

You'll Fall for Me, Today or Tomorrow

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Matthew's dark eyes gleamed when they landed on Clarissa's body, as desire emerged within the depths of his gaze.

She was torn between explaining herself and wrapping some clothes around her body first.

However, Matthew snatched the choice out of her hands.

He strode toward her and leaned down, smashing his lips onto hers and running his hands all over her body before she could speak.

Clarissa's protests were muffled as she tried to resist him, but it only prompted him to tighten his hold on her and become more unrestrained in his actions.

After a long time, her eyes shimmered with unshed tears. Her lips were swollen. All in all, she looked extremely pitiful.

She stared at Matthew with an accusatory glint in her eyes. Unbeknownst to her, the way she looked right now intensified his desire to conquer her.

Leaning down again, his hot breath tickled her lips before he bit down.

He finally relented when the woman whimpered in pain.

Clarissa forcefully shoved him away. Her body was half-exposed, which proved dangerous when within the vicinity of this man. Without a second's delay, she ran into the room and changed into long-sleeved pajamas.

Naturally, she managed to untangle herself from him only because he allowed it.

When she emerged again, Matthew was sitting lazily on the sofa with his shirt collar wide open and his long legs elegantly crossed. Sensing her presence, he lifted his gaze to her, beckoning her in a rich and seductive voice, "Come here, Clare."

Clarissa obediently padded over, but sat across from him to create a safe distance between them.

Matthew's lips tugged upward, and he chuckled softly as his scorching gaze landed on her.

Feeling restless, Clarissa kept fidgeting in her seat. In the end, she snatched up the tablet and held it in front of her, ignoring him altogether.

Besides the sound of the variety show playing on the tablet, silence was their only companion.

Finally, Clarissa could no longer take the weight of his gaze.

She placed the tablet back down and glared daggers at him.

"What exactly are you looking at?"

Matthew smiled cryptically and narrowed his eyes a fraction. With a hand supporting his chin, he answered in a deep voice, "You."

Yeah, no sh*t.

Of course she knew he was looking at her.

"What I meant was, why are you looking at me like that? What's so nice to look at?"

He raised his brows as his eyes darkened with amusement.

"Aren't you nice to look at?"

She was inarticulate for a moment before blurting out, "Lame!"

Blushing furiously, Clarissa shot up from her seat, trying her best to conceal her red cheeks as she swiveled around to go back to the bedroom. Before long, Matthew followed in after her.

She wasn't naïve to think that he would leave tonight. In fact, she had come to terms with it.

Truth be told, his embrace gave her a sense of security if he didn't start getting handsy with her.

Given that they were spending the whole night in the same bed, Matthew felt he had to do right by the gorgeous lady in his arms.

In the end, Clarissa couldn't help but retort, "Just how did you survive the last thirty years or so of your life? People even said that you're a master of self-control? More like master of hiding your true colors."

She poked his chest and glared fiercely at him. However, she looked charming and adorable rather than intimidating.

Matthew couldn't help but admire his self-restraint. With such an appealing woman in his arms, it was a wonder he could still refrain from forcing himself on her.

He ran his hands down her back and said in a husky voice, "I wasn't hiding my true colors. It's just that a pretty little vixen like you has never appeared in my life."

"Pfft... So I'm a vixen now?"

Clarissa couldn't stifle her laughter. "I'm a good girl, mind you. You're the shameless one, Uncle Matthew. Back then, I didn't even think about you that way."

"Oh, really? Not at all? Then why did you keep showing up in front of me? And dressed so seductively at that too."

"Se... Seductive? Me? No, wait. That's not the point. The point is, since when did I show up in front of you? That was all just a coincidence! A coincidence!"

Clarissa emphasized the last word, unable to take this sort of accusation lying down.

"Matthew, you can't still be thinking that I approached you on purpose, right?"

Clarissa was upset when she thought about this. She sat up in bed, wanting to make things clear once and for all.

Matthew broke into a cryptic smile as he folded his arms behind his head.

“It wasn’t you. I was the one who approached you on purpose.”

He didn’t sound like he meant it at all.

Clarissa wrinkled her nose and curled her lips in anger. After a loud harrumph, she turned around and lay down on the bed again, so that her back was to him.

When he hugged her from behind, she shook his arms away unhappily.

Matthew chuckled and gently kissed the top of her head before drifting off into a deep slumber.

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Since Clarissa didn’t need to go in for work now, she was free to do whatever she wanted, which included sleeping in.

Unfortunately, she was woken up by Matthew’s continuously teasing early in the morning. She couldn’t go back to sleep after that, no matter how much she wanted to.

By the time she saw him out of the house, she was fully awake. Hence, she powered on her laptop to study the previous copy of her book Princess.

Now that she had completely terminated her contract with Twilight Company, she had to do everything herself.

However, if she were to collaborate with Justin Yates Studio, her priority would be doing a good job in producing the adapted screenplay.

As for the promotional strategies and copyright issues, she had to take her time to find a manager for herself.

In the afternoon, she went to the studio to meet Justin. Neither of them liked beating around the bush, or they wouldn’t have expressed their admiration for each other.

They talked about the script, went over some areas that needed to be revised and others where they had a difference in opinion, with Justin giving Clarissa a definitive answer at the end.

"I'm on board with using this script for my film. Of course, it still needs to be adapted. Since this is your work, I'll let you run point. Also, what do you think of working together with an editor from my studio? Rest assured, you'll still be the one calling the shots, but there might be some shooting issues to be addressed, so you'll need to communicate with someone from my side."

There was no reason for Clarissa to reject. She was over the moon because if she could be a screenwriter for Justin, her life would be complete.

"Mr. Yates, I'm more than happy to accept your offer. Thank you for giving me this opportunity."

Justin smiled in return. "We're both giving each other an opportunity here. I hope we can resolve the issues with the script as soon as possible. There is still much work to be done and of course, money isn't a problem."

His smile made Clarissa a little embarrassed.

She even tried to explain. "Mr. Yates, my relationship with Uncle Matthew affects nothing else."

"I understand, Clarissa. I didn't mean it like that, but I'm glad that I get to work together with Matthew's girlfriend."

"Well, we haven't made our relationship public yet, Mr. Yates. Anyway, please feel free to call me 'Clary'."

Justin was intrigued. It seems like this young lady has her own way of thinking.

"Sure, Clary. I'm not sure how many awards we can bag with this film adaptation, but at least I can assure you that your hard work won't be destroyed, so thank you for your trusting me. I'll have someone draft the contract later. Once we've signed it, we'll officially be partners."

"Alright. Thank you for giving me this opportunity too, Mr. Yates."

After conveying their gratitude to each other, Clarissa left Justin Yates Studio with excitement bubbling in her.

She habitually shared this piece of good news with Ellie, who offered to throw a celebration.

However, after hanging up the call, Clarissa suddenly thought of Matthew.

There was one more person in her life now, and she had vowed to slowly ease him into her world.

With that thought in mind, Clarissa dialed Matthew's number.

"Uncle Matthew, I have some good news for you."

Matthew cocked a brow. "What is it?"

"Director Yates and I are going to sign a contract soon. Awesome, right? Hehe... Even I think I'm awesome. After he produces the film adaptation of my work, I'll become even more famous. And if he receives an award for it, I might very well go international. Haha! Before long, I'll be promoted to a manager and get a pay raise, then I'll be appointed as CEO. I'll marry my Mr. Perfect and reach the prime of my life... I'm getting excited just thinking about it!"

Matthew chuckled lowly, his rich and deep voice making Clarissa's body tingle slightly.

She pouted even though he couldn't see her. "Why are you laughing?"

"Who are you planning to marry?"

Clarissa was rendered speechless.

She stuck her tongue out and retorted, "That was just a joke. I didn't mean anything by it."

"Mm, then I'll have to tell Justin to hurry up."

"Why?"

"Because once he wraps up filming, you can reach the prime of your life sooner and... marry me sooner?"

Clarissa's face heated up and she hastily brushed it off. "Hey, I told you that was just a joke."

He chuckled devilishly on the other end of the line and purred, "I look forward to the day you realize your dreams."

Clarissa stuck out her tongue again. Who said I wanna marry you? I'm not even sure how long we'll last. She never expected that they could last until the end, but she wanted to cherish the present and treat each other with sincerity. At least for now.

Clarissa had made dinner plans with Matthew that night. She arrived at the restaurant first, only to run into Ellie's parents at the entrance.

She was thrown into a frenzy, but after reassuring herself that they probably knew nothing, she went up to greet them with, feeling jittery.

"Mr. and Mrs. Tyson."

"Oh, Clary? What a coincidence. Are you here for dinner? Is it with Ellie or some other friends?"

"Uhm... It's with another friend of mine."

When Yuliana saw the uneasy look on Clarissa's face and the light blush on her cheeks, she knew the latter was embarrassed to elaborate on this friend of hers.

Hence, Yuliana did not make things difficult for her. After chatting with Clarissa for a while, the husband and wife entered the restaurant.

Clarissa breathed a sigh of relief, grateful that they did not prod further.

Yuliana and Matthias were immediately led to a private lounge upon entering the restaurant. "I think Clary is seeing someone, don't you think so? Look at her. She's such a well-behaved and beautiful lady. Now, she has a boyfriend too. And then, there's our daughter. They are good friends, but look how Ellie is still fooling around outside. When is she going to settle down with a man?"

Matthias laughed softly. "Ellie knows what she's doing. Why are you so anxious?"

Yuliana sighed in response. "Fine, fine. We won't talk about Ellie today. Mr. and Mrs. Smallwood probably invited us here for dinner because of Matthew again. What are they

expecting from us? It's not like we can change the fact that he doesn't like Shermaine. I bet they're going to threaten or bribe us. Shouldn't they know better than to do that?"

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Yuliana's tone was unpleasant.

Thus, Matthias reminded in a solemn voice, "Not here. We can only say these things behind closed doors."

"Alright."

In truth, both of them had no say in Matthew's marriage.

The Smallwoods suggested marriage between their daughter and Matthew only because of the friendship between both their families.

Unfortunately, Matthew showed no interest in Shermaine. If it was before, Yuliana would have helped them, but since Matthew had already announced his stand in front of so many people, she dropped the idea entirely, lest she incur his wrath.

After all, she was only his sister-in-law, and it wouldn't bode well if she dictated his marriage.

However, the Smallwoods were persistent. Indeed, one reason was because Shermaine harbored strong feelings for Matthew, but another was because the Smallwoods themselves wanted to solidify their relationship with the Tysons.

If it were anyone else, an arranged marriage with Shermaine as the bride wouldn't be much of an issue.

However, the person in question was Matthew, and no one had the right to speak for him other than himself.

The Smallwood couple arrived very soon. James Smallwood and Kayla Smith were close friends with Matthias and Yuliana for many years. Hence, it was common for them to meet up occasionally.

Unfortunately, after the incident regarding Shermaine, their friendship had become slightly strained.

To make matters worse, Kayla had a soft spot for her beloved daughter. Every time she talked about Shermaine, she would air her grievances on the latter's behalf.

"Do you know how much my daughter likes Matthew? She cried the whole night after he broke her heart, and then she went for filming with swollen eyes the next day. Even though she didn't say what Matthew did, I know how deeply she feels about him. He's the only one who could've made her like this. Yuliana, isn't Shermaine good enough for Matthew? Why is he treating her this way? Didn't they get along just fine last time? Shermaine even thought that they'd get married soon, but things turned out this way. Has Matthew had a change of heart?"

Yuliana had been at the mercy of Kayla's waterworks more times than she could count. Right now, she truly had enough of it.

"Kayla, we can only give a few pieces of advice to Matthew when it comes to his private life. In the end, he still has the final say. Let them settle it between themselves. Besides, Matthew also said before that he only sees Shermaine as a friend; he doesn't have any other feelings for her."

Yuliana knew it would be bad if Matthew was wrongfully accused of playing with their daughter's feelings.

Kayla looked at them with disappointment and was about to say something when James cut her off.

"Yuliana is right. We shouldn't interfere with their love lives. Besides, we've been friends for so many years now, so we shouldn't let something like that come in between us!"

Matthias nodded in agreement. "Exactly. Even if we don't become in-laws, it won't affect our long-term friendship. Isn't that right?"

James froze. What Matthias said had completely foiled their plans for inviting them here today.

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Matthew had reserved a private lounge in advance, so since Clarissa had arrived first, she went in alone.

After scrolling through her phone for a while, he finally showed up.

The moment he came in, she lowered her voice into a whisper and asked, "Did you see your brother and sister-in-law outside?"

Matthew raised his brows in response.

Only then did Clarissa explain, "I met them at the entrance just now. It was such a close call, and it scared me to death."

She took a sip of her drink to calm her nerves.

Matthew sat down and gave her a lazy smile. "Didn't you meet them already?"

Clarissa gave him a sidelong glare. "You know what I mean!"

"Haha... I don't."

She rolled her eyes and refused to entertain him, lowering her head to sip on her drink instead.

After Matthew placed their orders, he turned back to her. "I can take you to meet them if you want to."

Clarissa was truly terrified now, shaking her head rapidly as she immediately refused his offer.

"No, no! I don't!"

After expressing her refusal so vehemently, she noticed that his face had frosted over.

Clarissa's heart skipped a beat. She quickly clarified, "I-I mean, we just started dating, so it's too soon to meet the family." She paused for a beat before blurting out, "I'm scared, okay?"

Silence ensued as Matthew said nothing to that. When the food was served, he finally spoke, "Eat up."

Clarissa sent a flattering smile at him. "Uncle Matthew, you agree with what I said, right? Going public too early might end up stifling our relationship. You're too important to me. I can't bear to part with you." She giggled.

A smile played on Matthew's lips. "Really?"

"Yes. Yes, of course!"

Clarissa nodded enthusiastically in response, eager to prove herself.

Matthew's eyes flickered, and a mystifying smile stretched across his mouth.

Words failed Clarissa when he pierced her with such an intense stare, so she bowed her head to eat instead.

Later on, her excitement went into full swing again at the mention of her collaboration with Justin. She prattled on about it, and this was perhaps the most she had spoken. As she described her screenwriting ideas to Matthew, it never once crossed her mind that it might bore him listening to her.

Fortunately, Matthew did not appear bored. He clung to every word she said, appreciating the way she seemed to glow and steal his breath away time and again.

After both of them finished their meals, he held her hand and led her out. While they talked, Matthew's face lit up with a soft smile.

When James came out with the others, he happened to glimpse Matthew's silhouette. Surprise filled him and was about to hurry after the two of them, but they had already entered the elevator.

Sensing his hesitation, Kayla walked over and asked, "What's wrong?"

James shook his head, deciding to keep this matter a secret for now, since he wasn't completely certain about what he saw.

Matthias and his wife didn't mention about Matthew having a girlfriend just now. Perhaps they really don't know, or maybe they're hiding it. No matter the reason, they'd never tell us about it.

Hence, James kept this matter from the two of them.

After both couples parted ways, Matthias revealed to his wife. "I saw Matthew just now."

Yuliana was astonished. "Really?"

"Yeah. He was holding hands with a girl."

"What?"

This was the biggest shock of all.

"Could you be mistaken?"

"No, I'm certain it was him. James probably saw him, too. This matter wasn't a big deal in the beginning. And now that Matthew has found himself a girlfriend, none of us have the right to intervene, but the Smallwoods might get upset once they find out. As for his girlfriend, her identity undoubtedly plays a key role in how things pan out."

Yuliana was no fool, easily catching the meaning behind her husband's words.

However, she shook her head after a split second. "It's not that complicated. Based on Matthew's assertive personality, once he's sure about something, no one can change his mind. What can the Smallwoods do? Are they going to force Matthew into marrying their daughter? I'm sure they know very well what kind of person Matthew is."

Matthias laughed. "Of course, Matthew will never allow anyone to manipulate him. It's just my father who might pose a problem."

Yuliana fell silent at that.

Indeed, this was a problem.

Matthew and Clarissa had just returned to Zen Highlands when Matthias called.

Seeing as Clarissa was still grumpy after being forcibly brought to Zen Highlands, Matthew pinched her cheek affectionately before answering the call.

“Hey, Matthias.”

Clarissa immediately perked up as her eyes widened in alarm. Flustered, she leaned closer to Matthew, wanting to listen in on their conversation and find out whether they had been discovered at the restaurant earlier.

Matthew smiled lopsidedly and played with her hair while he spoke to his brother on the phone.

“Mm... Oh, you saw me?”

Clarissa was shocked to hear this. She leaned even closer to him. Faced with her dramatic facial expressions, Matthew was greatly amused.

“What’s so funny?” Clarissa protested in a barely audible voice, but Matthias still caught it on the other end of the line.

“So, it’s true.”

“Yes.” Matthew did not deny it.

“And you’re serious?”

“Mm.”

“When will you bring her home?”

Matthew glanced at the hyperventilating lady beside him before replying, “Maybe after a while longer.”

“Alright. Just do as you see fit. You know very well how our parents are.”

After they ended the call, Clarissa launched herself at Matthew and stared at him with bulging eyes that were filled with trepidation.

“Did your brother find out about us? He saw us, didn’t he?”

Matthew naturally curled his hand around her waist and answered, “Yes, he did.”

“Ahhhh... He really saw us?” Clarissa shrieked like a banshee.

As if the sky was falling. Panic overtook her body, and she flailed her arms in Matthew’s embrace, her mind in complete shambles.

He found her reaction adorable.

Unable to handle her cuteness any longer, he grasped her chin and sealed her lips.

Clarissa struggled for a while, to no avail. Only after she went limp from his passionate kiss was Matthew willing to release her. Finally freed, she shot him a petulant glare.

“That’s enough, Matthew! You’re still kissing me at a time like this? He knows! Oh God, your brother knows! I’m doomed. Doomed! What must they think of me?”

Matthew had in fact omitted the truth—his brother did not see that it was Clarissa beside him.

He just enjoyed watching her get all flustered.

“Mm. Indeed, what must they think of you?”

“They probably think I used Ellie to get close to you, a-a-and that I seduced you! Maybe they even think I’m trying to marry into your family because I’m after your money... Who am I kidding? Of course that’s what they think!” she huffed with a sulky expression on her face.

Then she shoved Matthew away, her chest heaving slightly as her imagination ran wild.

As though she was convinced that the Tysons really thought of her this way, she was once again overwhelmed by the unpleasant feeling of being misunderstood and cursed at.

It reminded her of the time when she was severely criticized online. It was something she did not want to go through a second time.

Disappointment and despair washed over her, making her feel depressed.

Matthew sensed the turmoil in her. He immediately scooped her into his arms and patted her back gently.

In a deep and comforting voice, he cooed, "Are you that afraid? Well, don't be. You have me, right? Besides, didn't you say that I was the shameless one who forced you into this? So why can't you just push it all onto me?"

It looks like she's actually just a timid little girl.

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Clarissa shot Matthew a vicious glare.

He's right. This is all his fault!

"Yeah, you're the shameless one!"

She clenched her jaw, feeling the strong urge to sink her teeth into Matthew.

In the end, she only lightly ground her teeth into his neck because she couldn't bear to hurt him. Of course, the other reason was because she didn't have the guts to do it!

A chuckle escaped Matthew's lips, and he gently caressed the top of her head. "So, everything is on me, not you."

Clarissa sulked prettily and said, "That's what you say. If others know about us, they'll definitely point fingers at me, accusing me of coveting your money and whatnot, not the other way around. Such is the world—forever ruled by sexism."

"Why should you care what others think?"

“News flash, I’m a normal human being, of course I care!”

Clarissa couldn’t be persuaded otherwise.

Her mentality seemed to be strong, but in reality, it was quite the opposite.

Even the strongest people could be broken.

“Relax. Matthias saw the two of us together, but he doesn’t know it was you.”

“He doesn’t?”

After Clarissa’s surprise subsided, she immediately let out a sigh of relief.

She instantly broke into a brilliant smile, looking like she had just emerged victorious from a great battle.

She pushed Matthew away, completely disregarding his efforts in comforting her just a moment ago.

“Great! All is well then. You should go do your stuff; I’ll go work on my script. Lalala...”

She returned to being in a jolly mood, walking with a skip in every step as she hummed to a song.

Soon, she came back with her laptop and started writing seriously.

Matthew did not interrupt her at first. However, after staring at her for a while, he couldn’t help from grumbling, “I didn’t bring you here so that you could work.”

“Don’t interrupt me; I’m used to working at night! This is a huge deal, okay? Besides, Mr. Yates said that your company will be investing in the film. If I don’t do a good job and finish this quick, we’re all screwed, big time. That is why we, my dear Mr. Tyson, have to look at the bigger picture!”

Matthew chuckled softly but nodded in agreement.

“That’s a fair point.”

With that, he stood up and sat beside Clarissa, making sure both of their bodies were touching. Before she could protest, he shot her down with an undebatable reason.

“As an investor, I’ll have to go through your script.”

Clarissa had no room for argument when he put it like that.

Hence, there was nothing she could do when Matthew watched while she altered the original text.

It was still bearable in the beginning. Matthew’s hands were on her shoulders and because of his proximity, his warm breath would tickle the shell of her ear, distracting her.

Even then, it was still tolerable. However, the next part of the plot was when the princess’ country crumbled and a wild and intense scene took place between the sheets. To make things worse, Clarissa had written a particularly detailed description for that part.

She only recalled it upon scrolling to that page. Her cheeks instantly turned red as she frantically tried to skip that part.

To her horror, Matthew had already seen it.

He pressed down on her finger on the mouse and deliberately scrolled back to the sex scene from earlier.

Resting his chin on her shoulder, he teased in a deep sultry voice, “Clare, don’t you think we should study this part in depth? I think there are a lot of details to be changed, no?”

Clarissa was tongue-tied.

She already imagined herself kicking Matthew in the balls.

Unfortunately, reality only allowed her to verbally express her objection. “This part doesn’t need to be changed as the text and scene won’t be exactly the same. The director will shoot this sex scene to his own liking, so I can just delete this part altogether.”

She was about to do just that, but Matthew held her hand in a tight grip, preventing her from moving the mouse.

"You're quite right. I don't care how Justin shoots it. Though, I need to understand how you wrote it."

"W-Why?" Clarissa asked in an embarrassed voice.

Matthew smirked lightly. "Because I'd like to understand what makes you tick, Clare, since we're going to need it in the future."

Clarissa was speechless for a few good seconds. "Y-You use it on your own! It has nothing to do with me."

She protested with a blushing face. "Hurry up and let me go! Stop disrupting my work..."

However, Matthew leaned impossibly closer to her, so that their breaths intertwined with each other.

Then, in a deep and charismatic voice which seemed to carry a hint of seduction, he whispered, "How can it have nothing to do with you? Clare, I'm only doing this for your sake."

"Ahhh... You're incorrigible! Can I just stop writing? I wanna go to bed now. Get off me! Get off! I wanna go back to the room."

She pushed him away because she wouldn't be able to get any work done at this rate.

"Alright. Then don't write anymore. Let's go back to the room," Matthew drawled.

Before Clarissa could go to the guest room she had previously slept in, Matthew scooped her up and went to the master bedroom upstairs without breaking a sweat.

Although she put up a fight, she knew where things were going.

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Before Clarissa found a good manager for herself, she would have to trouble Hector for quite a lot of things.

They even completed the contract signing with Hector as a witness.

When she met up with Ellie in the evening, she asked for her friend's opinion on how to thank Hector for doing so much for her.

"I thought of buying Mr. Graham a meal, but then again, he seems to be a very busy man. So I thought, maybe a gift? But I don't know what to get him. Giving him money will make things even more awkward, right? Besides, I can't exactly afford him."

Ellie giggled. "Mr. Graham works for Uncle Matt, so obviously my uncle will be the one paying him. If you really wanna thank someone, it should be my uncle."

Yeah well, I'm pretty sure I've already thanked him in other more physical ways, so that's that.

This topic quickly came to an end. After they were done eating, Ellie invited a few friends to hang out. She had an abundance of friends who came and went, most of whom Clarissa either didn't know or wasn't familiar with. However, she was used to Ellie calling her friends over. Furthermore, those strangers sometimes acted as a source of inspiration for Clarissa, since she could observe the different qualities and characteristics in them. She had mentioned this to Ellie before, so the latter would occasionally invite her to join their gatherings as well.

"So, what do you see?" Ellie teased.

Clarissa smiled and pointed out some of the girls' makeup, actions, and appearances.

Ellie listened intently to her friend's detailed descriptions.

Suddenly, a group of fierce-looking people barged into the private lounge. Among them was a girl whose pitiful appearance tugged at everyone's heartstrings.

"Ellie..."

Surrounded by the group, the poor girl was sobbing weakly as she looked at Ellie, who immediately stood up and walked toward her with an icy glint in her eyes.

"Lucy, what's going on?"

The girl did not answer. An unruly man dressed in punk style walked out, casting a glance at Ellie.

“So, you’re Ellie Tyson? You told her to break up with me?”

Ellie glanced coldly at the man. “You were the one who beat her up? The one thing I despise the most is when a man hits a woman. So what if I told her to break up with you? What are you gonna do? Beat me up? C’mon! I’d like to see you try.”

Ellie leaned forward in emphasis, fearlessly provoking him. The man’s eyes reddened with fury, making Clarissa rather worried.

She was just about to pull Ellie back, but the man was already angered, cursing loudly at the same time as he propelled into action.

“F**k you, b*tch! I’ll beat you into a pulp!”

“Ahhh!”

Clarissa’s knee-jerk reaction was to pull Ellie over and shield her. Screams reverberated through the private lounge as mayhem descended.

Regardless of the gender, everyone joined in the fistfight. All of them seemed eager to spill blood as if this was a battle for survival.

The commotion here attracted the attention of others. Soon, someone called the police and asked for the manager. Needless to say, it was going to be a busy night for the relevant authorities.

Ellie called Matthew at the police station.

“Uncle Matt, I... I’m at the police station. Could you maybe... get me a lawyer? Just this once?”

Matthew had just left a social gathering and was in the car at that time. After listening to his niece’s explanation, he massaged his temples in exasperation.

“Ellie, you...”

“I know, I know. It’s all my fault, Uncle Matt. I promised you a few years ago that I wouldn’t get into fights again, but it was different this time. I was bullied and attacked by someone! I didn’t go looking for trouble, I swear!”

He pursed his lips. "Fine. I'll get you a lawyer. Are you sure someone actually bullied you?"

"Hehe... Oh you know, I've been focusing on my physical and mental health lately, so everyone probably treats me as a pushover now."

Matthew wasn't interested in the details of her life. After ending the call, he ordered Donnie to head to the police station to bail her out.

He wasn't really concerned about this because Ellie was rarely the one at the losing end.

However, when he returned to Zen Highlands and did not see Clarissa, his face instantly darkened.

A possibility emerged in his mind. He immediately called Clarissa.

The call rang for a while before it was connected.

Clarissa's voice sounded cautious, and he could immediately hear the guilt in it.

"Hehe... I'm in my apartment. I guess you're done with your social event? Are you home already?"

Matthew asked in a chilly voice, "Are you sure you're in your apartment, not the police station?"

Right after he said that, someone on Clarissa's end asked, "Clare, were you injured badly?"

Clarissa quickly covered her phone, but it was too late.

She shot a look at Ellie just when Matthew's stern voice came from the other end of the line.

"Clarissa!"

"I-I-I'm sorry. Don't come here! I'm fine, really!" Then, the phone went dead.

Clarissa ruthlessly hung up on him. She was indeed hurt quite badly, furrowing her brows as she endured the pain. She gnawed on her lip, worrying about how she was going to salvage the situation if Matthew really showed up here.

Ellie peered at Clarissa's face and asked, "What's wrong? Is your boyfriend coming over?"

Clarissa hurriedly denied, "No, he's not."

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"He's not? Doesn't he care about you?"

Ellie was immediately riled up. What kind of boyfriend is he?

He was too petty previously, but now he doesn't care at all! Ellie couldn't help but feel that this man was too unreliable.

Clarissa wasn't aware of her friend's disapproval at that moment, stretching out her arm with a wince on her face. Ow, it really hurts...

"Anyway, it's a good thing he's not coming! What am I supposed to tell him if he does? That I got into a fight?"

Ellie was terrified when her friend put it this way.

She was the one who started this and ended up implicating Clarissa, so she had no right to complain about others.

Clarissa reached out to hug Ellie, but the police officer on duty interjected in a strict tone, "What are you two doing? No hugging! Sit back down!"

Ellie whipped her head around and glared at the plainclothes officer who had taken her statement earlier.

With a displeased look on her face, she retorted, "We love each other and just can't help it, okay? Who the hell do you think you are, anyway? Why aren't you in your uniform during working hours? And you even yelled at me? Just because you're a police officer, you think can just yell at anyone? Do officers nowadays have such horrible attitudes? Be careful or I might file a complaint against you."

The plainclothes officer smiled coldly and his gaze turned sharp, making him look inexplicably dangerous at that moment.

He didn't say anything, only folding his arms over his chest, causing his muscles to ripple beneath his T-shirt. It was easy to tell that his sculpted body was the result of years of working out.

Ellie narrowed her eyes at him, but another younger uniformed police officer interrupted them.

"Captain Hayes, sorry for troubling you. Let me take over."

The young police officer courteously led his captain, Shawn Hayes, away. After he settled down in his seat, he noticed that Ellie was staring at Shawn's retreating figure.

"Ms. Tyson?"

Ellie withdrew her gaze and frowned. "Who was that? Why is he in casual clothes? And 'captain'?"

"That's the Captain of the Criminal Investigation Unit, Captain Hayes. He happened to come over to handle some matters, so he helped us out."

Ellie scoffed. "Captain Hayes, you said? I'll keep that in mind."

Seeing Ellie gnash her teeth in anger, the young officer was astonished. Well, this is a first. Usually, all the women who meet our captain are instantly bewitched.

He shook his head subtly and continued with his work.

Shortly after, Matthew's lawyer arrived to bail them out. Clarissa initially thought that the lawyer came alone. Thus, she was immensely relieved. However, when she walked out of the police station with Ellie, she spotted a familiar car parked by the doors.

Ellie was unperturbed, but Clarissa's stomach lurched, and her whole body stiffened.

Matthew got down from the car, his expression cold and terrifying while he exuded an intimidating aura. Ellie linked arms with Clarissa and stopped just a few meters away from him.

Ellie cracked a cajoling smile before chirping, "Uncle Matt, I feel bad for bothering you so late at night. You really didn't have to come over personally. Everything's settled now, so let's all go home."

Matthew kept mum, his gaze shifting from Ellie to Clarissa. His eyes flashed briefly before he approached them in long strides.

"Don't be mad, Uncle Matt. I swear, this time it was someone else- Huh?"

Ellie watched as her uncle snatched Clarissa from her and carried her into the car. Still in shock, she stayed rooted to the spot.

"Get in!" Matthew said in a clipped tone.

Only then did Ellie trudge toward the car and get into the front passenger seat, completely perplexed.

"Head to the hospital," Matthew ordered.

Afraid to turn back to look at her uncle, Ellie glanced at him through the rearview mirror. She perceived the glacial look on his face and Clarissa's stiff posture.

Mustering the courage, she turned her head slightly to peek at her bestie.

The two of them made eye contact, but there was nothing else they could do.

No one dared to speak first. First, Matthew's aura was too oppressive and the extreme coldness seeping from him could very well form icicles in the car. Second, Clarissa was scared out of her wits as she had been completely caught off guard by his actions earlier. Right now, all she could do was play dumb to avoid angering him further, lest he do something even more outrageous that would utterly blow their cover.

She knew Matthew had intentionally done that, wanting her to feel on edge.

Hah, I knew it. He's a petty man through and through.

The car headed directly to the hospital. Matthew immediately scooped Clarissa into his arms when she got down from the car. Meanwhile, Ellie piteously trailed behind them on her own two feet. As she stared at her uncle's back, she was suddenly overcome with self-pity.

However, that feeling quickly vanished after Clarissa was given a checkup.

Clarissa had sustained more injuries than she had, because the former had blocked most of the attacks. Ellie was overwhelmed with guilt as she cried out, "Clare, why didn't you say something? It's all my fault. You shouldn't have protected me! I deserved to be beaten up..." She sobbed louder just then.

"Ellie, stop crying. You would've done the same for me. You're my best friend and I'd take a bullet for you."

Clarissa thought she could make light of the situation and express her loyalty to her friend at the same time.

However, off to the side, Matthew released a mirthless laugh.

"Why don't I go get a gun and put your statement to the test? You're really something, aren't you Clarissa?"

Both girls were stunned speechless.

Ellie hurriedly said, "Uncle Matt, this is all my fault. Don't blame Clary. Besides, she did it to protect me. You have no right to get mad at her."

Matthew narrowed his eyes abruptly, a faint smile playing on his lips.

"I have no right?"

Clarissa panicked, rushing to explain, "No, no. You do. As our elder, you're the most qualified to get mad at us."

When Matthew glanced at Clarissa, she gave him a meaningful look. All of a sudden, her features were scrunched together as she yelped, "Oww! It hurts!"

"What's wrong? Where does it hurt? Just stay calm and try not to move. I think you should lie down."

"My back hurts."

Ellie was getting more anxious by the second. "Then, lie on your tummy and don't move around. You should stay in the hospital for a few days. Once you're better, I'll take you to my house. There'll be someone to take care of you there, otherwise I'll worry about leaving you all alone."

"No, it's fine, I can just..."

"Don't say no. Are you trying to make me feel more guilty?"

Ellie's eyes reddened once more. Clarissa had no choice but to acquiesce for now.

She quietly lay on the bed while Ellie turned to Matthew and said, "Sorry for troubling you tonight, Uncle Matt. You should go home and rest now. I'll stay with Clare."

"You don't need to. I'll be fine on my own," Clarissa cut in.

Ellie completely ignored her objection.

Matthew looked at the lady, who was still putting up a pretense. "So? What do you think, Clare?"

Clarissa's heart almost stopped beating in her chest. "Ellie, I don't need anyone to take care of me. You're injured too. How can I feel at ease if you stay back? Please, just go home or I won't be able to sleep tonight."

Faced with her insistence, Ellie finally agreed.

"You should go home too, Uncle Matthew. Really. Send Ellie home first. I'll be perfectly fine on my own. Besides, there are nurses here to take care of me."

Matthew stared at Clarissa for a while before turning on his heels to leave the ward.

Ellie left as well after fussing over her for a bit.

Finally having the room to herself, Clarissa's breath whooshed out of her and she relaxed significantly.

At that moment, her mind gradually registered the pain in her body. The first hit she had taken for Ellie was a heavy punch from that man, and it had landed directly on her back.

After that, he charged at Ellie. His subordinates showing no mercy as they attacked everyone else like their sworn enemies.

Clarissa seriously suspected that the man had violent tendencies.

The throbbing pain in her back prevented her from falling asleep. She puffed her cheeks slightly, trying to vent her frustrations, but it was to no avail.

Sleeping on her stomach wasn't comfortable at all. Hence, she fished out her phone to distract herself from the pain.

At the door of the ward stood Matthew. He had returned at some point and was currently watching her playing a game on her phone.

Clarissa didn't hear him come in until all trace of light was blocked by his towering figure.

She looked up distractedly. Upon seeing Matthew, she tucked away her phone with guilt creeping into her heart, then pretended to lie obediently in bed. Afraid to meet his gaze, she stared at the bedsheet as if it was the most interesting thing in the world.

Neither of them spoke, but Clarissa didn't speak out of fear. Meanwhile, Matthew gazed intently at her face which was covered in light bruises. Her originally fair and delicate skin was now an alarming sight to behold.

Matthew suddenly extended his hand to part her hospital gown, revealing the large and dark bruise on her back.

His eyes flickered with emotion.

Although embarrassed, Clarissa could only lie flat on her belly. "Don't worry. It may look bad, but it's actually just a superficial injury."

Matthew turned and lowered himself into a chair at the side. He clenched and unclenched his fists, resisting the urge to light a cigarette. It was obvious that he was in a bad mood.

"Don't worry, okay?" Clarissa tried to reassure him in a soft voice, "There was a small incident tonight. I'm not sure if Ellie told you, but the guy that attacked us probably has a violent streak. On top of hitting his girlfriend, he even tried to hit Ellie. But of course, bad things like this don't always happen and it's not like we run into people like him every day."

Matthew's lips curled into a mocking smile. His voice was chilly when he said, "You're still in the mood to worry about Ellie?"

Clarissa was at a loss for words. She was certain she did nothing wrong.

"I couldn't just stand there and let them beat Ellie up, right? She's my best friend and your niece. Should I have left her behind and ran instead? Do I look like that kind of person to you?"

Matthew snorted coldly. "Of course you're not. As I recall, you're someone who'd take a bullet for her, right? What next? A bomb?"

Clarissa was rendered speechless again.

It was clear that he was doing this on purpose.

"I'm not a heartless person, and I don't regret my actions today. Not one bit. If you have a problem with that, I guess there's nothing I can do about it, but if something like this happens again, I'll still react the same way."

Her words evidently angered Matthew. However, Clarissa was undeterred, stubbornly standing by her principles as she fearlessly met his gaze with eyes that were blazing with resolution.

Seeing as he wasn't able to change her mind on this, he didn't stop to try. Instead, he leaned forward and grasped her chin, then bit down on her bottom lip.

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Chapter 90

The next day, the pain in Clarissa's body was even more pronounced, so much so that she didn't dare to move a muscle.

Since lying on her belly felt more uncomfortable, she got down from the bed and stood still, which eased the pain slightly.

Ellie came to visit her early in the morning and even brought along some breakfast.

However, she was taken aback upon spying the lunchbox on the coffee table.

“Who brought this for you?”

Just as Clarissa was racking her brain for an answer, Ellie came up with one all on her own.

“Was it your boyfriend? Did he come over? Why didn’t he stay longer? I’m curious about what he looks like. Anyway, did he come here last night?”

Clarissa fumbled for words before squeaking out, “Mm... He did. He has to work today, so he left early. Besides, I’m not that badly injured. There’s no need for him to stay too long.”

“Hmph! That’s not the point. It’s the thought that counts. Anyway, let me tell you, even though I haven’t met this boyfriend of yours, I already don’t have a good impression of him.”

Ellie bluntly announced her standing, not bothering to sugar coat her words.

As for Clarissa, she could only smile wryly because there was nothing she could do.

Later in the morning, two people visited Clarissa in her ward.

It was Donnie and a police officer.

Ellie was puzzled, as she thought the incident last night had already been resolved.

“Ms. Tyson, this officer has a few questions for you. It’s about the girl named Lucy.”

“Lucy?”

Ellie was bewildered.

“Ms. Tyson, how long have you known Lucy?”

“Uh... Less than a month, I think?”

The officer glanced at Donnie, then continued asking Ellie a few questions about Lucy.

Seeing Ellie's confusion, Donnie walked her through the details after the interrogation was over.

It turned out that Lucy had shown withdrawal symptoms at the police station last night and was caught by them. Perhaps it was coincidental, or perhaps Lucy had run into a bout of bad luck. Due to the heavy discomfort she felt from being unable to relieve the symptoms, she had begged and rambled on about many things in the end. Among those things was the fact that she had approached Ellie on purpose.

At that time, it was thanks to their captain, Shawn Hayes, that they caught the important details after a brief analysis. Later on, they also got Lucy to confess the reason she had deliberately approached Ellie.

"Ms. Tyson, this Lucy girl approached you because someone gave her the idea. They told her that if she wanted to break up with her current abusive boyfriend, she needed to get you to intervene and the breakup would be a success."

"Even if that's the case, she was the one who wanted to break up. What difference does it make that I had a hand in it? I could never stand men who hit women anyway."

The police officer explained, "That's the problem. After Captain Hayes analyzed the situation, he found that breaking up was only one of the goals. Lucy's boyfriend has a tendency to beat people up whenever he gets upset. Previously, he had beaten up some rich people in his drunken state and suffered rather severe consequences. So Ms. Tyson, if he knew you were the one who urged Lucy to break up, it was inevitable that he'd go after you. This was the ultimate goal."

Clarissa gasped in surprise at that. "You mean, their goal was to beat Ellie up?"

"It's a possibility we can't rule out. We also interrogated Lucy, and she said she doesn't know the person who gave her the idea. It was just a girl she met at a bar and exchanged a few words with."

"Bullsh*t! You're saying someone wanted to beat me up and even went through all this hassle to do it? Is that Captain Hayes or whatever his name is delusional? Isn't he exhausted from coming up with such a complicated theory?"

The police officer's mouth arched into a helpless smile. "Captain Hayes has many years of experience in solving cases. His instincts are usually spot on."

“Hmph! I don’t believe that, not for one second!”

Ellie remained skeptical, but since the officer had said everything that needed to be said, Donnie sent him off soon after.

In the room, Ellie’s face was sullen, while Clarissa’s features were lined with worry.

“Ellie, there must be some truth since it’s what the police said. Maybe there really is someone holding a grudge against you, but just like you said, why go through all the hassle instead of just confronting you? Besides, getting someone to beat you up doesn’t mean they’d succeed.”

As Ellie fell into deep contemplation, Clarissa worriedly gnawed her lip.

“Can you think of anyone who’d hold a grudge against you? It’s probably not that big of a grudge...”

Ellie shook her head. “There are indeed many people who I have conflicts with; some rivals from work and the occasional random people I offend. There are too many to count. It’s impossible to root them out. Whoever played this trick on me is a coward, so there’s nothing for me to be afraid of.”

“I know you’re not afraid, but they might harbor more bad intentions. You have to be more careful.”

Ellie’s lips quirked into a smile when she saw Clarissa’s bunched up brows.

“Look at you. You’re turning into an old lady. Don’t worry, I’m not that stupid. I’ll be careful.”

Clarissa wasn’t reassured, but worrying about it was useless. They still had to get the police to catch the culprit.

Ellie wanted to stay to accompany Clarissa, but the latter persuaded her to leave since she had a job to keep. In fact, Clarissa could be discharged today, but they had insisted that she stay.

In the afternoon, she walked about for a bit before taking a nap. After that, she sat by the window with her laptop propped on her knees, working on her script. For certain parts, she had to communicate and consult with a Ms. Mayer from Justin Yates Studio.

Matthew opened the door and entered just then. The first thing he saw was a serious-looking Clarissa sitting by the window. The sunlight filtered in and illuminated her figure. Her long hair was tied up into a messy ponytail, leaving stray strands of hair framing her face. Gazing at the way her beautiful face glowed under the sun, he gradually fell under a spell.

Matthew's fingers twitched and his throat tightened at the alluring sight of her. For a long time, he stood there and watched her, trapped in a trance.

In the end, Clarissa was the one who had unwittingly looked up and saw him.

"Eh? When did you get here? Why are you always so quiet on your feet?"

Clarissa got up and reached out to grab a cup, but before she could, a hiss of pain escaped her lips.

Matthew swiftly walked over and took the cup for her, then wrapped an arm around her waist to hug her close to him.

After Clarissa finished drinking the water, Matthew stared hungrily at her lips. Unable to resist her natural appeal, he lowered his head to lock lips with her.

Why does he kiss me whenever we meet? Is he that desperate?

Being kissed so passionately by Matthew, Clarissa gasped for air before shoving him away. She showed no affection for him whatsoever as her mind was completely focused on Ellie's wellbeing.

"You probably know, right? Is someone really targeting Ellie? Can they find out who this person is?"

Matthew's eyes flashed icily. "Mm, they're investigating."

"I really don't understand. How messed up does a person's mind have to be to come up with a trick like this to harm her? It's probably because she's scared of being sniffed out and scared of Ellie finding out her identity. Since she's so scared, it could mean that Ellie knows her. Or maybe she's just a coward who used underhanded methods. Ugh, pathetic."

Matthew lowered his head and pinched her chin, cocking a brow at her.

“My, such logical conspiracy theories. You should just become a private investigator.”

Clarissa giggled. “Nah, this was nothing. I’m sure anyone with half a brain could’ve come up with these deductions. And I’m serious about what I said. As her uncle, shouldn’t you be worried about her?”

“Mm. I’m sure her dear Aunt Clare worries about her enough for the two of us.”

“Tsk. Don’t spout nonsense!”

Clarissa pushed him away. With a face as red as a tomato, she shuffled away and sat down to look at her laptop, feigning calmness.

Despite that, Matthew didn’t expose her facade. He went over to sit with her, keeping his eyes trained on her the whole time.

Clarissa could never handle the weight of his gaze. She fidgeted in her seat, feeling awkward and shy.

When she couldn’t take it anymore, she blurted out, “You should go now. I’m really fine on my own. Or I could just get discharged, so that you don’t have to keep coming here. It’s too risky.”

“Risky?”

Clarissa immediately steered the topic away. “The point is, I don’t wanna stay here anymore. Besides, I’m fine. I just have to take some medication and I’ll be as good as new. I wanna go home.”

Home.

Matthew’s mood seemed to improve vastly after hearing this word.

“Alright. Let’s go home then.”

He readily agreed to her request and settled the discharge procedure before bringing her back to Zen Highlands.

In truth, Clarissa had already guessed that he would take her back there. Hence, she didn't bother objecting.

Many said that it was easy to grow accustomed to a life of luxury. Indeed, Clarissa felt comfortable living in Zen Highlands. For someone as lazy as her, it was a dream come true not having to lift a finger. All she had to do was eat, write, sleep, and repeat. In addition, the view at Zen Highlands was beautiful, which could also significantly lift her spirits.

Forgive me for allowing my pure heart to be tainted by the lavish ways of a capitalist.

Oh, well. I'm technically a patient now, so I'll allow myself to enjoy this bit of luxury, just for now.

Clarissa sent a message to Ellie, telling the latter that she had gone home. She even straight up said that she was at her boyfriend's house and told Ellie not to worry about her.

"Didn't you say that he doesn't care about me? Hate to break it to you, but he actually cares, and quite a lot too. Anyway, don't worry, I'll focus on recovering and go visit you soon. I'll make sure to fatten up before seeing you, okay?"

"Hmph! I just can't figure out why you're being so secretive about it. Fine, I won't ask. If I find out that you've lost weight or something, don't blame me for checking up on that guy."

"Alright, alright. Relax, he's a very good person. You, on the other hand, have to be more careful. Beware of crazy plots from now on."

After ending the call, Clarissa could finally relax. She stayed in Zen Highlands for a few days to recover properly as well as focus on writing her script.

By the time her injuries were completely healed, her script was almost done too. Without a moment's delay, she sent it to Justin Yates Studio. Except for some minor details which she had overlooked, there weren't many issues with the script.

The studio had also already made the necessary preparations for filming.

After that, Clarissa met up with Justin a few times to discuss various matters ranging from the scenes to the costumes, and to the tiniest of details in the script. Justin held her in high regards and respected her opinions. Hence, he let her join in on the discussions. First, it was because she was the original screenwriter, and second, he wanted to offer Clarissa the

opportunity to fully participate in this film adaptation, unlike the previous crew who had only wanted her script.

Even though Clarissa started as a writer, she slowly gained an abundance of knowledge from Justin, which inevitably made her respect and admire him all the more.