes, friends. If I pushed back he'd cut me off for weeks. Silence was his punishment. Then when I joined TechForge it got worse. Suddenly I was his employee. Everything I did reflected on him."

Her voice folded on the last word like paper under a thumb. I felt the pressure of it in my chest.

"That video," I said careful. "The one on his phone. How long's he been doing that to you?"

She froze. Her fingers tightened on the cup until her knuckles whitened. "You saw that? How?"

"I wish I hadn't."

She stared at the tabletop and breathed like she was trying to slow a moving train. "He records everything. Keeps files on everyone. Employees, partners, me. Says it's for accountability. I think he just likes control. Makes him feel like a god."

"Sounds more like a coward," I muttered.

"You don't know him, Evan. He's not some street thug you can just punch and call it a day. He's got money, lawyers, people. You touch him, he buries you."

I leaned forward, elbows on the table. She was small in the chair like someone had taken the edges off. "Then we don't touch him. We make him bury himself."

She laughed, and it came out thin and brittle. "You mean revenge?"

"No." I let the word hang like a weight. "Leverage."

Her eyes flicked up to mine and searched for a joke I didn't give. "Even if you found something he'd crush you. He'd crush me."

"Maybe." I kept my voice flat. "But if he felt one tenth of what you felt? He'd crumble."

She let out a breath that was almost a laugh. "You talk like the world still owes people like us fairness."

"Not fairness," I said. "Balance."

We sat with the café noise around us, mug steam rising and the rain making the world outside soft. She began to tell me another thing. About being locked out at nineteen. About rewrites to performance reviews that had the intention of making her small. About the apologies she learned to give before she knew why she was saying them. Parts of her life had been saved for the quiet, but tonight she was gnawing at the edges, peeling things back.

At some point the dam she'd held for years gave. She started to shake. The first sound was a hiccup and then the sob came like someone had opened a faucet. She tried to pull herself back, but the noise rolled through her like a storm.

I left my hand on the back of her chair for a beat, then reached across and took her fingers. Her skin was cool. She flinched like from a shock and then squeezed back, as if gripping something could steady her.

"You don't have to be sorry," I said. "You need to be alive."

She looked at me like she was weighing the promise. "You don't understand what living with him is. I could lose everything. He will make sure I have nothing if I open my mouth."

Her words landed and echoed. They were small sharp things and they made my jaw ache.

"You are not alone in this," I said. "I am not asking you to stand in court. I am asking for what only you would know. Tell me names, dates, places. Tell me where he keeps things. Tell me what he is most afraid of."

"No, no, no. No, Evan. No."

She jerked her hand back like I'd burned her. Tears flooded harder. People around us stole looks and then went back to their cups.

Persuasion Attempt: Nala

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□□□

=====

Remaining Chances: 0/2

The numbers are blunt like a butcher's scale. Two attempts. No wiggle room. I had to pick my words like I was defusing something more dangerous than a bomb.

The first line that came to mind was the safe, quiet opener I had used on people who needed to be coaxed, the gentle voice that makes space.

Attempting Persuasion

=====

"I'm here to listen, Nala.

You can trust me."

=====

Base Chance: 45%

Honeyed Words: +30%

=====

Final Chance: 75%

Upon Succeeding: ☒

► Proceed with Persuasion? [Y/N]

It felt small and stupid saying it out loud, but ceremony matters when someone is scared. I said yes in my head, then said it out loud.

"I'm here to listen, Nala. You can trust me."

She let out a noise that was equal parts anger and fear. "Trust you? Why the hell would I trust you?" Her voice had teeth in it now. The first attempt petered out against years of broken promises and threats.

The UI flicked above her head like a failed streetlight:

Persuasion Attempt: Nala

=====

☒ ☐ ☐

=====

Remaining Chances: 1/2

One tick. Not enough. Her shoulders went rigid and she pulled away, wrapping both hands around the cup like it could barricade her. This is the exact point people want to run from. They think failure means the idea dies. It does not. It means you try different tools.

She began to talk faster, the way people do when they are building walls. "You don't get it. He has lawyers. He has money. He has contacts in the press. You think you can scare a man who owns a city into giving up his power over his sister?"

"Not scare him," I said. "Make him choose."

She laughed, but the sound was brittle. "He will choose anything but give up. He will make your life a smear and he will laugh through it."

I let her rant. I kept my face calm. I could feel the system waiting like a metronome. The second move had to be the one that showed her I understood that her fear was not some abstract. It was a living thing. It owned parts of her.

I forced the next words like a knife through cloth. I pushed on the place she had bared by crying, the part where she hated that she had learned to be small.

Attempting Persuasion

=====

"Trust me, Nala. You have survived him for many years. But I can see the cracks that he left on you. For your own sake, and mine,

you have to help me."

=====

Base Chance: 30%

Honeyed Words: +30%

=====

Final Chance: 60%

Upon Succeeding: ☒

► Proceed with Persuasion? [Y/N]

It was a gamble that asked her for permission to be brave on her behalf. It promised danger but it did not demand exposure.

"Trust me, Nala. You have survived him for many years. But I can see the cracks that he left on you. For your own sake, and mine, you have to help me."

At the words something gave inside her. She began to tremble, a broken laugh escaping. Her mouth formed a yes then closed. Tears streamed down, loud now. People in the café started to look. She swallowed hard as if gulping courage.

Persuasion Attempt: Nala

=====

☒☒☐

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Remaining Chances: 2/2 - Success!

She nodded, slow and small, as if agreeing to something that might kill her. "Okay," she whispered. "I'll tell you. But you have to promise me something."

"Name it."

"If this blows up, if he finds out I talked, you disappear. Same thing goes for me."

"Fair deal."

She swallowed like a person stepping off a curb. "He has a safe. Built into the wall behind a painting. The bottom right corner of the frame is loose. You press it and slide the frame left. He uses a code tied to dates he cares about. He keeps signed documents and hard drives in there. He also has a safety deposit box under Suncrest Holdings, number 701. Nobody knows about that. He thinks he is invisible."

Every word was currency. I wrote them down, slow, like copying a map. The city outside blurred into streaks of neon. The rain was a soft curtain. The waitress wiped tables, the coffee grinder hissed. None of it mattered. Her story was a code I could trade.

"Where is he most vulnerable?" I asked.

She hesitated then said, "Public exposure. Investors hate scandal. He profits from trust. If people stop trusting him, he loses everything."

"Good," I said. "That is how we make him choose. Not with blood. With the thing he is more afraid to lose than his sister."

She closed her eyes as if she had to lock the memory away. "If you do this, you have to be careful. He watches. He knows more than you think."

"I know," I said, and meant it.

We stayed in the quiet for a while. I folded the napkin and put it in my pocket with my pen. She wiped her face with the back of her hand and tried to put her hoodie right. Her hands shook. I took one last look at her... fragile, dangerous, like a loaded thing that could go off at any wrong word.

"I will be careful," I told her. "And I will be ugly if I have to. But I will not be cruel."

She gave a half smile that might have been hope. "I would... god, Evan. I would like to get my life back."

"Yeah... yeah, I know."



Chapter 145: Chapter 145

First things first, I had to learn the code for Guy's safe. Second, I needed credits—a shit ton of credits. My plan was to use Time Stop, not once but twice, to get into his place, crack open that safe, grab everything inside, and get the hell out before the cameras caught me or the Time Stop's ten-minute window ran out. Problem was, I was broke as fuck, sitting on just 55 credits. I needed to grind quests to afford two Time Stops at 90c each.

- Quest Available

=====

- Title: Who's There?

- Task: Talk to a stranger in a bar
and get a blowjob in the restroom.

- Reward: +40 EXP, 50c

=====

- Accept Quest? [Yes] [No]

Fifty credits wasn't bad. With my current 55, it'd get me closer to the 180 I needed for two Time Stops. Guy's place was probably a fortress—paranoid bastard like him might've rigged it with alarms or worse. I had to be ready for anything.

"Alright," I muttered, staring at my reflection in the mirror. "Get a blowjob in a bar restroom. Hello, STD."

I hit accept, and another quest popped up, even wilder but still packing credits. Not enough for a second Time Stop, but every bit helped.

- Quest Available

=====

- Title: Who's There(2)?

- Task: Talk to a stranger in a bar

and fuck her in the restroom.

- Reward: +60 EXP, 50c

=====

- Accept Quest? [Yes] [No]

I accepted it too, checking myself one last time in the mirror. Same tuxedo I'd bought with Anotta's card—sleek, black, tailored to make me look like a big shot. Hopefully, it'd fool some girl into thinking I was more than an ex-gas station clerk scraping by. Damn.

Kim was crashing with Jasmine tonight. We'd agreed to keep my thing with the girls on the down-low. If Guy caught wind of them, he'd probably come after Jasmine, Tessa, and Kim too, just to fuck with me. I didn't need that kind of heat.

- CURRENT STATS

=====

- Strength: 3

- Charm : 12

- Manipulative Charm

↳ Honeyed Words (□□□□□)

↳ Gaslight (□□□□□)

- Emotional Charisma

- Seductive Allure

- Libido : 10

- Pleasure: 10

=====

Unused Ability Points: 3

"Alright, Evan," I said to my reflection. "You dumped twelve points into Charm. Time to see what it can do."

I almost threw my three unused points into Charm but stopped myself. I might need to reset Libido or Pleasure later, depending on how this played out. For now, Charm at 12 would have to carry me through a bar full of strangers.

My phone buzzed—Tuck's name on the screen. Big T, my old gas station buddy. Still tight, unlike that weirdo Richard with his anal obsession. Thank fuck for normal friends.

"Yo, my man," Tuck said, his voice all energy. "The car's ready."

"Thank you," I said, grabbing my keys. "I'll be there in a second."

I hung up, exhaling. Tuck's brother worked as a bellboy at some fancy five-star hotel nearby and had pulled some strings to borrow a car for me. A Rolls-Royce Cullinan, I think? Couldn't remember the name exactly—cars weren't my thing, too damn expensive for a guy like me who'd never owned one.

I left my apartment, descended the stairs, my hair tied back in a messy bun. When I pushed open the building's door and saw the car parked out front, my jaw dropped. Holy fuck. This thing was a beast—sleek, black, gleaming under the neon streetlights, looking like it cost more than my entire life.

"Big E!" Tuck called, hopping out of the driver's seat, grinning wide as he walked over for a handshake.

"My guy," I said, returning the shake, our shoulders bumping. "Man, you saved my life with this car."

"Let's go over the plan," he said, checking his watch. "I need this back in twenty. You roll up to the nightclub in this Rolls-Royce, hop out looking like a boss. I'll play your driver or bodyguard, then drive off like I'm parking it. Or... let's change the plan a bit, don't drive the car. Let me drive. You cool with that?"

"Why?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"You never had a car, man," he said, smirking. "Don't want you scratching this beauty."

"I've got a license," I said, rolling my eyes.

"Nah, still," he said, waving me off. "Trust me."

"Fine," I said, shaking my head.

He chuckled. "Hop in."

I reached for the passenger door, but Tuck darted in front, opening it with a dramatic bow. "Please, my good sir, allow me," he said, his voice dripping with mock formality.

"Ah, shut up," I said, laughing. "Come on."

He grinned, giving my shoulder a playful punch before heading to the driver's side. I slid into the plush leather seat, the interior smelling like money. This had to work. If I didn't pull off these quests, I'd be screwed for credits. There was another quest I'd rejected the second I saw it, but if this plan tanked, I might have to reconsider.

(

- Quest Available

=====

- Title: Shush

- Task: Fuck Delilah in her

daughter's room while Ivy sleeps.

- Reward: 195c

=====

- Accept Quest? [Yes] [No]

(

Nah, no fucking way. Banging Delilah in Ivy's room while she slept? If Ivy woke up and saw her mom under me, it'd be a disaster. But... fuck. My apartment was on the line. 195 credits would cover both Time Stops and then some. Maybe I could... no. Or—shit, maybe? I was a mess, torn between survival and not being a total scumbag.

Tuck revved the engine, the Cullinan purring like a beast. I opened the glove compartment, finding a bottle of fancy cologne. I gave it a sniff—damn, it smelled like wealth—and sprayed some on my neck and wrists.

"Whose car is this?" I asked as we pulled into the street, the city's neon lights flashing across the windshield. "Fuck, they're rich, huh?"

"No clue," Tuck said, grinning. "But whoever they are, they've got taste."

"For real," I said, leaning back, the leather creaking under me. My heart was pounding, but my Charm stat was high, and I had a Rolls-Royce to flex. Time to play the part and make these quests count.

I stared out the window as the car glided through the city, the neon lights smearing across the glass like paint, pinks and blues bleeding into the rain-soaked streets. The city was alive, pulsing with late-night energy—people spilling out of bars, cabs honking, the faint thump of bass from somewhere distant. My mind was still on Nala, that safe, and the 180 credits I needed for two Time Stops to pull this off. Guy was coming for my life, and I wasn't about to let him win.

My phone buzzed, snapping me out of it. Kayla's name lit up the screen.

'Hey, Evan.'

My fingers hovered over the keyboard. What the hell did she want? I figured she'd forgotten about me by now, but maybe not. Or... fuck, it was probably Richard being a nuisance again, dragging her into his drama. My gut twisted at the thought of dealing with that asshole.

'Hey. Something wrong?' I texted back, keeping it short.

"I didn't take you for a nightclub guy," Tuck said, glancing at me from the driver's seat, his hands steady on the wheel. "You're more like a 'grab a beer and chill on the beach' type in my head."

"Hey, can't I enjoy beer, beach, and nightclubs?" I said, smirking, my Charm stat at 12 giving my voice a playful edge.

"You're right," Tuck said, chuckling. "Still, I was surprised you'd ask for something like this. Can't lie."

"Yeah, well, I surprised myself too, T," I said, leaning back, the leather seat creaking under me.

Another buzz. Kayla's reply: 'Richard is just being a dickhead. He told me he'd kill himself and now he won't pick up his phone. Can you check on him tomorrow? I already called the cops.'

Fucking Richard. Of course it was him. I'd hoped Kayla was texting for... I don't know, something normal, a conversation, maybe a hint she was into me. But no, it was that creep pulling his usual stunts. Back when I was still at the gas station, before everything went to shit and I quit, Richard was always yapping about moving out, starting fresh. Probably still in that dump, though.

'Sure,' I texted back. 'Don't worry about him. He's not the type to kill himself.'

'I hope so, Evan. Anyway, I won't bother you again this late. Bye.'

I sent a wave emoji and locked the screen, shoving the phone in my pocket.

The nightclub came into view, Endless Sea, its name glowing in electric purple above the entrance, the letters flickering like they were underwater. The place was packed, a long line of people snaking down the sidewalk, all dressed to impress, sequined dresses, tailored jackets, fake laughs cutting through the night air.

The security guard, a beefy guy with a shaved head, was checking IDs, his flashlight flicking over each one like a cop. A couple of police cars idled at the end of the street, lights off but ready for trouble. Tuck used to rave about this place, calling it heaven—pools of light, half-naked dancers, drinks that cost more than my old hourly wage. I'd never been inside, just passed by the street a few times, always wondering what the hype was about.

Endless Sea was a beast of a club, all glass and chrome, the front facade curved like a wave, reflecting the city's neon in warped, shimmering patterns. The entrance was flanked by two massive pillars pulsing with LED lights that shifted from blue to green, syncing with the muffled bass leaking out. The crowd was a mix of rich kids, wannabe influencers, and older guys with too much cologne, all buzzing with anticipation.

"Alright," Tuck said, pulling the Cullinan to the curb, the engine purring as he parked. "You stay here. I'll open your door."

"Okay," I said, adjusting my tuxedo, the fabric smooth under my fingers, the cologne I'd swiped from the glove compartment making me smell like I belonged here.

Tuck hopped out, rounding the car with a swagger, his broad shoulders filling out his black jacket. He opened my door with a flourish, bowing slightly like I was some VIP. "After you, boss," he said, his grin barely hiding his amusement.

The crowd's eyes snapped to me, whispers rippling as heads turned. The Cullinan gleamed behind me, its sleek lines screaming money, and my tuxedo, black, tailored, courtesy of Anotta's card, made me look like I owned the place. A few girls in line giggled, their eyes lingering, while some guys shot jealous glares. My Charm stat at 12 was practically humming, amplifying every glance, every step.

I stepped out, slipping a hundred-dollar bill into his hand. "Hey, I'll take that hundred back."

He smirked, shaking his head. "No way, bro. But good luck."

I gave a strained smile, my gut twisting as I watched him slide back into the driver's seat, the Cullinan pulling away with a low growl. I turned toward the entrance, bypassing the line entirely, my stride confident, like I was above waiting. The security guard gave

me a quick once-over, his eyes flicking to the tux, the confidence, the ghost of the Rolls-Royce. He nodded, unclipping the velvet rope and gesturing me forward.

"Welcome, sir," he said, his voice gruff but respectful.

I nodded back, stepping into the chaos of Endless Sea, the bass hitting me like a physical force, my mind already on the quests—and the safe waiting at the end of this fucked-up game.

Chapter 146: Chapter 146

A long corridor stretched ahead, its walls lined with sleek black panels that pulsed with thin strips of electric blue and hot pink, flickering in time with the faint thump of bass vibrating through the floor.

The corridor was narrow, the air thick with the scent of expensive perfume and a hint of smoke, the kind that lingers from vape pens or overpriced cigars. Mirrors ran along one side, reflecting the neon in jagged streaks, making it feel like I was walking through a tunnel of light and shadow. My polished shoes clicked on the glossy black floor, each step echoing my heartbeat, my Charm stat at 12 keeping my posture confident even as my mind raced with the quests ahead.

"Okay... okay..."

At the end of the corridor, a massive set of double doors stood open, their edges glowing with purple LED trim, inviting me into the heart of the club. I pushed through, and the full force of Endless Sea hit me like a tidal wave.

The nightclub was a fucking circus of excess—neon lights everywhere, slashing across the darkness in violent greens, reds, and purples, painting the sweating, writhing crowd in surreal hues. The ceiling was a lattice of steel beams, with three massive cages suspended above the dance floor, each holding a woman dancing like she was born for it. One wore a silver bikini, her hips grinding to the pounding EDM, her skin shimmering with glitter under the strobes. Another, in a black leather bodysuit, spun slowly, her movements hypnotic, her blonde hair glowing like a halo. The third was in red fishnets, her body arching against the bars, drawing hoots from the crowd below.

To the right, a long bar ran the length of the wall, its surface polished chrome, reflecting the neon chaos. Bottles lined the shelves behind it, glowing under blacklights, vodkas, tequilas, whiskeys, some brands I'd never even heard of, probably costing more than my old weekly paycheck.

Bartenders in tight black shirts moved like machines, pouring drinks, flipping bottles, their faces lit by the glow of tablets taking orders. Booths lined the opposite wall, plush velvet, each one packed with groups of people—some laughing, some whispering, some making out like the world was ending. Overhead, a massive chandelier made of

what looked like glowing glass orbs pulsed with the beat, casting fractured light across the room. The whole place screamed money, sex, and danger, and I was right in the middle of it.

"Okay," I muttered to myself, smoothing my tuxedo. "Come on, Evan. Charm twelve. You can do it."

I made my way to the bar, sliding onto a stool, the cold metal biting through my pants. The bartender, a guy with a buzzcut and a sleeve of tattoos, raised an eyebrow. "What'll it be?" he asked, his voice cutting through the noise.

"Whiskey, neat," I said, keeping my tone casual, like I ordered this shit every day. I slid my card across the bar, my heart sinking as he swiped it. The price flashed on the screen—\$48 for a single fucking drink. I died inside, my wallet screaming, but on the outside, I leaned back, cool as hell, like I didn't care. Ex-gas station clerk, my ass—this tux and my Charm stat were selling a different story.

The bartender slid the whiskey over, an amber glow in a heavy glass. I took a sip, the burn hitting my throat like a punch. Fuck, I hated whiskey. I'd rather a cold beer, but I couldn't break the façade now. I forced another sip, my face neutral, scanning the room for my targets.

My eyes locked with a few women already. One was in a booth across the club, maybe 25, with long black hair and a green dress that hugged her curves like it was painted on. She sat with two friends but kept glancing my way, her lips parted slightly, her eyes curious.

Another was closer, leaning against the bar a few stools down, blonde, in a white crop top and leather skirt, her legs crossed, a martini in her hand. She caught my gaze, smirked, and looked away, playing coy but interested. A third was on the dance floor, redhead, in a black sequined dress, moving like she owned the place, her eyes flicking to mine between spins, bold and teasing.

I sipped the whiskey again, grimacing internally but keeping my face smooth. Three potential targets, my Charm stat humming, the quests burning in my mind. Time to make a move.

"Okay..." I muttered under my breath, steeling myself as I started toward the booth across the club, my eyes on the woman with long black hair in the green dress. I took a sip of my whiskey, the burn hitting my throat, and raised my hand to wave at her—when a UI flashed above her head, bright and glaring.

- WARNING!

=====

- High chance of getting diseases

from this target.

"Holy shit," I whispered, freezing mid-step.

My stomach lurched, and I turned back immediately, heading for the bar stool I'd just left. The woman in the booth looked around, her brow furrowing, probably wondering why I'd bailed. She shook her head, grabbed her purse, and moved to another booth, her friends whispering as they glanced my way. Fuck, that UI saved my ass.

I cleared my throat, shaking off the close call, and focused on the other two women I'd clocked earlier. The blonde a few stools down was still there, sipping her martini, checking her phone but sneaking side-eye glances at me every few seconds. Her white crop top showed off her toned midriff, and her leather skirt hugged her hips tight. I walked toward her, waiting for another UI to pop up. Nothing. Thank fuck.

"Hello," I said, flashing a smile, my Charm stat at 12 smoothing my nerves. "Saw you were alone... thought I'd come by and say hi."

"Oh, hey," she said, her lips curling into a warm smile as she set her phone on the counter. "I wouldn't say no to some company. Sure."

"Great," I said, sliding onto the stool next to her.

"Is this your first time here at Endless Sea?" she asked, tilting her head, her blonde hair catching the neon glow. "I've never seen you around."

"Yeah, actually," I said, leaning in slightly. "I asked my assistants to recommend a place, and they said this was the spot."

"Assistants?" she asked, raising an eyebrow, intrigued.

"Yeah," I said, keeping my tone casual, like it was no big deal. "I decided to take a little vacation for a while."

"That's nice," she said, her smile widening, her eyes sparkling with interest.

"Hey," I called to the bartender, waving him over. "Another whiskey for me. What'll you have? It's on me."

"Whiskey sounds good," she said, then extended her hand. "I'm Alena."

"Jack," I lied smoothly, shaking her hand, her grip firm but soft. "Nice to meet you."

"I saw you through the window," she said, her eyes flicking over me, taking in the tuxedo. "That Rolls-Royce? That's a beauty."

"Honestly?" I said, chuckling as I paid for the whiskeys with my card. Maaan fuck me. "It's the least favorite car in my parking lot. I'm more of a Jeep guy, can't lie."

The bartender slid our whiskeys over, and we grabbed them off the counter. Alena smiled, and we clinked glasses, taking small sips. I grimaced internally at the taste—fuck, I hated whiskey—but kept my face smooth. I needed her sober enough for the restroom, not drunk. The first quest was a blowjob, and my Charm stat had to carry me there.

"So," she said, wincing slightly as the whiskey hit her. "Where do you work?"

"Nuppia," I said, leaning back, spinning a lie like it was second nature. "I'm the head of their Creative Design department. Oversee all the new clothing lines, set the trends, you know."

"Wow," she said, her eyes widening, clearly impressed. "That's big."

"And that's not the only job I do," I said, dropping my voice, teasing. "But... eh, you probably wouldn't be interested in the other one."

"Why?" she asked, turning her body fully toward me, her leather skirt shifting, her legs brushing mine. Damn, she was hot—blonde hair falling in waves, green eyes sharp and curious. "Now I'm intrigued."

"I take... well, videos," I said, leaning closer, my voice low, playful. "And publish them on my page. People pay to see 'em."

"Like... porn?" she asked, her tone half-shocked, half-intrigued, her lips parting slightly.

"Not like porn," I said, chuckling, my Charm stat kicking into overdrive. "Exactly porn. Kinda weird that I make more money doing that than my day job, right?"

"Wow," she said, eyeing me up and down, her gaze lingering. "I knew there was money in that, but... not that much. What kind of content do you shoot?"

"Public stuff only," I said, my voice smooth, testing the waters. "People love the danger. And, hey, I love danger too. What about you, Alena? You into a little thrill?"

She laughed, her cheeks flushing slightly, her body leaning closer. "Maybe," she said, her voice teasing. "Depends on the kind of thrill."

Time to make my move. The UI for Honeyed Words flickered in my mind—three attempts, six boxes to fill, four needed for success. I had to play this smart.

I watched as a UI flickered above Alena's head, empty boxes signaling the start of my persuasion attempt. My Charm stat at 12 was my lifeline, and Honeyed Words was about to do some heavy lifting. I needed four boxes filled to get her to the restroom for that blowjob quest. No need to go all-in yet—I'd start safe and build from there.

- Persuasion Attempt: Stranger

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□□□□□□

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Remaining Chances: 0/3

I took a sip of my whiskey, the burn hitting my throat, but I kept my face smooth, leaning closer to Alena, my Charm stat at 12 keeping me steady. A UI flickered above her head with my first dialogue option.

- Attempting Persuasion

=====

"I make videos that pay well online.

You've got the look, Alena.

Quick shoot, easy cash for you.

Interested?"

=====

Base Chance: 50%

Honeyed Words: +30%

=====

Final Chance: 80%

Upon Succeeding: ☒

I read the option silently, exhaled, and said out loud, "I make videos that pay well online. You've got the look, Alena. Quick shoot, easy cash for you. Interested?"

- Persuasion Attempt: Stranger

=====

☒☐☐☐☐☐

=====

Remaining Chances: 1/3

Alena tilted her head, her green eyes narrowing, intrigued but cautious. "Paying for a video? What kind are we talking about, Jack?" she asked, her voice teasing, her body shifting closer on the stool.

"Fair question," I said, chuckling, my mind racing. One down, three to go. Time to push harder with a riskier move. Another UI appeared.

- Attempting Persuasion

=====

"Like I said, I shoot steamy

public videos, like in a restroom.

Five minutes, Alena, and I'll pay

you five hundred cash right after

video starts making profit. You're perfect for it.

You in?"

=====

Base Chance: 50%

Honeyed Words: +30%

=====

Final Chance: 80%

Upon Succeeding: ☒☒

"Like I said, I shoot steamy public videos, like in a restroom. Five minutes, Alena, and I'll pay you five hundred cash right after the video starts making profit. You're perfect for it. You in?"

- Persuasion Attempt: Stranger

=====

☒☒☒☐☐☐

=====

Remaining Chances: 2/3

Alena laughed, her cheeks flushing, her fingers toying with her whiskey glass. "Five hundred for a restroom video? That's bold," she said, her voice a mix of amusement and interest. "You're serious?"

"Dead serious," I said, winking, my Charm stat keeping me cool. One more push, something less risky to close it. Another UI popped up.

- Attempting Persuasion

=====

"Just a quick video. And I might
save your contact for... later.

=====

Base Chance: 50%

Honeyed Words: +30%

=====

Final Chance: 80%

Upon Succeeding: ☒☒

"Just a quick video and I might save your contract later."

- Persuasion Attempt: Stranger

=====

☒☒☒☒☐☐

=====

Remaining Chances: 3/3-Success!

Alena's lips curled into a sly smile, her eyes glinting with excitement. "You're trouble, Jack," she said, her voice low, teasing. "But... alright. Let's do it."

I grinned, my heart pounding, and slid my hand onto her thigh, rubbing gently through her leather skirt. "Let's go to the restroom," I said, my voice husky, my Charm stat sealing the deal.

Chapter 147: Chapter 147

She giggled, a little nervous but clearly into it, and slid off her stool. I took her hand, weaving through the pulsing crowd, the neon lights flashing across her blonde hair, the bass thumping in my chest.

We reached the men's restroom door, tucked in a dim corner near the bar, its faded sign flickering under a single bulb. "Stay out here for a sec," I told Alena, keeping my voice low, casual, but firm. She raised an eyebrow but nodded, leaning against the wall, her leather skirt catching the light.

I pushed open the door, the hinges creaking, and stepped into the restroom. The air was cooler, smelling of cheap soap and stale beer, the tiles grimy under my polished shoes. A guy in a flashy jacket was washing his hands at the sink, glancing at me in the mirror. I pretended to check myself in the cracked mirror above the counter, adjusting my tuxedo collar, my heart pounding as I waited him out. He shook his hands dry, muttering something, and pushed past the door, leaving it swinging.

I cracked the door open quick and called softly, "Alena, come on. It's safe."

She slipped inside, her eyes darting around, nervous but game. I grabbed her arm gently, guiding her to the farthest stall, the metal door dented and scratched. We slipped inside, and I locked it with a loud click, the sound sharp in the small space. The stall was cramped, graffiti scrawled on the walls, the air heavy with the club's muffled bass vibrating through.

I pulled out my phone, my fingers steady despite the adrenaline, and hit record, the red dot blinking. "Sit on the toilet," I said, my voice low, authoritative. Alena giggled, her nerves showing, but she sat, the lid creaking under her. She reached for my belt, her fingers quick, unbuckling it with a soft clink. My pants dropped, and my cock sprang free, already hard from the thrill and my Libido stat at 10.

"Wow, so warm," she said, her voice husky, her green eyes wide as she gripped me, her fingers cool against my skin.

She leaned in, her lips wrapping around me, and started giving me a blowjob, her tongue swirling, slow at first, then faster. The excitement hit like a drug—the danger of the locked stall, the muffled voices of guys coming in and out, the sink running, footsteps echoing. Someone laughed outside, another guy cursed as the door swung shut.

My Pleasure stat at 10 was working; Alena moaned softly, her eyes fluttering. "Fuck, your cock is delicious," she murmured between licks, her voice thick with surprise. "Like... sweet, somehow."

I smiled, my breath hitching. "You're doing a good job, Alena," I said, my voice low, encouraging, my hand resting lightly on her head. The thrill of the public space, the risk of getting caught, sent my pulse racing, my cock throbbing in her mouth.

The door creaked again, more footsteps, a guy humming off-key. My heart pounded harder, but Alena didn't stop, her lips tight, her tongue flicking over my tip, savoring the precum my Pleasure stat made taste like candy. "God, it's so good," she whispered, pulling back for a second, her lips glossy, before diving back in.

"I'm close," I said, my voice rough, the pressure building. "Swallow it, Alena, it'll look better for the video."

She nodded, her eyes locked on mine, and kept going, her mouth working faster. The orgasm hit like a punch, and I groaned, cumming hard inside her mouth. She shut her eyes tightly, trying to swallow, her throat working, but a few drops spilled out, dribbling onto her white crop top, staining the fabric.

"Shit," I said, catching my breath, stopping the recording. "You spilled it, Alena. People don't like that in these videos. I can't use this footage."

Her eyes widened, desperate, as she wiped her mouth. "Wait, wait, let's try again," she said, her voice urgent, her hands grabbing my shirt. "I can do better, I swear."

I smiled, leaning in, grabbing my cock and rubbing it gently across her cheek, smearing a mix of cum and precum. "I know a hole that wouldn't spit my cum like that," I said, my voice low, teasing, testing her limits.

Alena smiled, but it was hesitant. "I've got a boyfriend," she said, her voice soft but firm. "I can't have sex."

"Hey, we'll use a condom, don't worry," I said, my Charm stat smoothing my tone, keeping it reassuring.

She hesitated, biting her lip, then straightened up, her eyes sharp. "Seventy percent of the profits," she said, her voice steady now. "If I'm doing more, I want more."

I raised an eyebrow, pretending to think it over. "For just this time? Sure."

I reached into my back pocket, pulling out a condom, and tore it open, rolling it on, my cock still hard, ready for the next quest. My heart was pounding, the thrill of the locked stall and the muffled chaos of Endless Sea beyond the door fueling my adrenaline. Alena stood in front of me, her white crop top stained, her leather skirt riding up, her green eyes flickering with nervous excitement.

"Turn around," I said, my voice low, authoritative, my Charm stat at 12 keeping my tone smooth. "Hands on the toilet lid. Let's do this doggy style."

Alena hesitated for a split second, then nodded, turning to face the toilet, her hands gripping the cold porcelain lid. She hiked up her skirt, revealing her bare ass. I helped her shimmy the skirt down to her thighs, her skin warm under my fingers, the neon light from a flickering bulb casting shadows across her curves.

I took a deep breath, my cock throbbing as I rubbed it against her pussy, teasing her entrance, feeling her wetness through the condom. "You ready for this, Alena?" I asked, my voice husky, already pulling out my phone to hit record, the red dot blinking in the dim stall.

"Fuck, yeah," she murmured, her voice breathy, pushing back slightly against me. "Just... make it quick, okay?"

I smirked, sliding my cock inside her, slow at first, her pussy tight and warm, gripping me through the condom. She gasped, her fingers tightening on the lid, her body arching. I started thrusting, steady but firm, the stall creaking with each movement, the danger of the public restroom making every second electric. "You feel so fucking good," I said, my voice low, dirty, as I recorded, the camera catching her blonde hair swaying, her ass bouncing against me.

A loud knock on the stall door made us both freeze for a split second. "Yo, anyone in there?" a guy's voice called, slurred and impatient.

"Occupied!" I shouted, not missing a beat, keeping my rhythm, my cock sliding deeper into Alena, her muffled moan barely audible over the club's bass leaking through the walls. The guy muttered something and left, the door swinging shut, but the risk sent a jolt through me, making me thrust harder.

The sex was intense, her pussy clenching around me, my Pleasure stat at 10 making every movement feel like fire. People came in and out of the restroom—footsteps, a sink running, someone laughing—each sound spiking my pulse, the thrill of getting caught pushing me closer to the edge.

"You like this, huh?" I said, my voice rough. "Getting fucked in a dirty stall, camera rolling?"

"God, yeah," she panted, her voice shaky, her hips meeting my thrusts. "It's... so fucking hot."

I grabbed her blonde hair, pulling gently, and leaned in to kiss her, but she turned her head, breathless. "No, Jack," she said, her voice firm despite her moans. "I've got a boyfriend. Kissing's off limits."

I pushed my cock deeper, smirking, my breath hot against her ear. "I'm fucking you in a restroom, and your limit's kissing? Wow."

She laughed, a little strained, her body trembling as I kept thrusting, harder now, the stall rattling. "Shut up and fuck me," she said, her voice half-teasing, half-desperate.

I grinned, pounding into her, my free hand gripping her hip, the phone steady in my other hand, capturing every thrust, every gasp. The restroom door creaked again, more voices, someone peeing at the urinal, oblivious to us.

Well, the sex wasn't as pleasurable for me as it was when Jasmine or any other girls were under me. Maybe because I was... desperate?

After five or six minutes, my balls tightened, the pressure building. "I'm close," I said, my voice tight, my thrusts faster, sloppier.

"Fuck, do it," she gasped, pushing back against me, her ass slapping against my hips.

I groaned, cumming hard, the condom catching it all as I thrust deep one last time, my body shuddering. Alena moaned softly, her fingers white-knuckling the toilet lid, but she didn't cum—my focus was on the quest, not her fake climax for the video. Since the condom was on, Pleasure wasn't able to work its magic.

- Sexual Activity Completed

=====

Partner: Stranger

EXP Gained: +37

Star Rating: 1.5 ★

Reason: Your partner didn't climax

Well, I wasn't trying to make her reach climax, but whatever. With both quests completed, I was one step closer to my goal.

- Evan Marlowe (Lvl 8)

=====

- Age: 21

- Height: 180 cm

- Weight: 73 kg

=====

- EXP: [REDACTED] 556/1131

I slipped out of her, peeling off the condom and tossing it into the bin in the corner, then gave her ass a playful smack. "Nice work," I said, zipping up.

Truth was, these videos weren't going online, and there was no Jack with a Rolls-Royce. I felt a twinge of guilt for tricking her, but my house was on the line, and I needed those credits bad. I'd do it again if I had to.

But... eh, well, I wasn't going to be a dick, I was going to pay her when this whole thing was done. I'd just buy 500 dollars from the Shop. But not now, though.

- SHOP

=====

- Aphrodisiac Drink (10c)
- Silk Lingerie Set (25c)
- Sensual Massage Oil (15c)
- Mystery Pleasure Toy (30c)
- Flirt Potion (20c)
- Hypnotic Perfume (40c)
- Time Stop (90c)
- 500 Dollars (50c)
- 1 Ability Point (150c)

=====

- Credits: 155c

- Select item to purchase.

"So," Alena said, glancing over her shoulder as she pulled her skirt back up, smoothing her crop top. "Did you get everything?"

"Yep," I replied with a smile, pocketing my phone. "I got everything."

♥□♥□♥□

Chapter 148: Chapter 148

Fuck, fuck, fuck. I needed one more quest to hit the 180 credits for two Time Stops, but this damn system was serving up the most fucked-up options I'd ever seen. Sneaky sex on public transit? Fucking Kim's ass while anal-fisting Jasmine? Playing master/slave with Tessa and making her pee outside like a dog? Jesus.

The Kim and Jasmine quest was doable, but if they thought I wasn't fully focused on this Guy situation and chasing after my own pleasure, they'd pull back, and I couldn't risk losing them.

Then there was this other one: call Mendy and say "I love you." What the fuck? But... 30 credits. Enough to cover the Time Stops with some left over. Maybe I could call her, say it, then play it off like I dialed the wrong number. Sorry, meant to call someone else. Could work.

"Hmm..." I muttered, rubbing my temples.

I opened the door to my apartment and plopped onto the couch, yanking off my tuxedo and tossing it on the floor. The Mendy quest had no timer, so I could accept it now and deal with it tomorrow. Guess that was the plan.

Not five minutes later, a knock came at the door. I dragged myself up, leaned into the peephole, and froze. "Cora?"

"H-hey," she said, her voice shaky through the door. "May I come in?"

I rubbed the back of my head, uneasy. "Uh... sure."

"Heh-heh. Thanks."

I opened the door fully, and Cora stepped inside, her movements shy, her dark hair spilling over her eyes. She stood awkwardly in the middle of the living room, hands clasped in front of her. I closed the door, just as awkward, then gestured to the couch.

"Sit, I guess."

She flashed a nervous, almost creepy smile, nodded, and sat, her legs dangling off the edge.

"I... know things are rough right now, Evan," she began, her voice soft, hesitant. "With Guy."

"How do you..." I started, narrowing my eyes.

"Heh-heh... I just know," she said, brushing hair from her face, her smile twitching. "Do you want my help?"

"Help... how?" I asked, sitting next to her, my elbows on my knees, wary.

"I could kill him, and when the cops catch me, I can—"

"Uuh, no. No, no, no," I said, shaking my head hard. "No. Just fucking no. Nuh-uh. No."

"Okay..." she said, her voice small, almost disappointed, her fingers twisting together. "Then what are you going to do?"

I leaned back, exhaling, staring at the ceiling. Yeah, what was I going to do? First, I needed those credits for two Time Stops. Then, break into Guy's place, crack that safe, and hope it held something incriminating. It had to—why else would he lock it away? But what if it was empty? My gut told me that wasn't likely, but the doubt gnawed at me.

"I don't know," I admitted, my voice low. "Guy's a petty bastard. He won't stop until he sees me crushed. I've gotta deal with him somehow."

"If you need anyone," Cora said, her voice softening, "you can always use me, Evan."

I nodded, forcing a smile. "Well, 'use me' sounds harsh, but... if something comes up, I'll ask for your help."

"No, no," she said, her eyes lighting up as she crawled closer on the couch, her smile turning eerie. She grabbed my hands, pressing them to her chest, right over her heart. "I mean it. Use me. Please. Heh-heh..."

I yanked my hands back, clearing my throat, my skin prickling. Cora was... strange. Her intentions didn't seem malicious, but offering to kill Guy? That was next-level unhinged. Still, she was loyal in her own creepy way, and I couldn't ignore that.

"Thank you," I said, keeping my tone even. "It means... a lot."

"Always," she said, crawling back to her spot, dangling her legs off the couch like a kid, her smile still unsettling.

I clapped my hands and got up, heading to the kitchen to open the fridge. Damn, there was actually something edible in here—some fruits, even. An apple, huh? Good thing I let Kim handle the shopping. Less beer, more healthy stuff.

"You want something?" I asked, glancing back at Cora. "I can slice some apple for us if you want."

"S-sure," she said, standing up, her oversized hoodie swallowing her frame.

Well, shit. I'd never sliced an apple before, and I was kinda hoping she'd say no and leave. I felt pretty pathetic not knowing how to slice a fucking apple, but I had to try. I grabbed an apple from the fridge and set it on the counter. Picking up a knife, I pressed it against the apple, trying to halve it. Nothing. The blade just slipped, barely denting it. I was definitely doing something wrong, and it was fucking embarrassing, my cheeks heating up as I fumbled.

"You don't have a chopping board?" Cora asked, her voice soft, tilting her head. "I-it'll dirty the counter."

"Oh... well, I kinda never sliced an apple before, so..." I mumbled, scratching my neck.

She perked up, stepping beside me. "I can do it."

"No, no, you're the guest here," I said, gripping the knife tighter. "I should be able to..."

"Please," she insisted, her eyes eager, almost too eager. "Sit."

I stopped, looked at her, and sighed. "Alright. Sorry, I just... never cut an apple before. Don't remember the last time I ate a fruit, honestly."

"It's fine," she said, already rummaging through the shelves for a chopping board.

After a few minutes, she found one on the top shelf, stretching onto her tiptoes to grab it, her hoodie riding up slightly. She set it down and started slicing the apple, her knife moving with scary precision—quick, clean cuts, like she'd done this a thousand times. It made me uneasy, no lie. Was she just good with knives, or... used to cutting things? Alive or dead, I hoped neither, but with Cora, I couldn't be entirely sure. She was... something else.

"There you go," she said, placing the sliced apples in a bowl and bringing it to the couch, her voice light but shaky. "They look y-yummy, heh-heh."

"They are," I said as she set the bowl on the armrest.

We each grabbed a slice and started eating. Cora took tiny, shy bites, nibbling like a mouse, while I was already on my third piece, chomping away. Under that oversized hoodie and messy black hair spilling over her face, she looked... kinda cute, in a weird, unsettling way.

"S-so," I said, breaking the silence. "You have a sister, huh?"

"Yes," she said, her voice soft. "She's always sleepy, heh-heh. Such a silly worm."

"Silly worm," I repeated, chuckling. "That's cute."

"Heh-heh," she said, her cheeks flushing, taking another small bite.

"You guys live with your parents?" I asked, leaning back.

"N-no. Together," she replied, looking up at me. "We moved years ago."

"They in the city?"

"Yes. But we don't see each other."

I nodded, sensing a story. "If it's not personal... can you tell me why?"

"Father used to beat us. Mother wouldn't say anything," Cora said, her voice flat, like she was reciting a fact. "When I hit eighteen, I grabbed her and we moved."

"You guys ran away?"

"No, moved," she corrected. "My auntie had a house in the city, we went there. But she... passed away not long after. She was old. Eighty-nine."

"Damn, I'm sorry to hear that," I said, my voice softening.

"Thanks," she said, finally finishing her apple slice after a million tiny bites. "What about your parents?"

"Oh, they broke up, but I still see them," I said, grabbing another slice. "We're on good terms."

"Broke up, huh..." Cora said, her eyes on the floor. "Sorry to hear it."

"Trust me, it was for the best," I said, shrugging. "They'd always fight over the smallest things."

She smiled faintly, taking another slice. I watched her, studying her expression. Her father used to beat her, huh? Fuck, that was rough. My dad was never like that—I was lucky. I had a buddy in school who got it bad at home, so bad even the class bully backed off out of pity. I hoped Cora's situation wasn't that grim, but her curt answer didn't give me much hope.

"You and your father..." I started, hesitant. "How... was he?"

Her eyes darkened, strands of hair falling over them. "Bad."

I nodded, her short reply hitting like a brick. Yeah, that sucked. I didn't have the words to comfort her, so I reached out, hesitating, and put a hand on her shoulder. Fuck, I felt like a dick. I'd been so rough with her when I caught her in my room, and now, knowing her dad was an abusive prick, I felt like a fucking monster. I had to own up.

"Hey, Cora," I said, pulling my hand back. "I'm... sorry I was so rough on you when... I—uh, caught you in my room."

"No, no, no," she said, shaking her hands frantically, her eyes wide. "You don't have to. I like it when it's you."

That last sentence sent a spark through me, a heat I shoved down fast. Not the time, not even close. I gave her an awkward smile and kept eating my slice, my mind churning.

"I should go back," Cora said, her voice shaky as ever. "Esme is waiting for me."

"Esme?" I asked.

"My sister. You, uh, met her at that park."

"Oh, right." I said, nodding. "Yeah, sure. You taking the bus?"

"Y-yes?"

"I'll walk with you to the station." I said as I got up, wearing my tuxedo. "It's night. You never know what will happen."

(_____)

EVENT

=====

Cora's Interest +50

Damn, I only offered her to walk to the station and I got fifty points from her?

"I wouldn't want to be a bother," She said, her face getting red. "I can walk by myself."

"Ah, come on," I said, gesturing for her to come as I grabbed my jacket off the rack.
"Let's go before the rain quickens."

"A-alright..." She said, getting up and walking toward me. "Thank you, Evan."



Chapter 149: Chapter 149

I sipped my coffee and exhaled, staring out the window of Burney's. The place was nearly empty, the heavy rain pounding the city, keeping most people away. A few customers sat scattered, their umbrellas dripping by the door, clearly just here to escape the downpour that started ten minutes ago. I'd been lucky, getting here half an hour before the storm hit. Now I sat, thinking, my thumb hovering over Mendy's name on my phone. How the fuck was I supposed to say "I love you" and then play it off like, Oops, wrong number? Who'd buy that crap?

I took another sip, the coffee bitter but warm, and finally hit call. One ring, no answer. Two, still nothing. On the third, my mind wandered to Richard—Kayla's worry that he'd hurt himself. Richard? That coward? No way he'd...

"Evan?" Mendy's voice cut through.

"Hmm?" I said, distracted, my brain still on Richard. "Oh, hey, I love you."

Quest Completed

Title: Say that again?

Reward: 30c

I froze, phone in hand, my words sinking in like a brick. Before I could backtrack, another UI popped up, hovering in front of me.

EVENT

=====

Mendy's Interest +2

What the hell? I gained interest points from her because of that? No way. Had to be a glitch. My plan wasn't to charm her—just get the credits and bounce. I shook my head, clearing my throat, forcing a strained smile she couldn't see.

"Oh, hey, Mendy," I said, sighing. "I didn't realize you picked up. Sorry."

"Ah... y-yes. That's what I thought," she said, chuckling nervously.

EVENT

=====

Mendy's Interest -2

Fucking hell. Whatever. I didn't care about her interest points. The quest was done, and I had the 30 credits, pushing me to 185. I leaned back, exhaling, the rain drumming against the window.

- SHOP

=====

- Aphrodisiac Drink (10c)
- Silk Lingerie Set (25c)
- Sensual Massage Oil (15c)
- Mystery Pleasure Toy (30c)
- Flirt Potion (20c)

- Hypnotic Perfume (40c)
- Time Stop (90c)
- 500 Dollars (50c)
- 1 Ability Point (150c)

=====

- Credits: 185c
- Select item to purchase.

"I, uh, called to see how you were doing," I said, sipping my coffee to cover my nerves.

"I'm doing good. Penelope's helping a lot," Mendy said, her voice soft but shaky. "God... I can't believe I took those pills, Evan. I'm so miserable."

"You're not," I said, firm but gentle.

"Like... why did I do that? For Richard? That fucking pervert?" she said, her voice cracking. "I'm so glad you alerted Penelope. Really, Evan, thank you again."

"Least I could do," I said, shrugging even though she couldn't see.

"The least you could do was save my life?" she quipped, a hint of her old sarcasm breaking through. "Sheesh."

I chuckled, taking another sip of coffee, the warmth grounding me.

"So... you talked to Kayla too?" I asked.

"Yeah," Mendy said. "She apologized, like, a thousand times. Kept saying she knew what she did was wrong, over and over."

"You forgive her?"

She exhaled, long and heavy. "Maybe? I don't know, really. I'm still... a mess, as you can probably hear."

"Hey, this whole thing's a mess," I said, my voice calm. "It's normal. Trust me."

"Oh, shoot, I gotta go," Mendy said suddenly. "Mom's home with a ton of grocery bags. I need to help."

"Right. See you. Take care of yourself."

"You too," she said, her voice fading as she pulled the phone away. "Bye!"

I hung up, staring at the phone, the rain still hammering outside. Richard. Fuck, I still had to check on that bastard today for Kayla. He wasn't the type to hurt himself, but I'd promised.

"Fucking... ugh," I muttered as I got up, finishing my drink. "Now I gotta check up on you, huh..."

The rain was pattering down heavily, the sunny days we had were, of course, once again over. I swear, one week it was raining nonstop, the next few days we'd be stuck in the most scorching heat and sun. Like her people, the city's weather was unstable as fuck.

I walked toward the double doors and stepped out, the rain soaking me instantly. I pulled my hood up and started moving, keeping close to the buildings' awnings for cover. People hurried past, some sprinting for their apartments, others ducking into shops for shelter. Man, I could've stayed at Burney's, sipping my coffee lazily, waiting for the rain to slow down...

"Damn you, man. What kind of idiot are you?" I muttered, turning left, my shoes splashing in shallow puddles. "Threatening to kill yourself? Fucking low."

My phone buzzed in my pocket, and I fished it out, glancing at the screen. Nala. I cocked an eyebrow, keeping my pace, and answered it.

"Hey?" I said, dodging a guy who didn't look up from his phone.

"Evan," she began, her voice tight, hurried. "I thought I knew the safe's password, but I don't. He's changed it."

"Changed it how?" I asked, my mind racing, the rain dripping off my hood.

"The safe—it's upgraded," she said. "Now it's smart, works via Wi-Fi or something. One app tap, and he can open or lock it remotely."

"What if there's no electricity?" I pressed, weaving around a couple huddled under a single umbrella.

"I researched the model he's using," she explained, her voice steady despite the strain. "The default code is 131413... if he hasn't changed that part."

"We have to be sure before we act," I said, my jaw tightening. "Can't risk setting off an alarm. Can't you just slip into his room and test it?"

"We have two maids in the house," she said, her tone bitter. "And his room is always locked. No one gets in. The maids wouldn't let me near it, either."

"Shit," I muttered, turning another corner, Richard's apartment building coming into view. "Okay... thanks for the info, Nala."

"No problem," she said. "I'll call if anything comes up."

"Do that."

"Bye."

"Bye."

That meant I had to use Time Stop when he was home. Take his phone, use his fingerprint, open the safe and take whatever was inside. This route was a little bit riskier, but I had no choice.

I turned another corner and kept walking. There it was—Richard's apartment, a squat brick building with flickering lights in the windows. I exhaled, staring up at it, the rain soaking my shoulders. His bedroom light was off, but shadows moved behind the curtains, someone pacing or shifting.

"Shit..." I muttered. "Let's go, Evan."

I crossed the street as the light turned green for pedestrians and stood in front of the building's entrance. I punched in the door code—0000, same as always—and pushed it open. An old woman was leaving, so I held the door for her, getting a mumbled "thanks" before she shuffled into the rain.

Didn't feel like climbing stairs, so I hopped into the elevator and hit the second floor. A few seconds later, the doors dinged open, and I stepped out into the dim hallway. There was his door, labeled "R.R.R." in peeling stickers. I walked up, took a deep breath, and knocked hard with my knuckles.

"Richard," I called out, my voice echoing slightly. "Open it."

I realized the door was already cracked open. I froze for a second, then eased it wider and stepped inside. The only sound was an open window banging against the wall with every gust of rain-laced wind. The living room was dim, shadows jittering across the walls from the streetlights outside. No TV, no music, nothing.

A low, rhythmic thumping came from the bedroom. I knew the layout from the few times I'd been here—straight down the short hallway, second door on the right. My boots creaked on the warped floorboards as I moved closer.

The bedroom door hung wide open.

There he was. Richard. The guy who'd sworn to Kayla he was going to end it all. Buried balls-deep in some prostitute's ass. She was on all fours, back arched, fake tits swinging, bleached-blond hair plastered to her sweaty neck. Richard's hands dug into her hips like he was trying to split her in half.

My eyes snagged on something green on the floor beside the bed—panties. Not the prostitute's; hers were still on, just shoved to the side. These were lacy, emerald, definitely not cheap.

"Fucking hell," I muttered. "What are you doing, Richard..."

He didn't even glance over—just kept pounding away, grunting with every thrust. The woman lifted her head, mascara already smudged, and gave me a lazy, lipstick-smeared grin.

"Didn't know we'd have an audience, dear," she purred.

"Shut up, slut," Richard snapped, slamming in harder.

I leaned against the doorframe, arms crossed. "Heard you threatened Kayla you were gonna off yourself. Real classy move."

"I was," he said between thrusts, smirking at the woman's ass. "Then I changed my mind. Why waste the night on those two bitches when I can spend it here?"

"Stop bothering them, then."

"How'd you get in?" he asked, finally flicking a glance my way.

"Your door was wide open, genius."

"Close it on your way out," he said, not missing a beat. "I'm busy."

Sick bastard.



Chapter 150: Chapter 150

This guy was living in a fucking mansion. And as if that wasn't enough, it was in the heart of the city—a giant hotel piercing the sky like a glass needle. From what I'd heard, he occupied the top floors: eight bedrooms, three living rooms, the works. Damn. Compared to my place, I felt like I'd been crammed in a cage my whole life.

I took a drag from my smoke and stared at the entrance. Two bodyguards stood like statues, hands linked in front, eyes scanning everything. Formal uniforms, earpieces—professional. No way I was waltzing in there without a plan.

Fuck, would twenty minutes be enough? Elevator to the top floor alone would eat ten. Maybe I needed to grind a few more credits for a third Time Stop as backup?

I whistled low. "Wow. This guy's living the dream."

My phone buzzed. I fished it out, still eyeing the building. Mendy's name flashed on the screen. Shit—I really told her I loved her, huh? Just thinking about it made me cringe.

"Hello?" I answered, pressing the phone to my ear.

"FUCK! STOP, MENDY!" Penelope's voice exploded through the speaker, followed by a sharp exhale. "Evan. You have to come here. Now."

"Wait, why?" I asked, straightening. "What's wrong?"

"Mendy's house was broken into. Stuff stolen," Penelope said, her voice tight. "She's convinced it was Richard."

"I talked to Richard yesterday," I said, flicking ash into the rain. "Caught him balls-deep in a hooker. Said he was done with Mendy. Didn't give a shit anymore."

"Then come tell her that yourself," Penelope snapped. "She's going cra—STOP, MENDY! WHAT DID I TELL YOU? STOP YANKING YOUR HAIR!"

Mendy's screams cut through the background—raw, panicked, terrified. My stomach dropped. Poor girl. Richard wasn't enough; now some thief had gutted her place.

"She's having a panic attack," Penelope said, breathless. "I gotta go. Please, Evan. ASAP."

"Alright, alright," I said. "Be there in five."

Panic attack? Mendy never had those before—or Richard would've told me about it. This had to be new. After the pills. After me. The guilt hit like a punch to the gut. I'd ruined her. I was a fucking idiot.

I exhaled hard, pocketed the phone, and stepped to the curb, arm raised for a taxi. Traffic crawled. One rolled up—lights off, occupied. I jogged over anyway, knocked on the window. The driver, an old guy with a thick beard, rolled it down. Light was red, and I was in the middle of traffic.

"Hey," I said. "Emergency. Friend's in trouble. Can you take me?"

"Got someone in back," he said. "Sorry, kid."

"Please."

He glanced in the rearview. "Lady, mind if he hops in?"

I looked past him. A woman sat in the back—buzzcut, dark skin, sleeveless shirt showing off serious muscle. A crooked scar ran from her right eye down to her nose. Minor scars laced her arms. Thirty? Thirty-five? Hard to tell. Tits perfect—smaller than Jasmine's, but damn. She stared at me, cold.

"Hey," I said. "Please, ma'am. It's important. My friend's house got robbed. She's having a panic attack. I have to get there."

She crossed her arms, eyes locked on mine. A beat. Then she nodded.

I smiled, slid into the front passenger seat, and sighed. "Thank you."

"So," the driver said, "where to?"

"We're close," I said. "Left here, straight ahead."

"I need to go right for the lady," he said. "Sorry."

"It's fine," the woman said from the back. "He's paying for his ride. And my extra."

"Yes, yes," I said.

Light turned green. We rolled forward, just catching it. I was tight on cash, but for Mendy? I'd pay double. The guilt was eating me alive.

"I'm Evan, by the way," I said, glancing in the mirror. "Thanks again."

"Sophia," she said, and that was it.

Another red light. I bounced my leg, staring out the window. Needed to smoke.

"Mind if I smoke?" I asked the driver.

He gave me a look, then rolled my window down from his side without a word. I took that as yes, lit up, and blew smoke into the rain.

"This friend of yours," the driver said, "girlfriend? Why the panic attack?"

"Too complicated," I said, exhaling. "And boring. But no—she's not my girlfriend."

The taxi lurched forward, tires hissing on wet asphalt. Rain blurred the windshield into streaks of neon and gray. I glanced in the rear-view: Sophia sat rigid, arms crossed, jaw tight. She wasn't happy—didn't like sharing space, didn't like me. Her scar caught the passing streetlights like a lightning bolt frozen mid-flash.

Another red light. I flicked the cigarette out the window; it spun, sparked, died in a puddle.

A few seconds later, my phone buzzed again—Mendy's name.

"Hello," I answered.

"Evan," Penelope said, voice steadier now. "Mendy's... okay. Her mom and I calmed her down."

"Okay..." I said. "You call the cops?"

"That's the problem." A pause. "No break-in signs. She just insisted Richard was here, took her stuff."

"Jesus..." I muttered. "What do you think?"

Penelope exhaled. "I think she's paranoid. You really talked to Richard?"

"Like I told you," I said, gesturing left to the driver. "Caught him with a hooker. Zero fucks about Mendy."

"How did she even find this idiot..." Penelope sighed. "God..."

"Cameras nearby?" I asked. "Neighbors might have footage."

"You're right. Can you come help check?"

"On my way. Five minutes."

"You said that five minutes ago."

"Traffic's murder." The light stayed red. "Ask her what triggered it. Something had to set her off."

"I think it was just the panic attack," Penelope said. "She's been... off."

"I talked to her yesterday. She sounded done with Richard. What if someone did break in?"

The light flipped green. The taxi rolled.

"I don't know," Penelope said. "Come. No cops yet—need proof."

"Text me the your number. I'll call when I'm there."

"Will do. Hurry."

I hung up, shook my head, stared out the window. Everything was collapsing at once: Kim's eviction, Richard's bullshit, Guy's safe, the mansion, the grind for Time Stops. I was bone-tired.

"Things that serious, huh?" the driver asked.

"Yeah," I muttered. "Turn right here, straight shot."

Ten minutes crawled by. We left the city's neon arteries for quieter suburban veins—wet lawns, porch lights glowing behind curtains, driveways with minivans and kids' bikes. The rain eased to a drizzle, drumming softer on the roof. Sophia never spoke. The driver hummed an old tune under his breath.

I pointed. "Stop there—that blue house."

Brakes squeaked. I dug out my last crumpled bills—fare plus extra for Sophia's detour. Handed it over.

"Thanks," I said.

The taxi pulled away, taillights fading into the mist.

I walked the short path, boots splashing puddles, and knocked. The door cracked open—Penelope, eyes red-rimmed, hair messy.

"Hey," she said, tilting her head inside. "Come on in."

"How is she?" I asked, stepping over the threshold.

"In her bedroom," Penelope said, closing the door. "We barely calmed her down."

"Damn..."

I walked down the short hallway, my shoes sinking into the plush carpet with each step, the muffled sound barely registering over the faint hum of the air conditioner.

I'd caused this mess, even if indirectly. Richard, the pills, the break-in paranoia—it all looped back to me somehow.

I reached Mendy's bedroom door, the wood cool under my knuckles, and pushed it open slowly, the hinges giving a soft creak. Okay... here I was now.

Penelope's voice drifted from behind me, low and tired. "Good luck."

I stepped inside and closed the door with a gentle click, sealing us in the dim room. Posters of old bands peeled at the edges on the walls, a vanity mirror cracked in one corner, clothes strewn like casualties on the floor. Mendy was curled on her bed, knees to chest, but the second she saw me, she shot up like a jack-in-the-box, her eyes wild and red-rimmed, hair a tangled mess framing her pale face. She crossed the room in three frantic strides, grabbing my arms with surprising strength, her nails digging in just enough to sting.

"Evan, someone was here—I swear it," she blurted, her voice cracking, words tumbling out in a rush. "My jewelry box was flipped open, drawers pulled out. It has to be him!"

I kept my expression neutral, my Charm stat at 12 helping me stay calm even as her panic clawed at the air. "Okay, Mendy, I believe you," I said, my voice steady, reassuring. "But do you have any proof? Something concrete we can show the cops?"

She froze, her grip loosening, cheeks flushing a deep crimson that spread to her ears. Her eyes darted to the floor, then back to me, then away again. "I... I have something, but—ugh. It's... I can't say it. It's embarrassing. Just... trust me, okay?"

I took her trembling hands in mine, stepping closer until I could feel the heat radiating off her skin, smell the faint trace of her shampoo mixed with sweat from the attack. Her fingers were ice-cold.

"Look..." I said softly, locking eyes with her. "Maybe you're right. Maybe you aren't. Either way, you shouldn't act like this. I heard what happened on the phone, Mendy. The screaming, the hair-pulling—it scared the shit out of everyone."

"I... I know," she whispered, exhaling a shaky breath that trembled on the edge of another sob. "I was just... so scared. I feel like I'm being watched all the time, Evan. By Richard. He's living rent-free in my mind, whispering crap even when he's not here."

"I talked to him yesterday," I said, squeezing her hands gently. "Face-to-face. He said he was done with you—called you and Kayla... well, excuse my language, but he called you and Kayla 'sluts' he didn't care about anymore."

"Did you really?" she asked, her voice small, searching my face for any lie.

"Yes. He even had a fucking hooker over. Blonde, fake tits, the works. Didn't glance up once while I stood there. Guy's moved on—in his own twisted way."

"Okay..." she muttered, biting her lip hard enough to leave marks. "Maybe... ah—fuck. Fuck. Okay. You're right."

"I'm not saying you're wrong or crazy, Mendy," I said, my tone firm but kind. "Maybe there was someone in the house. I don't think you're imagining it all. Just... how about installing a camera on the front door? Catch the bastard if he comes back."

"Yeah, I already told my mother we should do that," she said, her shoulders slumping a little, the fight draining out. "She's off talking to someone about it right now—some security guy from work."

"That's great," I said, releasing her hands slowly, giving her space. "Call me up if anything happens, okay? Day or night. I mean it."

EVENT

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Mendy's Interest +2

"Mm." She nodded, but her eyes welled up again, and she swallowed hard to hold back the tears. "Thank you, Evan. For... everything."

"No problem," I said, rubbing her shoulder one last time, feeling the tension in her muscles. "Take care of yourself, alright? Eat something, sleep if you can."

She nodded again, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. "Mm... okay."