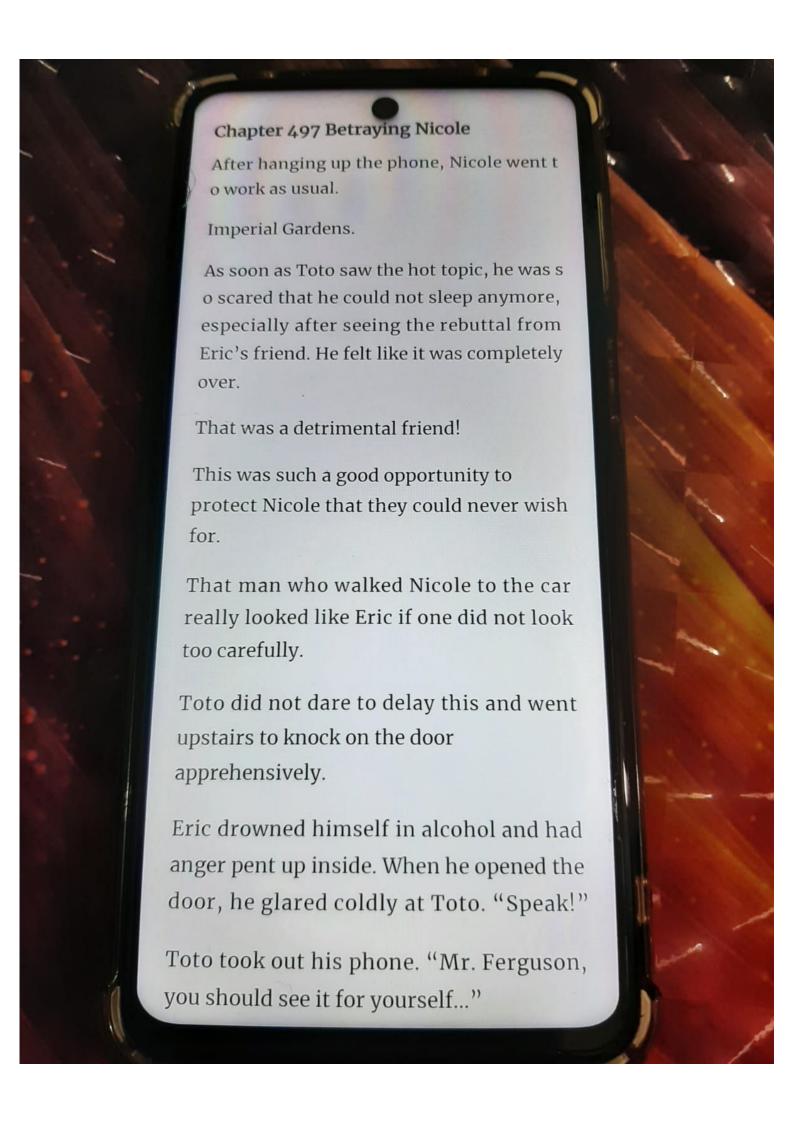
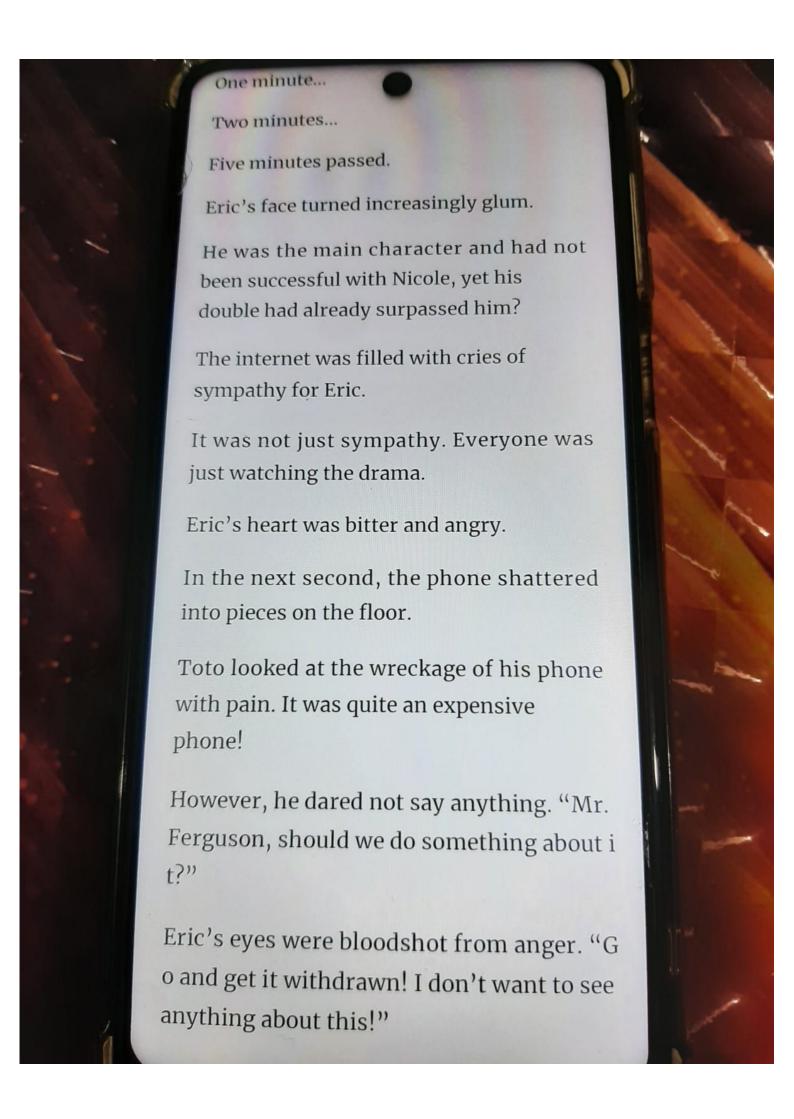


"Okay, I'll tell her." Yvette understood what Nicole meant and quickly hung up the call. Nicole scrolled through the news and got a general understanding of the stage of development this news was at. [This guy is really Eric Ferguson's lookalike! Nicole found a replacement. What a pity!] [Previously, Eric Ferguson was so humble wanting to reconcile his relationship with Nicole, but now, Nicole would rather find a lookalike than look at him, so who's the problematic one in this relationship?] [She really is the heiress of Stanton Corporation! She can have anyone she wants in a matter of words. Your idols need to work harder!] [Nicole's private life is so messy! Perhaps this is just the superiority of rich women... My heart aches for Eric Ferguson!] [I'll always support Nicole! Only someone as capable as her can find a double!] [Cheering for Fabian!] [Cheering for Miles!]

[Cheering for Nathaniel!] Nicole was speechless with all the comments she saw online and dialed Dominic Young's number. Dominic Young was probably just as shocked as she was. When he received her call, he said, " President Nicole, don't worry. I've already started to suppress this news, but you need to be mentally prepared for any backlash because netizens are very sensitive to using privilege to manipulate the news. I'm afraid it won't be as simple a s before because it'll look very abrupt. If Eric Ferguson didn't say anything, it'll probably pass after two days, but who knew his friend would post a photo to clarify his whereabouts? Did you two get into a disagreement?" Nicole was silent for a few seconds. She ignored his last question and instructed in a calm voice, "There's no need to withdraw it then. Get someone to sign on Xander. Not everyone deserves to ride on my popularity. Didn't he want to be

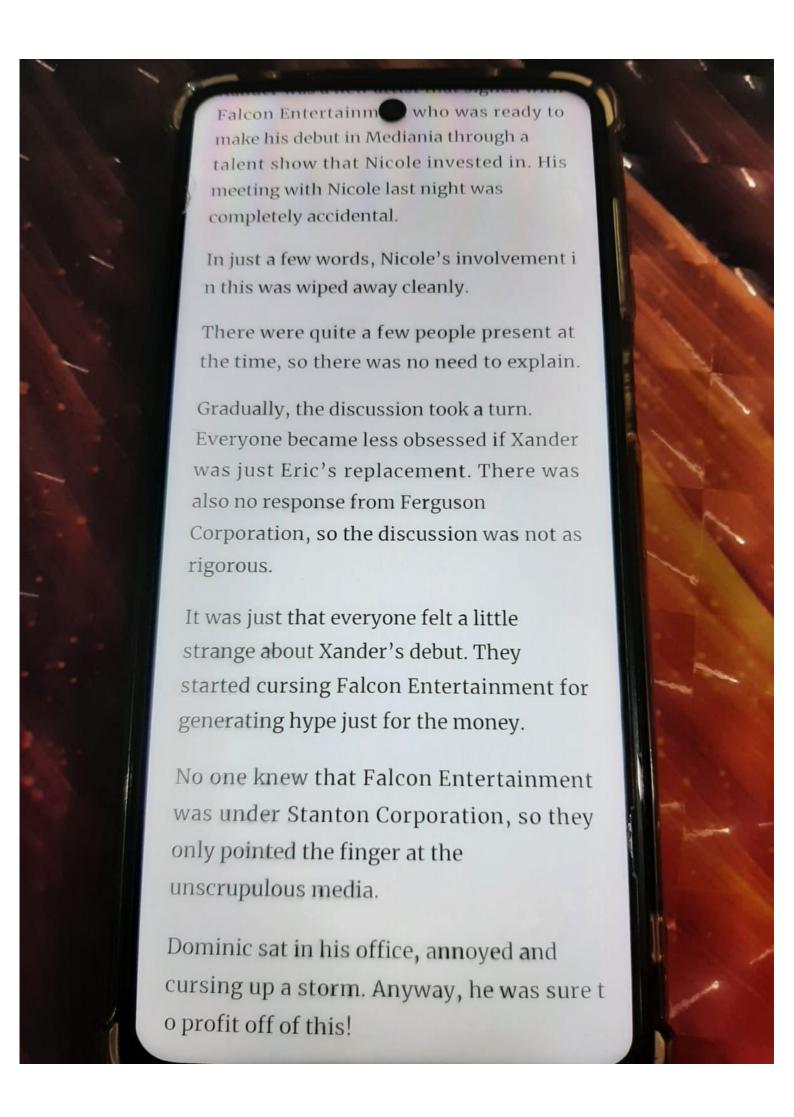
my popularity. Didn popular? Instead of letting others make money, why not get this money ourselves?" Dominic clicked his tongue. He had long wanted to do this, but he dared not mention it. Now that Nicole brought it up herself, he would naturally oblige. "Okay! I'll contact his agent right now." "Mr. Young, you don't have to be kind to him. Arrange everything and anything for him so that he'll get addicted to this sudden fame." Dominic instantly understood what Nicole meant. This was just a momentary hype. After it was over, Xander would be abandoned and left hanging. 'Huh, it's true that not everyone can afford to ride on Nicole's popularity...' Dominic thought. "Don't worry. I'll squeeze every last drop of oil out of him!" Dominic spoke nonchalantly.

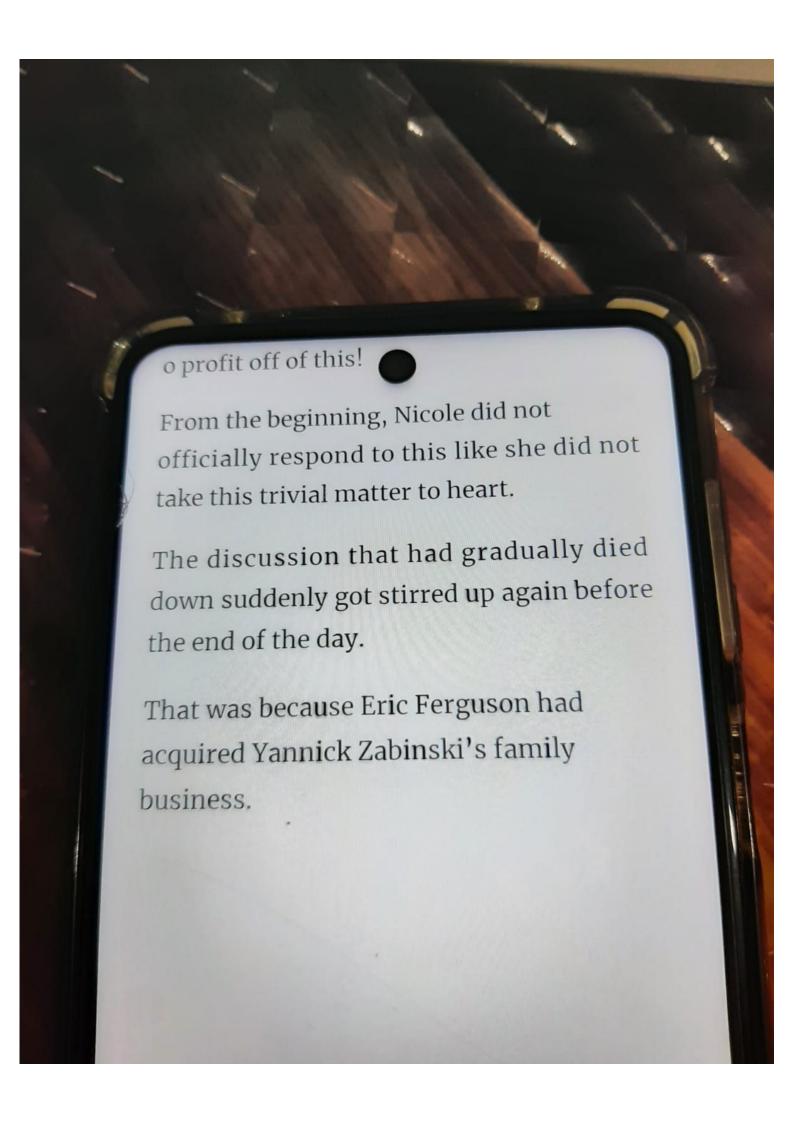


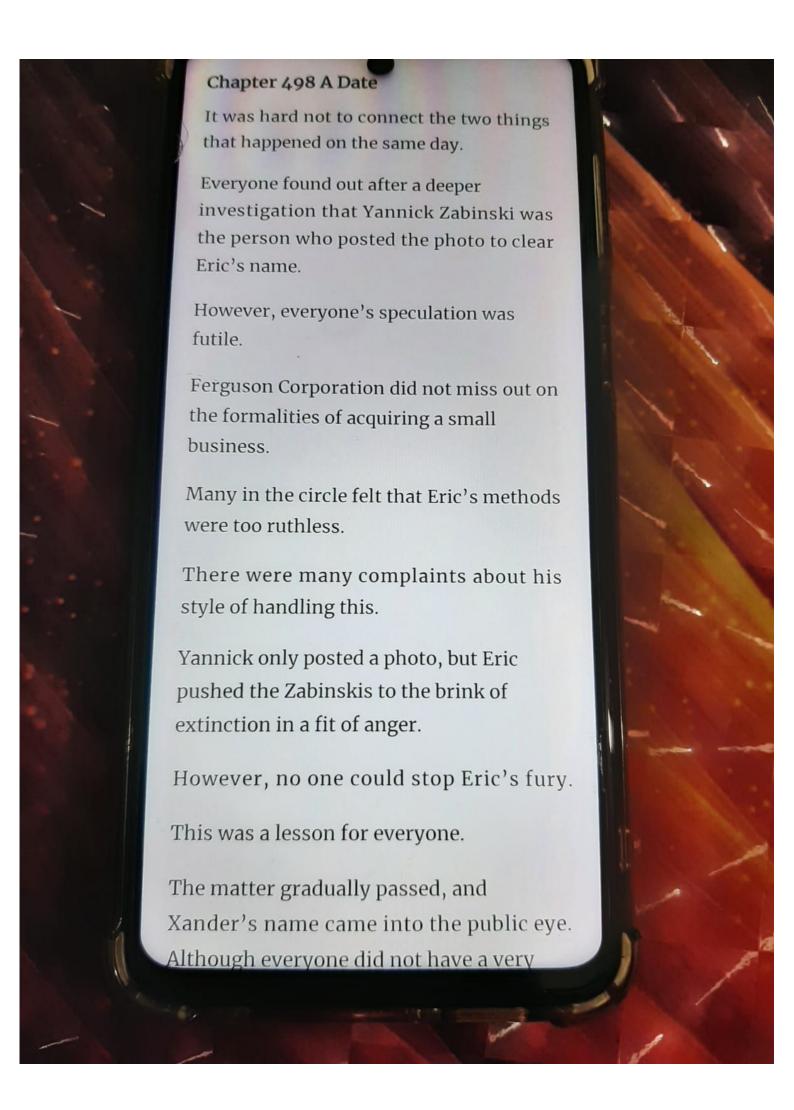


Toto quickly responded and called Mitchell, who was more experienced in handling such matters. Eric went back to his room and took out his phone just as Keith called. "Ferg, don't get angry with what I'm about to tell you..." "Who's that person who's meddling online?" Eric asked. "You found out?" Keith secretly felt bad for the guy. He knew all too well about Eric's feelings for Nicole. Their friend was "kind" enough to clear Eric's name but doing so put Nicole in an awkward situation. Moreover, it made Eric look like he wanted to save himself and betray Nicole. How could Eric tolerate such a thing? Thus, as soon as Keith saw this, he tried t o intercede in this matter. However, he was still a step too late. "Tell me!" Eric's voice was cold with a

ce was cold with a "Tell me!" Eric's y compelling bitterness. Keith pursed his lips. "It's Yannick Zabinski..." Even if Keith did not tell him, Eric would still find out. Eric hung up the phone and called Mitchell. His mind was clear as he instructed. "Immediately announce that we're cutting off all cooperation with the Zabinskis Mitchell froze for a moment. "Yes, Mr. Ferguson." Such a big thing happened so suddenly. Mitchell guessed that it was related to what happened last night. Eric calmly rubbed the corners of his lips. His eyes had a hidden ruthlessness. Soon, the situation on the internet suddenly reversed. Dominic Young released a statement with the company's official account. Xander was a new artist that signed with Falcon Entertainment who was ready to







Although everyone onthave a very good initial impression of Xander, a lot of people still supported him because he had Eric Ferguson's domineering face.

Dominic Young also put Xander's popularity to good use and arranged many activities for him and got him to do live streaming during his free time.

J&L Corporation.

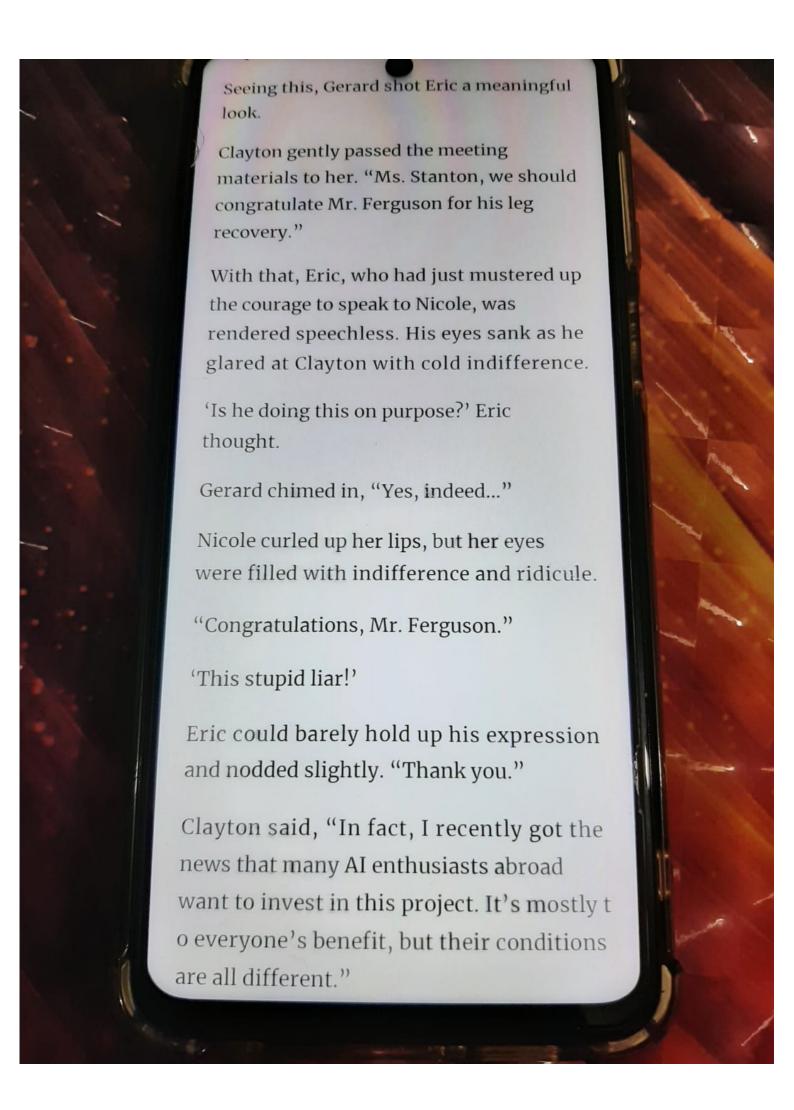
The stipulated meetings of the project were important and required the presence of all four parties.

When Nicole arrived, Gerard Lichman, Eric Ferguson, and Clayton Sloan were already sitting in the conference room.

Their eyes were calm when they saw her coming as if they did not know that she was a frequent visitor on the hot topics lately.

No one knew if it was intentional that Eric and Clayton sat opposite each other with a n empty seat beside each of them.

Nicole swept a glance and sat next to Clayton without much thought and expression.



Gerard replied, "If a large amount of capital is injected, it'll surely push our project to an admirable scale, but if the progress doesn't go smoothly, it'll have a devastating ending and it'll be more difficult to start again. Out of consideration for the protection of our core technology, I'm not in favor of it."

Eric hooked his lips. "They're just eyeing our project and want to squeeze us out of the game. Even if we want capital injection, we need to consider all aspects. Not to mention, we haven't yet reached this stage."

Clayton nodded in agreement.

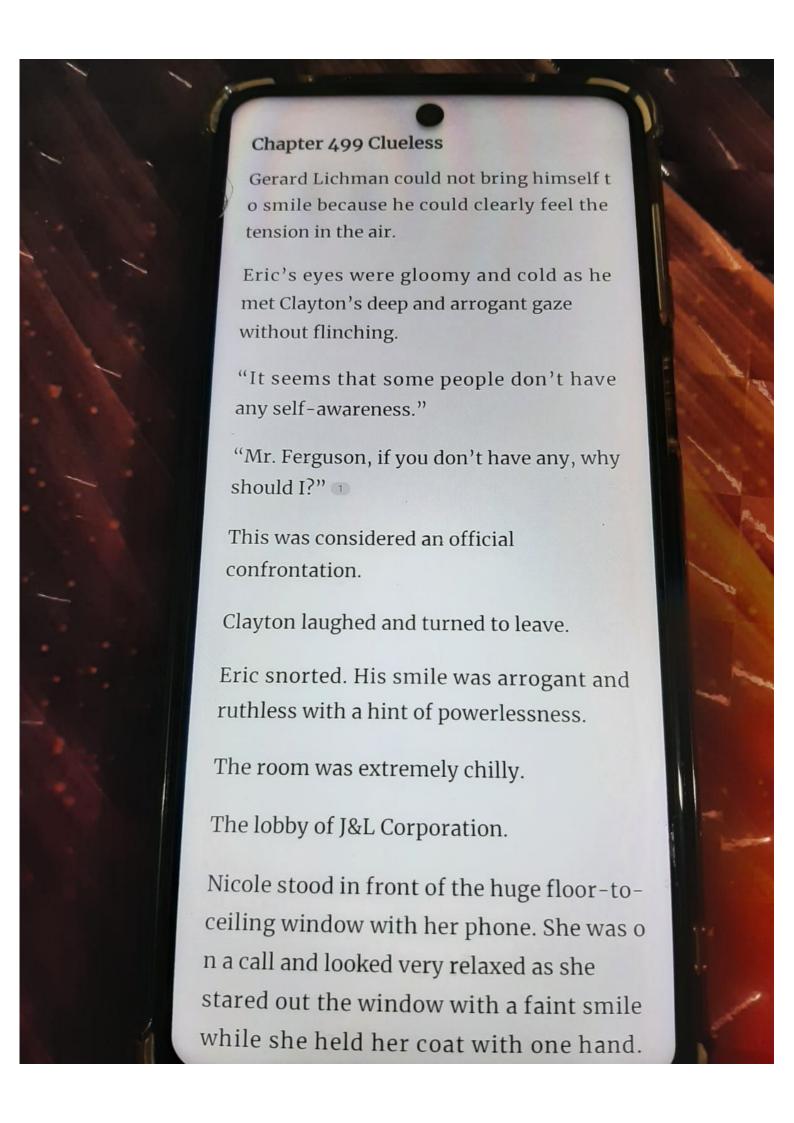
Nicole raised her eyebrows and did not have an opinion about this.

Throughout the meeting, Nicole and Clayton had more interaction and had a very tacit understanding of each other. They would understand what the other party wanted to say with one look.

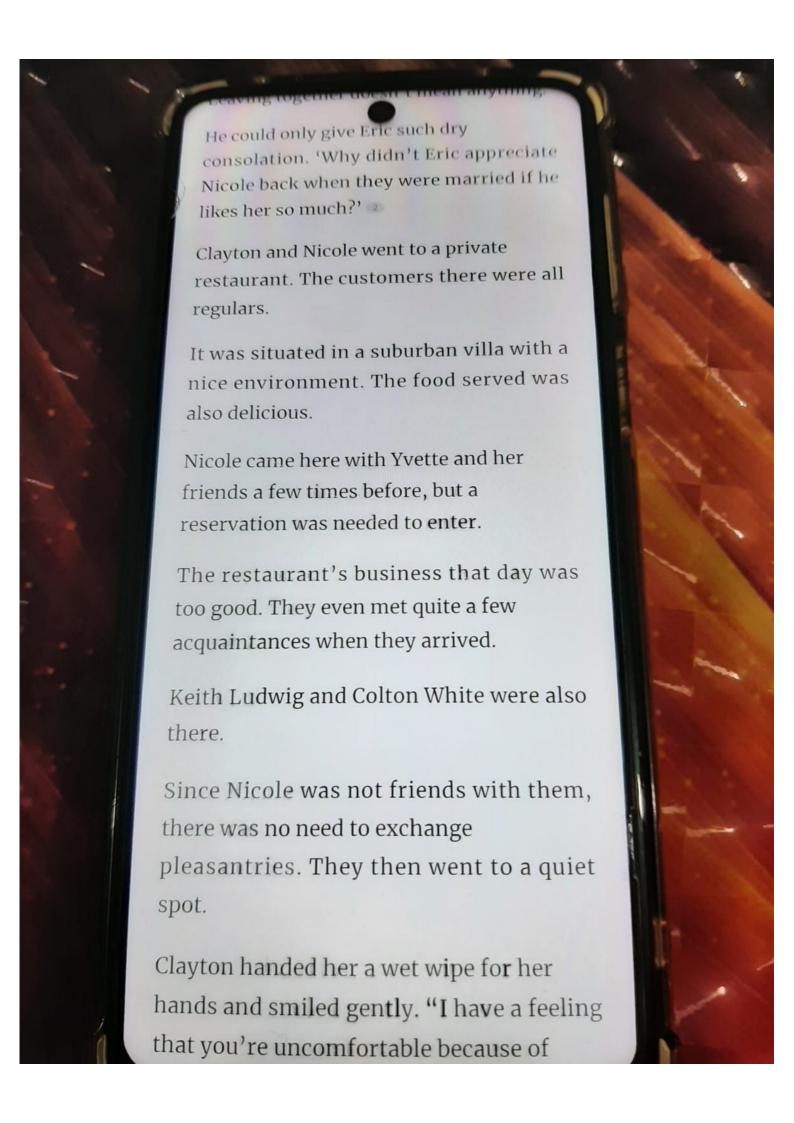
Eric was left out and felt bitter about it.

As soon as the meeting ended, Clayton leaned over and spoke to Nicole in a gentle tone.

"Ms. Stanton, let's have lunch together. Is there anything you'd like to eat?" Before Nicole could say anything, Gerard answered, "I wanna join." Eric chimed in. "Me too." Nicole said, "Oh, then you guys can go ahead. I still have something to do." There was a momentary stagnation in the air. Nicole slowly packed up her things and left. Gerard sensed that the atmosphere was not right and looked at Clayton. "Mr. Sloan, you could've invited us along just now. Only inviting Ms. Stanton is misleading. It sounds like you want to date her." Clayton smiled lightly and glanced at Eric. "Indeed, I do."



while she held her at with one hand. She seemed pleased with herself. Seeing Clayton walking over, Nicole hung up the phone. "Mr. Sloan, is there something else?" Clayton had his hand in his pocket as he smiled at her. "The most pressing thing now is treating you to lunch." This was the second time he asked today, s o it was not good to refuse. Nicole paused and chuckled. "Okay, but it should be my treat." She only refused earlier because she did not want to share the same table with Eric Ferguson. Without Eric there, she had no worries. The two of them got into the same car, which was seen by Eric, who was standing upstairs. A thick coldness shrouded his body. The displeasure in Eric's heart was shown on his face. Even his chest felt stuffy. Gerard cleared his throat, "Don't be sad. Leaving together doesn't mean anything."



that you're uncomfor ble because of what I said last time? "Mm, a little." Nicole was very straightforward. There was no need to hide it. It would be strange if she was unmoved by it. Clayton chuckled. "Sorry, that was my fault for being too abrupt, but it was effective." Nicole said, "I don't want to waste time o n relationships, but I appreciate your good intentions, Mr. Sloan." "Ms. Stanton, may I ask why you rejected me so curtly? Are you dissatisfied with me in any way?" Clayton's smile was sincere and genuine, which made her relax. Nicole raised an eyebrow. "No. If it's a marriage alliance, you are indeed a good partner, but I can generate the value that a marriage alliance will bring by myself." Clayton instantly understood Nicole's words. If he was only pursuing her for the sake of profit and a marriage alliance,

sake of profit and a criage alliance, Nicole was unfazed by it.

She was not the type to sell herself for profit.

If it was not for profit, there did not seem to be any feelings to speak of between them.

The atmosphere was silent for a moment. Clayton's eyes were gentle as he rubbed his temples.

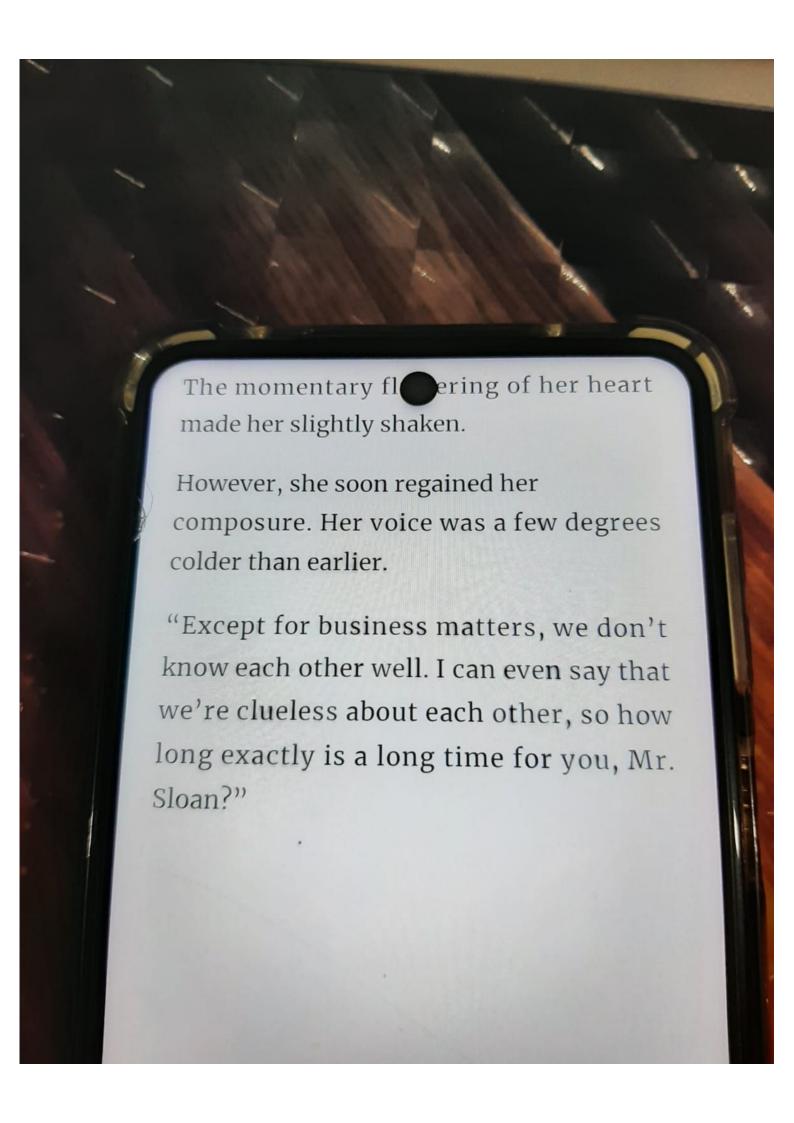
His tone was apologetic, and his voice was low.

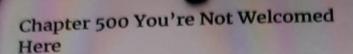
"This is poor consideration on my part.
I'm not pursuing you for the sake of a
marriage alliance. What if I said that it
was for selfish reasons? I've admired you
for a long time."

Nicole poured a cup of tea with lowered eyes. When she heard the last sentence, her wrist shook slightly.

The fragrance of the tea filled the space. A few drops of clear brown liquid spilled out of the cup. It suddenly felt as if the blazing warm sun was shining on her.

The momentary fluttering of her heart





Nicole was suspicious of Clayton's deceitful blather. She was not someone who could be coaxed with mere words.

Clayton met her gaze and said frankly, "
Less than a year... But every day since I
met you, I've been very happy to find out
that you're single. Nicole, let's start anew.
My name is Clayton Sloan. I was widowed
three years ago, and I have a son."

He lowered his eyes and smiled a little self
-deprecatingly. "I know that sounds like
poor conditions, but I have a lot of money.
I'm not quite sure on the exact amount,
but if you want to know, I can get
someone to tally it up, but it may take a
little longer because I can't remember all
the assets that I have. Also..."

Clayton paused for a moment. He looked serious, and his warm gaze seemed to glow.

"Michael is actually my late brother's son. Due to certain religious beliefs and traditions, I had no choice but to marry Michael's mother so that her family

would agree to her giving birth to Michael." Nicole stiffened. She suddenly did not know what to say. His self-deprecating look earlier made her feel a little loss for words. This secret also made her heavy-hearted. No one probably knew about this secret, yet Clayton opened up to her about this. Nicole's heart ached for Michael, Her mood was very complicated. Clayton continued, "I'm only telling you about this because this is my biggest secret. Don't feel burdened by it. I originally intended to wait for Michael to get older before telling him about this" Nicole pursed her lips. She seemed to have inadvertently touched Clayton's sadness. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to probe." After finding out about this, Nicole could not bring herself to be happy. Clayton seemed to reveal everything about himself with full sincerity, but what

Nicole was not at all ready to start a new relationship. Clayton's smile was gentle and humble. " Well, I just want you to get to know me a little more. I don't want you to think that I'm only infatuated by your beauty." Nicole gradually relaxed. After a while, Nicole went to the bathroom. Not far away, Keith and Colton were staring at the couple's movements. They seemed so cordial, and their stunning looks made them seem like a good match. Keith looked at his phone anxiously. There was still no response. He had sent Eric a message earlier, but Eric did not react. Was Eric on the way here to kill someone? Keith and Colton could not wait any longer. They took advantage of Nicole's absence and walked over to Clayton. "Mr. Sloan?" Clayton raised an eyebrow and nodded at

Clayton raised an e row and nodded at the two strangers in front of him. "Mr. Sloan, I'm Keith Ludwig from the Ludwig Corporation, and this is Colton White from White Corporation. It's a pleasure to meet you." Keith felt that although Clayton maintained a modest and decent smile, there was something about Clayton that was so similar to Eric. The only difference was that this feeling was more intense and obvious with Eric, while it seemed deliberately hidden with Clayton. Keith subconsciously looked wary but thinking about his best friend Eric that was going crazy because of Nicole, he had to help somehow. "Hello." Keith nonchalantly sat next to Clayton and pretended to be puzzled. "If I'm not mistaken, the one sitting here just now was Nicole Stanton?" Clayton's eyes darkened as he smiled and nodded his head.

He stood up trembling with an ingratiating and humble smile on his face. "I was just kidding. Why would I go about spreading rumors? I was just saying hello t o Mr. Sloan..." Nicole coldly swept a glance at him and sat on the opposite seat. "Keith, if I'm on the hot topics, I'll make sure that you'll rank first." Keith was shaken. His face changed slightly and instantly understood Nicole's warning tone. 'It's so hard to be Eric's bro!' Keith thought. "I-I was wrong!" Keith was ashamed to look at Clayton's expression. He felt like he had lost his reputation. Nicole's voice was calm and cold. "Did Eric Ferguson put you up to this?" Keith hesitated for a few seconds. "Of course..." 'Not!' However, he could not bring himself to say the last word. He looked at

