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"Grandpa's health has been deteriorating for the past two years. It's really strenuous for him to be on long flights, so he told me to come on behalf of him instead," Alexander replied. "Oh no, that old man should take care of his health! It's fine if he can't make it; at least he still remembers that he has an old friend like me."

Linus urged Alexander to go into the living room as they continued their conversation. As Linus glanced at the young man before him, he gradually softened his gaze as he thought, *This young man is pretty decent.* "Since you came all the way here, you should stay for dinner tonight. You can always leave tomorrow," Linus offered.

Alexander didn't have the heart to reject Linus's warm hospitality, so he agreed to stay. "I'll have to take up your offer," he uttered. Linus immediately got the maids to prepare dinner. "Miss Joy is back, and Helen has already told us to prepare dinner," the maid replied. Linus was pleased to hear this. "Joy's back?

That's great." Alexander didn't show much of a response after hearing about Joy, but Linus then patted him on the shoulder. "I need to introduce you to a new friend tonight. She's the owner of this manor." He turned to call the maid once more. "Where did Miss Joy go?" The maid answered honestly

, "Miss Joy said that the lavender fields blossomed really well this time around, so she brought Prince out to play with her kite there." Linus chuckled upon hearing this. "The older Joy gets, the more playful she is." Alexander felt rather curious about Joy when he noticed how fond Linus seemed of her. Soon enough, it was time for dinner.

The maid knocked on Elise's door. "It's time for dinner, Miss Joy." Elise quickly found an excuse for herself. "I'm still jet lagged, so I think I'll skip dinner today." The maid was troubled by her response. "But... Mr. Linus insisted that you come down for dinner." Frustrated, Elise pulled her blanket over her head before she threw it off and sat upright.

The more I try to avoid this, the more it happens. I might as well just face my fears. With that thought, Elise prepared to get out of bed. At that moment, Helen pushed the door open and entered the room. "Miss Elise!" Elise's gaze shot up to look at Helen, and Helen immediately realized her mistake.

"Miss Joy! It's time for dinner. I got the maid to prepare your favorite dishes." Elise slipped her arm into Helen's as she spoke. "Is the man from Athesea still here?" "He's Linus's guest who came a long way, so Linus made him stay for a day or two. What is it? Do you know him, Miss Joy?" Helen asked after explaining the situation. Elise instinctively shook her head to deny it.

"No, I don't know him." When Elise appeared in the dining hall, her eyes landed on Alexander instantly. As they exchanged glances, Elise gave him a smile without looking away. She considered it her form of greeting to him. Elise had sharp and delicate features, and her dimples showed as she spread her red lips into a smile.

Her distinct aura made her appear prettier and more elegant than ever. "You're finally back, Joy." Linus welcomed her. She stuck her tongue out playfully. "I specially came back because I missed you guys so much, Linus." Linus let out a hearty laugh. "You're so good at sweet-talking, you little brat. Let me introduce you to my friend's grandson.

This is Alexander Griffith." He quickly turned to introduce Elise to Alexander. "This is my niece, Joy Sinclair." Elise stuck her hand out to greet Alexander. "It's nice to meet you, Mr. Griffith." Alexander shook her hand. The familiar feeling that Alexander had was intensified the moment their palms touched.

He stared at the girl in front of him, and he was quickly reminded of Elise. It wasn't the first time he had felt that way. However, he knew that the girl before him wasn't Elise—it was impossible. "Hello, Miss Sinclair! It's nice to meet you." Alexander's deep and husky voice was unique and seductive.

However, Elise merely smiled at him before taking her seat. She had to sit through the whole dinner, and when dinner was finally over, Elise decided to bring Prince out for a walk to digest all the food she ate. However, Linus stopped her before she could make a move. "Hey, Joy.

I heard that there'll be fireworks at the manor tonight. Why don't you help me bring Alexander over to watch the fireworks? You young people have more to talk about, anyway." Elise rejected the idea before even thinking about it. "I'm bringing Prince out for a walk, so I don't think I can show Mr. Griffith around." Linus stubbornly insisted on his suggestion.

"Well, you can definitely bring Prince for a walk. I'm old, and my body's weak, so I need to rest earlier. Furthermore, it's better for both of you young people to stay together than for

him to hang out with an old man like me." She was about to say something else when she met gazes with Alexander.

"Do you not want to bring me around for a walk, Miss Sinclair?" Alexander asked with his eyes fixed on her. She no longer had the energy to reject him after that. Instead, she simply led Alexander out of the castle with Prince's leash in one hand. The two of them walked side by side with a dog tagging along beside them.

Their dark figures under the dim lights made them seem especially close to each other. "You remind me a lot of a friend, Miss Sinclair." Alexander started the conversation, and Elise felt her heart skip a beat immediately. However, she couldn't stop herself from responding. "Is that so?

Perhaps it's just a coincidence. Your friend must be pretty decent..." Elise uttered in a playful tone as she subconsciously stole a glance at him. He curled his lips into a smirk. "She is pretty decent. She's kind and hardworking. Whenever I'm with her, she's always busy with her math questions.

She even got a perfect score for some national mathematical competition..." Elise would have never imagined Alexander to describe her in that way. She let out a soft chuckle, but it didn't seem to conceal the awkwardness she felt at that moment. "She does sound like a really outstanding person."

Alexander was stunned for a moment. He hadn't been thinking too much when he was speaking earlier, but he then realized that his description of Elise was full of praise. *I never knew that my impression of Elise was that good.* "Yeah, she is! You guys look really similar. I nearly thought that both of you were the same person when I first met you," he uttered. Upon hearing this, Elise felt her heart pounding against her ribcage.

She forced herself to contain her emotions as she put on a calm act. "If you weren't Alexander, I would've thought that you were just using these words in an attempt to flirt with me," she uttered. A sense of confusion emerged in Alexander after he heard her words. He turned to give her a questioning look.

I've only met her today, yet I feel like I've known her for a long while. "You're extremely beautiful, Miss Sinclair. She's no match for you." Upon finishing his words, Alexander couldn't help but recall Elise's face in his mind. At that moment, he no longer thought that Elise was an ugly girl.

She might dress in a rather old-fashioned manner, but she's not ugly at all. After pausing for a while, Alexander continued to speak. "It's also such a coincidence that both of you share the same surname. If we get a chance to meet again in the future, I should introduce you to her."

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Elise felt herself getting anxious, so she quickly changed their topic of conversation. "Linus mentioned that there'll be fireworks tonight. Let me bring you over to watch them." Alexander nodded and followed behind her as she led him onto a tiny pathway. After walking along the pathway for a while, they heard noises coming from above them. Right after that, a spark of fire shot up into the sky before erupting with a loud bang. It spread out across the sky like a large flower blooming above them. Elise couldn't help but exclaim when she saw the fireworks. "It's so beautiful!" He turned to look up at the sky. "Fireworks may be pretty, but they only last for a short moment. Yet, it only takes the fireworks one short moment to flaunt the most beautiful side of itself."

The fireworks continued shooting up into the sky, with one bang quickly following the other. There were all sorts of different-colored fireworks that painted the night skies. Once the fireworks ended, the sky returned to its usual, quiet self. "It's getting late. Let's go back," Elise suggested.

Alexander looked away from the skies and checked the time. "Let's go! We should get some rest." After they got back to the castle, Elise parted ways with Alexander and headed back to her room. The maid showed Alexander to the guest room. The next morning, Elise woke up to find out that Alexander had left early in the morning.

She was rather disappointed when she first heard the news from her maid, but she quickly recollected herself. "What about Helen? Where is she?" Elise asked. The maid responded in a polite tone, "Helen's harvesting some grapes in the orchard. The grapes are all ripening now, so Helen thought that it'd be a good idea to bring some back to make wine."

Elise's eyes lit up when she heard this. "I'll go and help her!" She then hurried off to the orchard to find everyone busy harvesting grapes. She grabbed a basket for herself before going over to help them out. "These grapes look great, Helen." Helen beamed when she saw the younger girl.

"Don't bother, Miss Elise. Let me do the work." Of course, Elise didn't obey Helen's orders. "It's fine. Let me help you." Helen no longer stopped Elise after she saw how determined Elise was to help her. Both of them got their own scissors, and they started harvesting the grapes. "That guy, Mr. Griffith, who came yesterday...

He seems pretty decent! He looks like a noble, dignified and handsome man. I think he's not bad!" Helen commented as they worked. "He is pretty decent." Elise agreed after hearing Helen's praise for Alexander. Helen turned to look at Elise then. "You're getting close to the age for marriage, Miss Elise. Perhaps you should start making some plans."

Elise was rather embarrassed to talk about this. "What are you saying, Helen? I'm still young!" Helen couldn't help but giggle when she saw the bashful look on Elise's face. "I think you should try dating. However, it's hard for someone as perfect as you to find a man who matches your standards, Miss Elise.

Only someone as handsome and outstanding as Mr. Griffith could be a good match." Elise quickly held her hand up. "You can talk about me all you wish, but don't drag him into this, Helen." "I was just making an offhand comment. But I do think he's a decent guy, Miss Elise," Helen uttered.

Elise eyed the woman speechlessly. It looks like I'm never going to hear the end of this. "Regardless, I think you should bring a guy home the next time you're here, Miss Elise." This time, Helen spoke in a firm and serious manner while she stroked Elise's hair. The older woman's eyes were filled with anticipation.

Elise understood Helen's intentions, so she quickly comforted and reassured her. "Okay! Don't worry, Helen. I'll make sure to bring a boyfriend over the next time I'm here." Helen spread her lips into a pleasant grin when she heard Elise's words. "We'll be waiting for your good news, then."

After harvesting the grapes, the maids brought all of the baskets into the manor. "I'm leaving tomorrow, Helen. I don't know when I'll be coming back again," Elise uttered. Helen had a smile on her face before that, but the smile faded once she heard Elise. "You just came back! Are you leaving already?

Can't you stay for a few more days?" Elise gave Helen an apologetic look. "I have other matters to handle here this time, so I can't stay for long. When I come back next round, I'll

make sure to spend more time with both you and Linus." Helen's spirits were utterly dampened at that point, and she turned to address Elise in a gloomy voice.

"Miss Elise, this manor belongs to you, and Linus and I are merely here to care for it temporarily. You'll have to take over someday." Elise wrapped an arm around Helen's shoulder. "I know, I know. I'm thankful for all the help you and Linus have given me.

I'm afraid I'll have to continue troubling you guys for a while." Helen knew that she didn't have the power to stop Elise from leaving, so she no longer said anything else.

The next morning, Elise left the manor. Jamie was already at the location of the international race, and Elise had to make her way there. ... The annual French Grand Prix was about to begin. This was a widely anticipated race by racers all over the world, and it was one of the largest races in the industry.

Each racer represented their own country, and most of the winners of this international race often shot to fame once they won a title. They would become famous on a global scale. The international race was held in a stadium in Paris that could fit up to 50,000 people. All of the spectators were from different countries, but they all had one thing in common—their love for race cars.

Elise and Jamie brought their tickets to the entrance. They both had tickets for Zone A, and Jamie quickly called for Elise once he found nice spots. "Over here, Boss!" Both of them sat close to each other as the rest of the spectators swarmed into the stadium. Soon enough, all the seats around them were taken.

The large stadium was extremely packed and lively. "Today's just the preliminary round, Boss. The seeded player that we had our eyes on—the one from Germany—will be here today. However, I heard that there's also a racer from Cittadel who registered this year.

Apparently, his skills aren't that great, and he might not even get past the preliminaries," Jamie said. Elise pressed her lips together. "Don't worry. The competitors from Cittadel usually only reveal their full potential at the end. Who knows what will happen? Let's just watch the race." The race officially began at 7.00PM.

The theme song of the race played through the speakers, and the crowd cheered excitedly when they heard the song. Elise felt as if their excitement was contagious—a smile formed

on her face as she watched the crowd. She had enjoyed racing ever since she was young, and she loved speeding.

Back then, she somehow got the opportunity to register for an international competition while she was a transfer student in France. However, she hadn't expected herself to perform so well—she won first place that year. Yet, the rules in her school prohibited her from joining racing activities.

After they threatened to expel her, she no longer joined any public racing competitions. At most, she would have some friendly matches with her peers. "Woah! Number 7 is doing well! I knew he was good!" Jamie cried excitedly. Number 7 was the seeded player that Jamie had been doing his research on.

After the first group completed their races, Number 7 was announced as the first place. "Boss, I think he's going to win the championship! Even if he doesn't, I'm sure he'll get top 3," Jamie cried. Elise didn't agree to this.

"It's too early for you to jump to conclusions. This is just the first group of racers—there are others who haven't gotten to race yet. I have a feeling that this is going to be an interesting match."

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At the same time, Alexander was backstage at the same race. He was cheering on one of the contestants that day. "You've been training for two years now; it's about time you evaluate yourself with this race. Good luck! I'm looking forward to your performance." The other man gave him a firm nod.

"Don't worry, Young Master Alex. I will do my best!" The person was none other than Wilson DeMarco, the only representative of Cittadel that day! Alexander had spent large amounts of money to develop Wilson as a racer. "Wilson DeMarco from the fourth group, please get ready!"

Wilson stood up once he heard his name being announced. After bidding goodbye to Alexander, he prepared to step onto the tracks. Alexander didn't stay after that—he headed

to his seats in Zone A after checking his tickets. However, the moment he sat down, he saw a familiar figure sitting just three rows in front of him. *Joy*?

That's odd. I didn't expect to bump into her here. He smirked without thinking much about the encounter. Instead, he put all of his focus on the race. "Let's go, Number 6! You're the only representative of Cittadel!" Jamie cried at the top of his lungs. His words caught Alexander's attention, and Alexander was shocked when he saw Jamie.

What a small world! But why would Jamie and Joy be together? It doesn't really make sense for them to interact with one another—one lives in France while the other lives in Athesea. Judging by the way they are interacting now, it seems like they're pretty close. It doesn't look like they just met each other here.

Alexander shifted his gaze away. *Am I overthinking this? Something feels weird!* Elise beamed when she saw Wilson. "This participant seems pretty good. I think he might be a favorite to win." Jamie didn't agree at all. "Wilson's a new face in this scene, Boss. Furthermore, he's not from one of the nearby countries.

I think it's unlikely for him to be a favorite." Most of the locals here held prejudices toward people from faraway countries like Cittadel. In fact, that was one of the reasons Elise nearly lost her title as the champion back then. "We'll find out soon." Elise understood the rules of the race, but she genuinely thought that Wilson seemed like a promising racer. Her predictions were right—Wilson won first place within his group of racers.

"I think he has great potential," Elise uttered in a serious tone. Jamie sighed once more. "Boss, although you're my boss, let's agree to disagree this time. I still think Z from Germany has better skills. I have more faith in him." Elise chuckled in response. "Why don't we bet on this, Jamie?" A bad feeling emerged in Jamie's chest immediately as he had never once won a bet against Elise. "What are we betting on, Boss?"

"Since we're here at the race, let's bet on the person we think will be the champion." Elise laughed. "Please spare me, Boss! I've known you for so long, yet I've never won a single bet against you. You're going to take my entire fortune if we continue betting! Please show me some kindness and spare me for once," Jamie pleaded. His playful words made Elise burst out laughing.

"Okay! Fine! You look so pitiful when you talk that way. Let's just place a small bet this time. Let's bet on a fancy meal." Jamie was relieved to hear that they would only be betting on a

meal and nothing more. "A fancy meal it is. Are you betting on Wilson, Boss?" "Yes!" Elise replied.

"I'll bet on Z, then! Regardless of who loses today, we can't go back on our promises, okay?" Once they made the deal, both of them shifted their focus back to the race. At that moment, Elise felt someone tapping on her shoulder. She turned around to find Alexander staring directly at her.

She was so shocked that her eyeballs nearly popped out of her sockets. "M-Mr. Griffith! What are you doing here?" Alexander stared at her and Jamie for a while. Jamie was shocked by Alexander's glare. "What a coincidence! I didn't expect to see you here, Miss Sinclair." He then turned to Jamie.

"Are you here to watch the competition too, Mr. Keller?" It took all of Jamie's brain juice for him to generate possible stories to ensure that Elise's identity wouldn't be exposed. "I happened to drop by for business, and I came over to watch this race because I heard about it."

Jamie tried to keep his distance from Elise as he spoke. However, Alexander had already seen them interacting in a close manner previously. Why are they pretending as if they don't know each other now? How odd! He couldn't help but recall how Jamie and Elise used to spend time together in the Griffith Residence.

Images of the past were juxtaposed with scenes of the present, although Alexander didn't know what made him connect the two to each other. "Do you guys know each other, Miss Sinclair?" Alexander asked. Elise immediately felt a chilly breeze from behind her. However, she didn't seem like she had anything to hide.

"I got a seat next to Mr. Keller, and he happens to be from Cittadel as well. That's why I spoke to him. I guess you could say that we know each other!" Her narrative was flawless! If it were any other day, Alexander might have bought her story. However, there had been too many coincidences at that point—something told him that the situation wasn't as simple as it appeared to be.

His gut feeling told him that Jamie and Elise knew each other, but he didn't expose them. "I didn't expect a wealthy woman like you to enjoy watching races, Miss Sinclair. You've surprised me," Alexander said instead. Elise had a response prepared for this. "It's just an interest.

I can't say that I'm a diehard fan of this sport. What about you, Mr. Griffith? Did you come to France just for this competition?" "That's exactly right," Alexander muttered. Elise was about to say something else, but the next race had already begun, so she shifted her focus onto the tracks while Alexander returned to his seat.

"What is he doing here, Boss?" Jamie whispered. Elise sat straight and maintained her posture as she hissed in Jamie's direction. "Shut up and watch the show. You'll have to buy me a meal if you lose." Only then did Jamie focus on the game with his mouth sealed. By the time the race was over, Alexander was long gone.

Elise stole a few glances at the seats behind her, and she assumed that Alexander had left when she couldn't see him anywhere. Jamie dragged his feet gloomily. "Didn't everyone say that Z was a favorite to win? He isn't even that great. I can't believe he only got third place in the preliminaries.

I don't think he's going to be the champion," Jamie uttered dejectedly before turning to Elise. "What sort of superpowers do you have, Boss? How on earth did you recognize the potential in Wilson?

His skills are much more refined than the rest of the competitors. If everything goes right, he might just be the champion this year." After Jamie finished his long speech, he realized that he would have to buy Elise a meal. That made him feel even worse. Why am I always losing?

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"I'm not too sure about him getting first place, but I dare say that he'll be in the top three." After Elise provided her solid opinion on the matter, both of them walked toward the exit with Elise leading the way. As they were heading out, Elise noticed something from the corner of her eye.

She saw Alexander standing beside Wilson, and she was immediately intrigued. "Hey, Jamie. I need to use the washroom. Why don't you wait for me outside?"

Jamie didn't seem to suspect anything. "Go ahead, then. I'll wait for you at the exit." After that, Elise made her way toward the washroom with her gaze still fixed upon Alexander. She

ended up hiding in a corner where she could hear Alexander's voice. "You did pretty well today.

You just need to be a little more stable." "My condition is much better today, and it's all thanks to your advice, Mr. Griffith. I'll do my very best for the finals tomorrow," Wilson replied in a humble tone. Alexander patted him on the shoulder. "Go get some rest." Once their conversation was over, Wilson walked off.

Elise seemed to have understood something after hearing their exchange. *Could Wilson be under Alexander? Does that mean that Alexander has been secretly training a racecar driver to participate in this international event?* Elise figured that it was something that Alexander would do—she could tell that Alexander was a fan of racing, after all.

Elise had no intention to stay any longer, so she walked toward another exit to leave the stadium. However, she had only taken a few steps when she saw Alexander walking toward her. They came face to face with each other, and Elise greeted him since she had no reason to avoid him.

"Hello, Mr. Griffith. What a coincidence! We meet again." This time, Alexander took a long, thoughtful glance at the woman before his eyes. I just realized something. Joy gives me a strong sense of familiarity because she gives off an aura that's similar to Elise's. Furthermore, Joy's jet-black eyes remind me of Sare!

Joy is like a combination of Elise and Sare! This realization came as a shock to Alexander. "Are you heading back now, Miss Sinclair?" Elise nodded.

"The event is over for today, after all. I'll be here to watch the finals tomorrow." He nodded in agreement. "I'll see you tomorrow, then!" "See you!" She waved. Their shoulders brushed past each other as they both headed in different directions.

Once Elise got to the exit, she looked around for Jamie, but before she could find him, she heard the sound of a gunshot coming from inside the stadium! The gunshot was followed by a series of screams, and the crowd descended into havoc as everyone charged frantically toward the exit. Elise was dumbfounded.

Why would there be the sound of a gunshot at a place like this? Alexander's still in there! Upon that thought, she no longer cared about anything else. She went against the flow of the crowd as she ran into the stadium. Tons of people bumped into her yet it didn't seem to

slow her down, and she continued running into the stadium. Suddenly, she tripped on something and flew forward to crash directly onto the ground.

"Ouch..." She cried out in pain when someone accidentally stepped on her. Right after that, she hastily scrambled to her feet. However, people continued to bump into her as they rushed out of the stadium. She was nearly shoved against the wall when a large hand reached out and held onto her waist. Both of their bodies struck the wall, but Alexander blocked the impact by holding her close to his body. "Are you okay, Miss Sinclair?"

He had just walked out of the stadium, but he happened to see Elise falling onto the ground. He initially figured that he would mind his own business, but he had second thoughts after he recalled that Joy was his grandfather's friend's niece. He thought that it'd be rude of him if he were to walk off without offering help, so he hurried over to her. Meanwhile, Elise felt her heart racing as she stared at the man right in front of her eyes.

All the subconscious worries that lingered in her mind seemed to have been resolved at that very moment. I think I've fallen for Alexander. As much as I don't want to admit this, it seems to be the truth! I wouldn't have run in to look for him in such a dangerous situation if I didn't like him! Once she realized her feelings for him, she instinctively pushed him away.

"I'm fine!" Right after she finished speaking, the sound of a gunshot came from behind them. The crowd seemed to panic even more after hearing the second gunshot, and they all charged toward the exit. Alexander did the same thing—he grabbed Elise's arm and ran without any hesitation.

She followed the crowd, and it felt like they had run for ages before they finally came to a halt. "I can't... I can't run anymore..." she uttered between breaths. Alexander looked at her before looking around him. "I think we should be safe here!" Elise's legs turned to jelly after she heard his words. Her adrenaline was what kept her going for so long. "Thank you for what you did earlier," she said in a sincere manner.

However, Alexander didn't seem to pay much attention to her words. "I wonder what happened. It's legal to own guns in France, but I don't think it's safe to come here anymore. You shouldn't watch the competition tomorrow. Let me send you back to the manor." Elise immediately rejected his offer. "No, it's fine. I don't want to go back yet." He raised an eyebrow as he gazed at Elise with a look of surprise.

"For the sake of your safety, I don't think you should come again tomorrow. It's just a competition, after all. You can watch it next year if you miss it this year. There's always a next time." Elise nodded. "I got it. Thank you, Mr. Griffith." She looked away from him after that. Ever since she realized her true feelings for him, she felt especially nervous about spending time with him when it was just the two of them.

Something struck her at that moment, and she quickly reached into her pocket to pull her phone out before giving Jamie a call. However, Jamie didn't pick his phone up after it rang for a long while. She knitted her brows as she started to feel worried. "Is something the matter?" Alexander asked.

Elise parted her lips to speak, but she bit her tongue at the very last second. Alexander noticed that she seemed rather hesitant. "It's fine if you don't want to tell me about it," he offered. Elise hadn't intended to tell him about her concern, but she figured that she had to do it for the sake of Jamie's safety.

"Jamie is still somewhere in there. I can't contact him." Alexander quickly understood her concerns after he heard what she said, but he didn't do much apart from offering some words of comfort. "He's a grown man, so he should be fine. Don't worry. You can try calling him after a while.

If you still can't contact him, I'll walk around to look for him with you." She nodded before making a few more calls to Jamie. After a few consecutive calls, Jamie finally picked the phone up. "Where are you, Boss? Are you okay? Something happened in the stadium, and I've been trying to look for you.

Where did you go?" Upon hearing Jamie's flustered voice, Elise felt a surge of relief in her chest. "I'm fine. I managed to run out of the stadium. Don't worry." A long sigh came from the other end of the line. "

Where are you? Should I come over to meet you now?" Elise looked around her and gave him some directions before she ended the call. As Alexander watched her talk on the phone, he realized how she sounded like a girlfriend who was caring for her boyfriend. *Could Joy be Jamie's girlfriend*?

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Alexander naturally believed that his assumption was correct since it seemed to make sense. "I'm fine now, Mr. Griffith. My friend is coming in a while," Elise uttered. He nodded. "If that's the case, I'll leave after your friend gets here," he offered. Elise didn't reject him, so they both stood by the side of the road as they waited for Jamie.

Neither one of them spoke to each other, but complicated emotions continued to surface in Elise's heart. She glanced up at the sky above her as she curled her lips into a pleasant smile. From the start, Elise had intended to travel to France to relax and seek some answers of her own.

Right then, she felt like she had finally gotten a clear answer for herself. *I guess this trip wasn't a waste after all.* Jamie rushed over to them. "You scared me to death, Boss." After he finished his sentence, he noticed how Alexander was standing right beside Elise. He instinctively clamped a hand over his mouth.

Elise understood the reason for Jamie's actions, so she quickly reassured him. "It's fine. Mr. Griffith knows that we're friends." It took Jamie a while to process the situation before he nodded. He no longer asked any questions. When Alexander noticed that Jamie had arrived, he announced his departure.

"I'll head back now, Miss Sinclair. It can get rather dangerous on the streets of France, so you should watch out for your own safety." He left after finishing his words. The moment Alexander left, Jamie tugged on Elise's shirt as he questioned her. "What's up with you and Alexander, Boss?

Aren't you afraid that he might learn about your true identity?" Elise shrugged. "Hey, Jamie. Can you help me book tickets to return to the country? I'll head home tomorrow morning." Jamie was shocked to hear this. "Are you leaving before the race is over, Boss?" She nodded in response.

"I don't think there's anything else that interests me in the race. You can watch it on my behalf. I've found the answer in my heart, and everything's much clearer to me now. That's why I know that it's time to head home." Jamie had no idea what she meant, but he figured that it must be something too deep for him to comprehend. Although he didn't know what was going on, he still had to follow his boss's orders.

He therefore booked the return flight tickets for Elise, and both of them returned to the country the next morning. ... Once they landed in Athesea, the first thing that Elise did was to find a public bathroom, where she transformed herself back to how the usual Elise would look.

She didn't head back to Griffith Residence right after that and made a trip to school instead. Since Elise's academic results were decent, her teachers hadn't asked much even though Elise had taken a few days off from her classes. When Elise arrived in class, Mikayla hastily clung onto Elise before she began to blabber all about school.

"You're finally back, Elise. You have no idea how bored I've been in the past few days. I don't have a single person to talk to in class!" Mikayla couldn't help but complain as she put on a pitiful look on her face. "Please bring me along when you leave for a holiday the next time, Elise."

Elise ruffled the other girl's hair. "Alright. You can come along the next time," Elise replied with a laugh. Mikayla spread into a wide grin upon hearing this. "By the way, Elise, did you know that my husband's releasing a new song? He just posted an announcement on Twitter this afternoon."

Elise was rather confused. "Your husband is...?" "Jack, of course! Who else?" Mikayla hastily explained herself, and Elise nodded understandingly after hearing her explanation. "Did he announce the album and song title?" Elise asked casually. "He didn't say anything.

However, he mentioned that he's trying something new with this song and that it will sound extremely different from his previous style. He created a brand-new track! I'm more and more impressed by my husband each day. Hey, Elise, why don't you help me ask my husband out for a date someday?

I can buy him lunch." Elise didn't see a reason to reject Mikayla's request. "Sure. I'll help you pass the message to him." Upon hearing Elise's words, Mikayla looked as if she were about to erupt with joy. "You're the best, Elise!" Elise curled her lips into a grin—Mikayla's happiness was too contagious to be ignored.

That afternoon, the two of them walked out of school after classes were over. Elise waved Mikayla goodbye as they parted ways, and she watched Mikayla disappearing into the distance before she made her way toward Griffith Residence. However, Noel snuck up from behind Elise right after Mikayla left.

"You were the one who wrote Jack's new song, right, Elise?" Noel started off with a question once he appeared in front of Elise. His tone was flat and calm—it didn't reveal a hint of emotion. He stared deep into Elise's eyes as if he'd be able to get an answer from them. He knew that his guess had been right when he saw Elise remaining silent for a while.

The general style of Jack's new song was familiar to Noel. Even the way the lyrics were written reminded Noel of Elise's style. Anyone who knew her well enough would only take a few seconds to recognize her writing. "Didn't you say that you'd stop writing music? What made you change your mind this time?"

Noel asked. Elise hadn't expected Noel to find out about the truth so quickly. Regardless, she had already predicted such a thing to happen eventually, so she didn't bother to come up with any excuses. "I wasn't the one who created this track. I simply made a few changes to it. It was no big deal."

"But the style of this music is way too distinct. Aren't you worried that the news might get out, H?" Elise responded with a smile that didn't seem to reach her eyes. "One way or another, I've decided not to pursue a career in this field. I'm only doing this to help a friend out."

As Noel glanced at the girl in front of him, he realized how she seemed different from the girl in his memory. "If that's the case, then why didn't you give me this opportunity instead?" Elise held her arms open as she explained herself clearly. "Look, I'm sorry, Noel! All of this was a coincidence. Whatever happened in the past still feels fresh to me today, and I don't think I'm able to repackage myself into a brand new person under the public's eye.

This is the only time I'm breaking my promise. I won't do this again in the future..." Noel frowned a little. "H, I know that you suffered a great deal after that event. However, the public needs to hear the truth about that incident. I trust that you'd never do such a thing, but..." As Noel continued speaking, Elise finally interrupted him.

"Look, Noel. You claim that you trust me, but your trust is dependent on other factors, too, right? We're teammates, but you've never shown your trust in me. You've never chosen to believe my words over hers in the past." A rather bashful look appeared on Noel's face when he realized that he had been exposed.

He parted his lips to speak, but no words came out. "If we can't be teammates, then we shouldn't be friends either, Noel. You can stop looking for me in the future." With that said,

Elise made a move to leave. However, Noel quickly held onto her arm. "Charlene didn't do it on purpose, H.

She has been talking about you a lot—she really wants to return to the days of glory that she had shared with you." Elise scoffed as she shrugged his arm off. "I'm sorry, but I have no interest in doing such a thing." Right after that, Elise strode off and left Noel standing on his own. He watched her back as she hurried off. Elise took a long, deep breath as she walked.

Her emotions were no longer as intense as they had been three years ago, and she finally felt like she was able to accept the past incidents she had gone through. She no longer felt trapped by those issues. Even Noel's sudden mention of Charlene's name felt like nothing more than a gust of wind that vanished as guickly as it appeared.

Elise didn't know how long she had been walking on the sidewalk when she heard a loud horn beside her. She instinctively glanced up to see an MPV parked by the side of the road in front of her. The car window came down before a man stuck his head out. "What are you doing here all alone, Elise?" It was Jack.