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"Louis, I'm going back to my room to rest." Charlotte made up her mind. "You should return to watch the show."

"I need a rest too." Louis fanned himself. "I don't know why, but I feel a little hot."

"All right. Let's head back together."

They returned to the villa together. Before Charlotte could enter her room, Louis stopped her. "Charlotte, I need to talk to you."

"We can talk tomorrow." The woman held her temples, drained of energy.

"I'm afraid I'll lose the courage to say anything tomorrow," Louis confessed, sounding despondent. "Now that there's liquid courage in me, I'd like to talk to you."

Charlotte could not bring herself to reject him, so she caved in. "All right. Come on in then."

Louis entered her room after her.

Her two female bodyguards were also about to head in, but Louis' bodyguard stopped them. "The couple wishes to talk in private. I don't think it's appropriate for you two to be inside the room, right?"

"But..." Charlotte's bodyguards glanced at her hesitantly.

"Leave us alone," Charlotte commanded.

"Yes!" The bodyguards left as instructed.

After slamming the door shut, Charlotte poured two glasses of water. She offered one to Louis and sat down on the sofa to drink hers.

"Charlotte," Louis uttered, gazing at her affectionately. He then proceeded to reveal his true feelings for her. "Do you know how delighted I was when you agreed to marry me? My dream is finally coming true! Our wedding will be held eight days later—"

"Louis," Charlotte cut him short. She frowned and continued, "If that's what you want to say, you can do it another day. I'm too tired and wish to go to bed."

"You've been so cold to me lately," he complained wistfully. "Is it because Zachary's arriving soon?"

"Can you stop acting like a child?" she snapped impatiently. "I've been honest with you from the start—I don't have romantic feelings for you. If you insist on marrying me, you have to consider it carefully."

"Yes, you've warned me, and I understand." Louis could not seem to hide his grievance. "I've been trying so hard to close the distance between us. I thought you'd be touched by my efforts, but you remained unfazed no matter what I did. On the contrary, I think you're drifting apart from me."

The more he spoke, the more agitated he became. In a choking voice, he pleaded, "Charlotte, please be honest with me. Do you still love Zachary? Are you going to get back together with him?"

"That's enough!" Charlotte did not want to hear any more of it. "Tonight isn't a good time for us to talk. We can continue the conversation tomorrow."

She placed her glass down with a thud. "I need to go to bed. Good night!" It was clearly an order to leave.

"I'm sorry for acting rashly. If I've upset you, please accept my apology," Louis apologized instantly.

He was back to his cowardly self. Though an unknown fire was blazing within his body, arousing his desire, he dared not lay a finger on Charlotte.

"I hope I didn't affect your mood. Goodbye, and see you tomorrow."

Louis was all ready to leave when the phone on the coffee table rang. The caller ID showed that it was a call from Zachary.

Charlotte was startled. Why is Zachary calling me at this hour?

At the sight of the man's name, Louis exploded with anger. "Charlotte, did you kick me out so that you can answer his call? Didn't you tell me you've broken up with him and that you'll never get back together with him ever again? Why is he calling you this late?"

"Louis, what's wrong with you today?" she demanded.

He's acting strange tonight. Usually, Louis is a polite gentleman. No matter what, he'll choose to communicate in a sensible manner. He has never acted this capriciously before.

"Don't forget that you're my fiancée, Charlotte," Louis roared. "You announced our wedding to the public yourself. You can't do this to me!"

"Louis, are you drunk?" Charlotte rolled her eyes. "I didn't cheat on you, did I? Why are you so agitated?"

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"Then why is he calling you at this hour?"

"You should ask him, not me. I have no idea!" Charlotte refused to continue talking about this, so she urged, "All right, leave now. We can talk tomorrow."

Instead of doing as told, Louis picked up her phone and answered the call.

"You-"

"Hello."

Before she could say anything, Zachary's voice came from the other end of the line.

Furrowing her brows, Charlotte glared at Louis before answering, "What is it?"

"Tonight, I..." Zachary was about to say something but suddenly changed his mind. "You sound different. What's wrong?"

"I'll hang up if you've got nothing to say."

Charlotte was about to end the call when Louis interjected indignantly, "Why are you in such a hurry? Are you afraid he'll find out that we're together?"

"Louis!" She stared at him in disbelief. I can't believe he just said that!

"Louis?" Zachary's voice rang out.

"Yes, it's me." Glaring at Charlotte, Louis responded furiously, "Zachary, she's my fiancée now! Please stay away from her!"

With that, he ended the call.

"Louis, do you have any idea what you're doing?" Charlotte finally lost her temper. Anger bubbled up in her chest as she demanded, "Even if he did call, it must be about the children. Why did you do that?"

"Why didn't he call in the day to talk about the children? Why at this hour?" Louis retorted. "Why did you treat me coldly when you found out he's going to come here?"

"You're drunk. I can't get through you." Charlotte refused to continue the conversation. "Please leave, now!"

Sorrow overwhelmed Louis when he saw how heartless she was treating him. At the same time, a strange impulse coursed through his body, making him extremely frustrated.

"Why are you in a hurry to kick me out?" He grabbed her shoulders, seemingly heartbroken at her action. "I love you so much. Can't you feel it?"

"Louis-"

Her reply was cut short by Louis' attempt to kiss her.

Charlotte panicked and tried to shove him away, but she was not his match, and he refused to release his grip on her.

In haste, she gave him a tight slap across his cheek.

Slap! Louis was rooted to the spot.

Furious, Charlotte barked to chase him out of her room.

"Get out right..." However, her voice trailed off upon seeing the blood trickling out of Louis' nose, staining his pristine white suit.

"Charlotte, I'm sorry. I don't know what happened. Perhaps it's because I'm too drunk." Louis regained his senses from the slap and hung his head low in embarrassment.

He was about to head out when footsteps sounded from outside. A maid had come upstairs.

Covering his bleeding nose, he came to a halt, clearly at a loss.

"Clean yourself in the bathroom," Charlotte urged. She then quickly apologized, "I'm sorry. I didn't do that on purpose."

I didn't slap him that hard. Why did he get a nosebleed that easily?

"Oh, okay." Louis hurried into the bathroom.

Feeling her head throbbing, Charlotte slumped on the sofa and placed a palm on her forehead grouchily.

I thought it was all right to agree to marry him. After all, I won't fall in love again. It was all for my family, especially Danrique's sake. Back then, it sounded like an excellent opportunity to avoid Zachary. I only realize now that some things can't be forced. Even if the entire world buys my lie, I can't lie to myself. I can't pretend to like Louis nor be intimate with him. I can't even put up an enthusiastic front before him. I just can't.

Frustrated, Charlotte felt parched. She grabbed the glass on the table and downed the water. Only after her third glass was her thirst quelled.

Exhaustion took over her, and she slowly dozed off on the sofa.

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In the bathroom, Louis splashed cold water onto his face until his nosebleed stopped. He stared at his reflection in the mirror and gradually became sober.

Recalling his prior actions, he squirmed.

I've always been a gentleman. What happened today? Why did I become this bold? I even tried to take advantage of Charlotte. That was horrible of me!

Louis reprimanded himself silently as he tried to clean his clothes in exasperation.

His white suit was stained with blood. If he were to leave Charlotte's room right now, the maids would definitely see the bloodstain and inform his mother.

I'm her only son, so she dotes on me a lot. If she sees me in this state, she might get upset and reprimand Charlotte. Their relationship might sour if that were to happen.

At that thought, Louis went back to cleaning his clothes hurriedly.

The water flowed from the faucet noisily, drowning the sounds outside, so he was unaware of the intruder.

After entering the room quietly, Diana locked the door.

Delight flashed across her eyes when she saw Charlotte was fast asleep. She then glanced at the bathroom carefully and made sure the water was still running before heading toward the sofa.

Swiftly, she poured a packet of powder into a glass and shook it lightly to make sure it had dissolved before feeding Charlotte the spiked water.

Then, she dragged Charlotte into the closet and hid the latter inside.

Right at that moment, the sound of flowing water ceased. In a panic, Diana switched off the lights on the bedside table, took off her clothes, and dived onto the bed.

"Charlotte, I can't wash the blood off my blazer. It should be fine if I remove it and leave with just my shirt on, right?" Louis asked as he stepped out of the bathroom.

He stopped, realizing that the lights were switched off. The only light source was the dim emergency lights from the closet.

"Charlotte?" Louis was confused. "Why did you switch the lights off?"

"Mm..." A low sound came from the woman on the bed. It seemed that she was moaning in a state of drunkenness.

"Are you all right?" Thinking that Charlotte was drunk, Louis carefully made his way over to the bed. "Why are you lying in bed? Are you feeling unwell?"

Diana dared not utter a word. She was afraid Louis might recognize her once she said something.

Louis finished that glass of water earlier. Why is he still conscious now?

"Are you still mad at me?" Louis sounded guilty. "I have no idea why I lost control of myself earlier. I'm really sorry. Please forgive me."

Saying nothing, the woman in bed turned slightly, exposing her long legs and half of her perky butt.

It was obvious that she wanted to seduce Louis.

Louis halted at the sight of the long legs. The fire inside of him lit up all of a sudden, and he felt his nether regions stirring.

However, he swiftly looked away and reminded himself. No, you can't do this, Louis. Seriously, what is wrong with me today? It feels like there's a worm in my body, and it's making me extra restless.

The last shred of consciousness in him stopped him from forcing himself on Charlotte.

I love Charlotte, so I can't take advantage of her when she's feeling unwell.

"Charlotte, I have to go. I'll ask Lupine to come in and take care of you."

As he turned to leave, a hand slipped out from under the duvet and grabbed his.

"Charlotte!" Louis was startled. Before he could do anything, he was pulled onto the bed, and something soft was pressed against his lips.

At the same time, a pair of slender and smooth hands slipped underneath his clothes and roamed everywhere.

Louis' eyes widened in disbelief as his body tensed. Burning passion rose within him and took over his entire being. He could not suppress his desire anymore.

No longer rational, he pinned the woman underneath him and showered her with wild and passionate kisses.

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At the same time, Charlotte was blissfully fast asleep inside the closet without having a clue of what was happening outside.

The bed shook violently as the man and woman engaged in a passionate session of lovemaking, utterly unaware of the woman hidden inside the closet.

As Louis climaxed, he moaned again and again, "Charlotte, I love you."

Tears welled in Diana's eyes, but she bit her lip and held back her sobs.

I've waited years to become Louis' woman. I can't let my efforts go down the drain.

Outside the room, Lupine was on the way to Charlotte's room when she bumped into the two female bodyguards. She questioned, "Why are you both outside? Where's Ms. Lindberg?"

"Ms. Lindberg is in her room," came the reply.

"She's alone inside? Is she asleep?" Lupine sounded worried.

"Sir Louis is inside too. We don't know whether he has left," the bodyguard answered.

"What?" Lupine knitted her brows. "Didn't I ask you to stay with Ms. Lindberg at all times? She needs someone to take care of her since she drank a lot of wine"

"We were with her until Sir Louis said he wanted to talk to her in private. Initially, we wanted to go in, but Ms. Lindberg told us to leave them alone," one female bodyguard explained.

"Even so, you shouldn't have gone far away. What if something happens? You should've stood guard outside the room," Lupine growled in displeasure.

"That was what we thought too. But Ms. Lindberg and Sir Louis are about to get married, so it didn't seem right for us to stand guard outside the room—"

"Cut the crap!"

"Yes."

Lupine strode up the stairs to see Charlotte for herself.

Suddenly, a deafening bang came from outside.

She froze for a second before hurrying to the windows to see what was going on.

Thick plumes of cloud billowed from the stage, and flames blazed brightly. The maids screamed and descended into a state of hysteria.

"What happened?" the bodyguards asked anxiously.

"The assassins might've sneaked in." Lupine guessed as she studied the situation carefully. Frowning, she ordered, "Go to Ms. Lindberg's room and stand guard outside. Don't go anywhere else. I shall go check on the children."

"Got it!"

Although she had arrived on the corridor of the second floor, Lupine still spun on her heels and dashed down the stairs.

She knew how much Charlotte adored the kids, so it would be a disaster if they got hurt.

Both bodyguards arrived outside Charlotte's room and stood guard there.

Since the room's soundproofing was top-notch and coupled with the chaos and explosions outside, they could not hear a single sound inside the room.

At that moment, Louis had lost all sense of rationality, acting like a beast that succumbed to desire.

Outside, fireworks were blooming magnificently in the sky.

The kids jumped with joy and whooped gleefully at the spectacular sight.

Sherlyn and the maids were enjoying the fireworks with smiles hovering on their lips.

After running into the garden, Lupine belatedly realized that the loud explosion had come from the fireworks.

The magician had created the billowing smoke and fiery flames for suspense.

At first, the kids and maids were indeed shaken up, but they immediately cheered once they realized it was nothing but a surprise.

Lupine breathed a sigh of relief as she looked up at the fireworks. Yes, the fireworks were splendid, but there was a niggling anxiety in her heart.

"Lupine!" Right then, one of the Lindberg's male bodyguards scurried over to her and warned gruffly, "Assassins have infiltrated the manor. Protect the kids."

"What?" Lupine blanched with horror.

She immediately contacted Morgan and commanded everyone to watch over the children. Nothing can happen to them!

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The magician was still performing on the stage, and so were the brilliant fireworks blooming in the sky.

Lupine and her team of female bodyguards rushed to the front of the stage. They surrounded the children protectively and watched over them on high alert.

Fortunately, all five children were still standing before the stage, still enraptured by the magic show.

Sherlyn was also with them, talking and laughing merrily. It seemed as if she was utterly oblivious to what was happening outside.

Lupine observed Sherlyn and dismissed her suspicions when she saw the latter's attention was all on the children and the magic performance. In fact, she even felt a tinge of guilt for having doubted her.

Even if someone did manage to sneak in, it would be an assassin from Erihal. Lady Sherlyn can't have played a part in it. Although she's overbearingly protective and impatient, there's inherently nothing bad about her.

While the commotion was going on outside, the two figures in the bedroom were still wrapped in each other's arms, lost in ecstasy.

At the same time, Charlotte was blissfully fast asleep inside the closet.

The pair of female bodyguards standing guard by the door was unaware of what was going on inside the bedroom.

After all, the sound of the fireworks exploding in the sky outside had drowned out all the sounds coming from inside.

Sherlyn casually glanced in the direction of the bedroom upstairs, and her lips curled into a smirk. Louis and Charlotte must have done it!

Little did she know, Diana had foiled her plan.

Soon after, the fireworks slowly faded into the night sky as the magic show came to an end.

Before leaving the stage, the magician happily signed autographs for the children, snapped photos with them, and taught them simple tricks.

It was late into the night, and the children were getting sleepy.

Sherlyn bent down to their height and asked with a smile, "So, did you all have fun today?"

"Yes!" the children shouted happily in unison.

"Well, I'm happy that my effort paid off," she said with a pleased smile. "It's late now. Let's all go to sleep."

"Okay!" they said obediently.

Lupine ordered Morgan and the other female bodyguards to escort the children back to their rooms.

The maids were tidying up the garden, and the magician troupe was packing up their props on stage, getting ready to leave.

Everything was being wrapped up in an orderly manner. In the meantime, Gordon and his men were combing the area to seek the people who had snuck into the manor while Lupine and Morgan had their hands full with the children.

As a result, none of them knew what was happening in the bedroom.

After Sherlyn had tucked the children in for the night, she returned to her room. As soon as she removed her heavy coat, she asked impatiently, "How did it go? Is it done?"

"Yes. We watched Sir Louis enter Ms. Lindberg's bedroom with our own eyes. It's been two hours, and they're still in there," one maid replied as the others covered their mouths and giggled.

"That silly boy! He's usually such a goody-two-shoes, but I gave him some liquid courage today." Sherlyn was elated. "Well, that's great! With that, the wedding will surely go on! I may even get a little grandchild!"

"Congratulations in advance, Lady Sherlyn!" the maids gushed, eager to flatter the duchess.

"It's all thanks to you!" Sherlyn said graciously. She was in an especially good mood today.

"Lady Sherlyn, we'll draw you a hot bath."

The maids helped Sherlyn undress for the night, chattering the whole time about what had gone down between Louis and Charlotte.

The more Sherlyn heard from them, the prouder she became. I made a great decision!

However, she suddenly recalled something and asked, "Where's Diana?"

"Diana was busying herself at the stage earlier today. After that, we don't know where she disappeared to," the maid replied with a shrug. "Maybe she went back to her room to rest."

"Hmph! Does she think I don't know what's going on?" Sherlyn sneered. "She's just upset to see Louis and Charlotte together."

"Sir Louis is an attractive young man, both inside and out. He and Diana are childhood sweethearts, so it's not unusual for her to have a crush on him," the maid said with a small smile.

"Oh, she wishes!" Sherlyn raised her chin, her voice dripping with disdain. "My son is of noble birth. Not any woman is worthy of him."