

# Always Been Yours Chapter 471 - 480

## Chapter 471 A Reward for You

For a moment, a sweet vibe permeated the surroundings from Nicholas and Tessa.

Later, when the server came and served the dishes, they were all Tessa's favorites.

Nicholas was also very attentive to her during the meal, and the smile on the corners of his lips never faded away.

"Eat more. Their shrimp dish is very famous."

As he spoke, he gave her another piece of shrimp.

She observed him while eating the dishes on her plate.

When he noticed her gaze, he asked, "What's the matter?"

"I feel that you're acting rather strangely, yet I also feel like you're in a good mood." Tessa expressed her thoughts; however, she didn't expect him to acknowledge her words.

"I'm indeed in a good mood today."

"Did something good happen?" She looked at him curiously.

Unfortunately for her, he only remained silent for a long time as he looked back at her.

When Tessa saw this, her heart was aroused by curiosity. Thus, she urged, "Stop looking at me, and tell me what's the good news."

"There's no good news." Nicholas laughed. Then, he put more food on her plate and said warmly, "I brought you here today as a reward for you."

"A reward for me?" She repeated after him, utterly puzzled. Therefore, she could not help but ask, "Why do you want to reward me?"

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Once again, he only gave her a mysterious smile without saying anything. Then, he changed the topic and urged, "Eat up, or the food will get cold."

Tessa did not ask further questions after she sensed that he didn't want to talk about it. She believed that Nicholas would naturally tell her when he wanted to.

After they were done with their dinner, they decided to walk around the street for a while, and they didn't return home until the night grew darker.

It did not cross their minds that they would see Gregory sitting on the sofa with his cheeks puffed up as soon as they entered the living room. And when Gregory saw them, his downcast eyes immediately lit up.

However, Gregory seemed to have thought of something again afterward, and he huffed in anger. Then, he crossed his arms in front of his chest, turned his head, and looked away from Nicholas and Tessa.

Tessa knew what Gregory was on his mind when she saw him deliberately ignoring them.

So, she loosened her grip on Nicholas and walked over to Gregory with a doting smile. After that, despite knowing the cause of his anger, she asked, "Greg, why are you angry? Tell me, who has upset you? I'll help you punish that person."

Gregory could not stand it anymore when he heard this. So, he immediately complained aggrievedly. "It's Daddy! He's bad! He promised me that he would bring you and me for dinner tonight. But in the end, I only got to have dinner alone with Mr. Timothy!"

Tessa felt that the whole situation was hilarious; however, she truly liked the feeling of being missed by Gregory. Finally, she took him in her arms and sat on the sofa. Once again, she heard Gregory grumbling in grievance.

"I've already let Daddy spend time with you at night time. But he still wants your attention all the time. He is too greedy!"

Gregory wrapped his arms around her neck and said with a pout, "Miss Tessa, let's ignore Daddy, okay?"

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Nicholas' face slightly darkened when he heard this from his position by the side of the mother-son duo. He also suddenly felt that Gregory wasn't his son but was his love rival.

However, it was impossible for Tessa to ignore Nicholas.

So, she hugged Gregory and coaxed him by saying, "This time, it really was your Daddy who went back on his words. How about this? We'll take you with us no matter where we go in the future."

Even so, Gregory pursed his lips as he was still very unhappy. Meanwhile, Tessa was also very patient as she continued coaxing him.

In the end, it was only after Tessa agreed to many conditions that Gregory finally had a smile on his face again.

Later, they played for a while then she took him for a bath since it was already relatively late.

After the bath, Tessa intended to go downstairs to pour herself a glass of water. However, she did not expect to see Timothy massaging his legs when she passed by his room.

"Does your leg hurt again?" She pushed open the door and walked in. Then, she squatted in front of Timothy with a concerned look on her face and directly started helping him massage his legs.

Timothy was slightly startled. Then, he nodded and said, "It does ache a little bit."

"Have you not taken care of your legs and regularly soaked them in a medicinal bath recently?" she asked.

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Chapter 472 Where Is Kathleen?

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Tessa looked up at Timothy with displeasure. If Tim takes care of his legs and regularly soaks them in the medicinal bath, it's impossible for him to have a relapse.

Timothy hesitantly spoke when he sensed her disapproval, "Since I started establishing the company, I have been busy. Sometimes, I just can't make myself get up after doing overtime."

"Who told you to be such a busy bee? I know the growth of your company is important. But didn't I tell you that your health is more important than your company?!"

At that moment, Tessa was furious. However, she felt distressed underlying her fury as she knew why Timothy was working himself to the bone. Tim is working this hard to provide us with a better life.

Tessa couldn't help the tears welling up in her eyes when she thought about that. Then, she said with a choked voice, "You promised me that you would take good care of yourself."

As Timothy listened to the sorrowful tone in her voice, he felt his heart clenched tightly. Thus, he quickly admitted his mistake and assured her by saying, "Don't cry, Tess. I'll take good care of myself in the future."

He felt panicked as he immediately helped Tessa wipe her tears.

Tessa glared at him, took a deep breath, and calmed down. Then, she remembered that he had never done acupuncture since she left. Hence, she went downstairs to get her acupuncture kit and gave him an acupuncture treatment.

During that period, Nicholas came over. However, he only stood by the door and watched the siblings speak softly. Then, instead of stepping forward to interrupt them, he left quietly.

That was because he knew that Tessa and Timothy must have a lot of things to say to each other.

That night, Tessa did not return to the master bedroom until the middle of the night. After she entered the room, she found that Nicholas was still waiting for her.

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Under the silver-white light, the man sat quietly and leaned against the headboard while holding a book in his hand. He had already washed up and was wearing a navy blue night robe. The robe belt was loose, revealing a large section of his masculine and sexy chest. He did not meticulously comb his jet-black hair; instead, it slightly covered his forehead messily.

Nicholas immediately looked up from his book when he heard the sound of footsteps. As soon as he saw Tessa entering, his cold facial features softened.

"I filled the tub for you. Hurry and go take your bath."

Tessa felt a warm sensation lingering in her heart when she heard that. She nodded and went into the bathroom while taking a set of clothes with her.

After her bath, Tessa crawled into bed, and he quickly followed suit after he left the bedside lamp on. Then, he naturally took her into his arms, kissed her forehead, and said warmly, "Let's sleep."

Tessa nodded her head and leaned against Nicholas' chest. Then, with the corners of her lips curled up into a sweet smile, she closed her eyes and fell asleep, feeling safe and warm in his embrace.

The bright white moonlight shone in from the window, and the scene whereby the two slept in each other's arms was extremely lovely.

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The following day, Tessa accompanied Gregory for breakfast. After that, she rushed to Silverscape Theater. However, she did not expect to hear Hathaway's angry voice as soon as she entered backstage. "She's not a little girl! How can you guys not notice if she shows up or not?"

Hathaway reprimanded the surrounding members of the orchestra as she stood in the middle of the backstage. Everyone was silent, and some people even showed grievances on their faces.

Tessa quietly approached a member and asked, "What happened?"

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The member was startled by the sudden voice in his ears. After seeing that it was Tessa, he breathed a sigh of relief and told her the whole story.

"It's Kathleen. We don't know where she'd gone. Miss Hathaway asked us to rehearse, but she's the only one absent. After asking the others, no one knew her whereabouts. We also couldn't reach her. Plus, we're abroad. Miss Hathaway worried that something happened to her, so she got angry."

Tessa frowned when she heard this, and she felt that Kathleen was behaving more and more outrageous. The day for the band to perform is just around the corner, yet she doesn't rehearse conscientiously. And now, she has even gone missing.

Just as Tessa was ranting in her heart, Hathaway's voice rang in her ears. "Tessa, I'm quite busy here, so I can't leave. Since you're the only one who's free here, go back and check if Kathleen is still in the hotel room for me."

Hence, Tessa had no choice but to take a taxi and head back to the hotel where the orchestra members were staying. It was just that she did not go to Kathleen's room right from the start. Instead, she went straight to look for the hotel manager.

"I'm sorry for the inconvenience. However, we couldn't find and reach a member of our orchestra band, so I wish to check the surveillance videos to see if she had gone out."

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### Chapter 473 Irresponsible

Tessa gave the hotel manager a brief explanation of the reason she was there, and the manager instantly got his staff to show her the CCTV footage after he realized the potential severity of the matter. When they went through the videos, they realized that Kathleen hadn't left the room after she returned to the hotel the night before.

There was somewhat an uneasy look on Tessa's face as she thanked the staff and headed over to Kathleen's room. Knock knock. "I know you're in there, Kathleen. Open the door," Tessa uttered while knocking loudly.

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There was no response from the person inside the room, but Tessa continued to knock anyway. Finally, after some persistent knocking, Kathleen opened the room door.

She stood behind the door with a sour look on her face. "What's wrong with you? Why are you knocking on my door early in the morning? Why won't you let me sleep?!" she shouted at Tessa.

Her actions made Tessa feel annoyed, so Tessa pulled her phone out to point at the time. "It's already 10.00 AM, and the whole orchestra is waiting for you to rehearse. So, how could you still be sleeping?!"

"They can train on their own notes. It's none of my business. I don't need to practice, anyway. Get lost! Stop disturbing my sleep." Kathleen rolled her eyes as she tried to shut the door.

Tessa hastily stuck an arm out to stop the woman and frowned in disapproval as she commented on Kathleen's inappropriate and lazy attitude, "Everyone's training for the performance right now, so why are you the only one who doesn't have to train?"

"Are you lecturing me now?" Kathleen narrowed her eyes to give Tessa a nasty stare.

Tessa was speechless for a moment. "I'm not lecturing you. I just think that your idle manner of working is extremely irresponsible toward the performance," she explained.

"Are you saying that I'm irresponsible?" Kathleen let out a mocking laugh as if she had just heard a huge joke. Then, she slowly lifted her chin while speaking in a disdainful tone, "Do you think you have the right to tell me what to do just because you're my mother's protégé? Well, you're nothing to me, so you have no right to speak to me like that!"

Tessa was infuriated by the other woman's words. After all, her intention was just to provide Kathleen with some words of advice—she hadn't expected to be attacked personally.

However, before she could say anything, Kathleen spoke up again. "What is it? Are you angry?"

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Kathleen stared into Tessa's eyes with a scornful look in her gaze. "You'll have to hold it in even if you're angry. You only have the right to teach me a lesson when you're in my position."

Of course, Tessa's expression darkened after that.

Kathleen didn't seem to care—she simply turned around and shut the door with a loud bang! Tessa was fuming as the door slammed in her face, yet she had no other choice than to leave and return to the Silverscape Theater.

Back in the theater, Hathaway was the first to come over and check on Tessa. "Did you find Kathleen, Tessa?"

"I did. She's sleeping in her room, and she said she isn't coming for practice," Tessa replied. She stated Kathleen's wishes in a transparent manner, but she didn't bring up anything about the argument they had.

Hathaway was already furious just listening to Tessa's explanation. "Kathleen is getting too much! Does she think she's that great? How dare she not come for practice!" she cried.

Meanwhile, Tessa stood by her side, where she quietly waited for her teacher to release all her anger.

Although Hathaway was furious at first, she managed to calm her temper down after a while. Unfortunately, they didn't have much time until the actual performance, so she wanted to use her precious time to train the other members. In addition, Hathaway wanted to make sure that the show was flawless.

So, even though there was a missing violin among them, the rest of the orchestra members continued playing their parts. The song sounded almost the same, although they were missing a violinist. Tessa didn't have much to do, so she sat beside Hathaway and watched as the members practiced.

When she saw the empty spot where the violinist was supposed to be, a wild idea began to form in her mind. "Can I stand in Kathleen's position to practice with everyone?" Tessa asked. She had finally decided to share her true intentions.

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Hathaway frowned as she misunderstood Tessa's intentions—she thought that Tessa was desperate to be on stage. "You may have shown great improvement in your bowing techniques and musicality, but you will have to practice a lot more before you can take Kathleen's place."

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### Chapter 474 Replacement

"I think you've misunderstood me, Miss Hathaway. I'm not saying that I would like to go on stage. I just thought that I could gain some experience through learning from others since Kathleen isn't here today. I would like to gather some experience for the future—I know that there's a lot more I need to learn." Tessa wore a sincere expression as she explained herself to Hathaway.

After contemplating for a moment, Hathaway finally agreed to Tessa's request. Although she wasn't prepared for an actual performance, it would be good for her to train with the other members just to get some experience. That way, Hathaway wouldn't have to train Tessa's performance skills in the future.

Kathleen only showed up sometime in the afternoon. When she entered the theater, she found Tessa standing in her position and rehearsing with the other members. Kathleen lost her temper immediately. "Who gave you the permission to stand in my spot, Tessa?!" Kathleen barked. She didn't care if the rest of the members were halfway through their rehearsal—she immediately threw her bag in Tessa's direction.

Fortunately, Tessa's reflexes were quick enough—the bag would have smacked her in the face otherwise. Unfortunately, Tessa's reaction only made Kathleen more furious than ever. "How dare you dodge my attack, b\*tch?" Kathleen glared at Tessa angrily. "What is it? Are you annoyed after what I said in the morning? Do you think you can take my spot in the performances just because you're standing in my position now?"

"That wasn't my intention at all." Tessa suppressed her annoyance to explain herself when she saw that Kathleen had misunderstood her. However, Kathleen didn't seem to hear what she was saying at all. "Why would you stand in my position if that wasn't your intention? Don't you think you seem really pretentious now?" Kathleen glared at her disdainfully.

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Tessa took a deep breath to contain her anger. She believed that she had to clarify things with Kathleen, as she knew that things would get messy otherwise. She could tell by Kathleen's expression that Kathleen would undoubtedly create a fuss. "I'm standing in your position because you didn't come for the rehearsal, and I wanted to take this opportunity to gather some experiences in preparing for a performance. I really look up to Hathaway Philharmonic's maturity, and I appreciate every opportunity I get to learn from them," Tessa explained.

The rest of the members couldn't stop themselves from speaking up for Tessa at this point. "Tessa was just learning from us. You shouldn't overthink it," one said. "Yeah. You know what Tessa is like. She would never look down on you. Your spot was empty since you didn't show up for practice, so what's the big deal with allowing Tessa to learn some stuff?" another one said.

Kathleen's face darkened upon hearing these individual's words.

"She has no right to stand in my position, even if I'm not around," Kathleen hissed. She scanned all of her team members with a threatening look in her eyes. Although some of her members thought that she was being irrational, they didn't have the guts to speak up as they were inferior to her.

Kathleen gave Tessa a contemptuous glare before scoffing. "I don't care what your true intentions are, but you're far from replacing my spot in the orchestra. Do you think you're protected just because my mother watches over you? If I see you standing in my spot one more time, I'm going to turn you into a cripple!"

Tessa's face turned sour, and even Hathaway seemed rather infuriated by her daughter's words. Hathaway had been silent as she thought that Tessa would be able to deal with this on her own. But she hadn't expected her daughter to be so arrogant and demanding!

"That's enough, Kathleen! Who are you going to turn into a cripple?" Hathaway stood up from her seat in the audience before storming toward her daughter. "I was the one who allowed Tessa to go on stage. Do you want to turn me into a cripple too?"

When Kathleen realized that her mother was around, she was no longer as aggressive as before. "That wasn't what I meant, Mom. I was just too angry because I thought Tessa was trying to overtake my role," Kathleen said.

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"Is that so? Didn't Tessa explain herself to you earlier? She said that she just wanted to learn from the orchestra since you weren't around. So, why are you still clinging on to this matter now?" Hathaway asked.

When Kathleen heard how protective her mother was over Tessa, Kathleen despised Tessa even more than ever.

## Always Been Yours Chapter 475

### Chapter 475 Drink Up

Kathleen was afraid of her mother, so she didn't say anything in the end. However, Hathaway wasn't about to let her off the hook yet. "I don't think there's anything wrong with Tessa's eagerness to learn. You, on the other hand, have been getting lazier and lazier. You even skipped half a day of practice. Do you think you're that great?" Kathleen pressed her lips shut without saying a word.

After their orchestra practice ended in the evening, all of them went for a meal together. As usual, Tessa was the one who picked their dinner spot. The group chit-chatted with one another, and she was laughing happily at a joke that one of the other members said. The happier Tessa was, the more displeased someone else was. When Kathleen saw the bright smile on Tessa's face, she felt especially triggered. Then, Kathleen's gaze darkened further as she glanced at the juice on Tessa's table.

An idea popped up in her head at that moment. "Tessa," Kathleen said as she got out of her seat. She headed over to Tessa's table with a glass of whiskey in her hand. When Tessa saw Kathleen, she knitted her brows slightly. "Is anything the matter?" A few of the people around them also glanced over worriedly. They were afraid that Kathleen would pick a fight with Tessa.

Kathleen pretended as if she couldn't see the worried looks on other people's faces. She simply stood in front of Tessa before filling her glass up with alcohol. "I'm sorry," Kathleen uttered sincerely. "I was too hot-headed this afternoon, so I'm here to apologize to you."

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Tessa wasn't the only one who was shocked upon hearing Kathleen's words—the rest of the people around them were just as surprised. Did Kathleen just apologize to Tessa? Is she still the Kathleen we know?

Naturally, Kathleen noticed the dumbfounded looks on everyone's faces. However, she didn't seem to care much about them. She beamed when she realized that Tessa didn't have an alcohol glass for herself. "Oh, dear. I didn't even realize that you don't have a glass. Hold on. Let me get you a drink." When Tessa saw Kathleen moving over to get her a glass, she hastily stopped Kathleen. "It's fine. I'm drinking juice."

Kathleen's eyes glinted before she spoke when she heard Tessa's words. "Are you trying to disrespect me by rejecting my drink, Tessa?" Kathleen twisted her face into a frown as she glared at Tessa.

Tessa felt rather uneasy to see the change in Kathleen's expression, but she tried her best to remain patient. "That wasn't my intention," she explained.

"If that wasn't your intention, then do you think it's right for you to drink juice while I drank alcohol for my apology?" Kathleen asked. So, Tessa had no choice but to explain herself again when she saw that Kathleen wasn't willing to let this slide. "It's not the right time for me to drink alcohol now," Tessa stated.

"I don't think it's about the timing. You just don't want to drink with me, right?" Tessa felt rather annoyed by how pushy Kathleen was. Since Tessa didn't want to ruin their dinner, she finally gave in and drank two glasses of alcohol. Cough cough...The burning sensation in Tessa's throat made her cough a few times, and her pale face turned visibly red under the bright lights.

When Tessa lowered her glass of alcohol, she turned to gaze at Kathleen with her slightly teary eyes. "Are we done now?" she asked in a hostile tone.

"Of course." Kathleen wore a sly and smug grin on her face when she saw Tessa suffering. She knew that Tessa's stomach had been acting up—that was why she forced Tessa to drink alcohol. Tessa wasn't aware of Kathleen's plan, but her stomach felt extremely uncomfortable after the two glasses she had. At first, she could still tolerate the pain, but she soon felt like her entire stomach was on fire. She was in a lot of pain. "I need to use the washroom." In the end, she couldn't control herself any longer—she hurried out of the room after informing those around her that she had to use the washroom.

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When Kathleen saw Tessa leaving, she curled her lips into a smirk. Then, after dinner was over and everyone was about to leave, they suddenly realized that Tessa hadn't returned from the washroom. "Tessa has been in the washroom for a long while. Did something happen?" someone asked.

"I don't know, but I noticed that she seemed rather pale when she left earlier," someone else replied. "Why don't we go take a look?" A few of them agreed with one person's suggestion. A faint annoyance flashed across Kathleen's gaze when she first overheard their conversations. "You guys don't need to look for Tessa anymore," Kathleen said as she stood up to stop them. "She texted me a while ago and said that she had already left. So she told us to head home on our own."

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### Chapter 476

None of them were suspicious upon hearing Kathleen's words—they simply left along with Kathleen. After everyone left, Tessa returned with a sickly look on her face. "Where's everyone?" she wondered when she saw the empty room.

Right then, one of the waiters from the restaurant walked over. He happened to — overhear Tessa's words, so he responded to her. "Are you asking about the people who were in this room? They've already paid the bill and left."

"They left?" Tessa asked puzzledly. "When did they leave?"

"Just a while ago. I think you might be able to go after them if you leave now." The waiter began cleaning the room up after finishing his words. Tessa immediately headed out of the restaurant. But unfortunately, she was a little too late, and they were nowhere to be seen by the time she ran out of the shop.

Her stomach had been uncomfortable to begin with, and she felt even worse after she jogged to chase after them. Tessa gasped in pain as she clutched onto her stomach and squatted by the side of the road. Cold sweat began to form on her forehead.

In the end, she had no choice but to pull her phone out to call Nicholas. "Is your gathering over?" Nicholas's gentle and pleasant voice sounded on the other end of the

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line. Tessa bit her bottom lip as she forced her words out of her mouth. "Can you come over to pick me up, Nicholas? My stomach hurts."

"Where are you? I'll come right now." His voice turned serious upon hearing her words. After she told him her location, she squatted by the stairs and waited for him to arrive.

On the other end, Nicholas ordered Edward to get the car immediately. He kept urging Edward to drive a little fast as they made their way to the restaurant. Then, about ten minutes later, Nicholas leaped out of the car to find her hunched by the stairs. He felt a twinge of pain in his chest when he saw her tiny and frail figure.

Nicholas took large strides over before lifting her into his arms. "Nicholas." Tessa felt grateful to see Nicholas beside her, and she rested her head against his chest as he brought her back to the car. Then, when he saw how pale she looked, he hastily sent orders to Edward. "Drive us to the hospital immediately!"

Edward nodded and stepped on the gas. The black car sped off on the road at the speed of light, and Nicholas held her in his arms as he lowered his head and gently

comforted her. "We'll reach the hospital soon. Just hold on for a while more." She nodded lightly. Her stomach no longer hurt as much after she inhaled the man's fresh scent.

Soon enough, they arrived at the hospital. Nicholas got Edward to register for Tessa while he brought Tessa over to the doctor's office. "What is it?" The doctor's gaze landed on Tessa the moment they walked in. "Gastric," Tessa replied honestly. The doctor stood up and pressed his finger on her stomach area.

"It hurts." Tears formed in Tessa's eyes as she was in too much pain. When Nicholas saw this, his expression turned sour as he shot the doctor a hostile glare. "You need to be gentler," he hissed in a cold tone.

The doctor smiled without acknowledging Nicholas's words. Instead, he simply returned to his desk before speaking to Tessa. "I smell alcohol on you. Did you drink just now?" he asked.

"I drank two glasses of whiskey," Tessa answered honestly. The doctor nodded while writing a prescription for her. "You may be suffering from acute gastritis. The alcohol in your system probably stimulated your stomach. I'll give you three days' worth of

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medication to cure the inflammation, but you shouldn't eat anything too spicy or strong-flavored after that. You need to watch your diet and stick to the more simple and bland foods," he ordered.

Tessa nodded while Nicholas was standing beside them, and he quickly took note of the doctor's advice. After they collected the medication, Nicholas got Tessa to take her first dose of medication at the hospital. The pills were quick and effective as her stomach no longer hurt after taking them.

While they were on the way back, he wrapped his arms around her. "Why did you drink alcohol?"

She rested all of her weight on him as she gave him a brief explanation of what happened in the restaurant. "During then, Kathleen would have started a ruckus if I hadn't drunk. So, I figured that I would just drink a glass or two so that it wouldn't disrupt everyone else's dinner."

"It's Kathleen again," he grumbled.

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Nicholas frowned-he was displeased to learn about what had happened. Tessa immediately sensed a shift in his mood, and she hastily attempted to calm him down. "You shouldn't let someone like her ruin your mood. I'm fine."

He gazed down at the woman in his arms. "There will be no more next time," he hissed.

"I don't think there'll be a next time," she replied with a small voice. Although Tessa had been trying her best to tolerate Kathleen, she would no longer allow herself to be bullied if Kathleen went overboard.

Later that night, he insisted on carrying Tessa out of the car once they arrived at Dynasty Gardens. Timothy and Gregory were still awake when they walked into the living room. They hurried over to Tessa when they saw Nicholas carrying her in. "Did something happen to Tessa, Nicholas?" Timothy asked.

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"What happened, Aunt Tessa?" Gregory chimed in. Tessa felt a warm, fuzzy feeling in her heart when she heard the concern in both their voices. Then, she ran her fingers through Gregory's soft, black hair. "I had a stomachache earlier, but I'm much better now," she uttered faintly.

Timothy knitted his brows and looked like he was about to continue questioning her, but Nicholas stopped him before he could do so. "It's getting late. I'll bring her into her room for her to get some rest." Then, Nicholas carried Tessa up to her bedroom upon finishing his sentence.

Although Timothy and Gregory were still worried, they couldn't bear to disturb Tessa when she wasn't feeling well. Meanwhile, after Tessa and Nicholas got to her room, he lowered her onto the bed before he tended to all her needs.

Initially, Tessa felt somewhat embarrassed to get him to care for her. However, she felt less shy after realizing that they had done everything that they shouldn't have done prior to this anyway. Then, she finally allowed him to take complete care of her after that, with her heart full of gratitude for the man.

The next day, Tessa woke up a bit later than usual, perhaps because she was ill the next before. However, her stomach no longer hurt in the morning, and she finally looked like she had some color on her face. Everyone at home felt less worried when they saw that Tessa's condition had improved.

Nicholas's initial plan was for Tessa to stay home and rest. However, Tessa realized that the orchestra's performance was happening soon, so she rejected this idea. He had no choice but to send her over to Silverscape Theater. When she got out of the car, he eyed her worriedly. "Take care of yourself. If you're not feeling well, you shouldn't push yourself too hard. Call me if there's anything you need. I'll come over to pick you up."

"I got it," she replied before walking into the theater. When she first entered backstage, Kathleen caught sight of her, and Kathleen immediately started on her odd and long lecture. "You said I was lazy yesterday, yet you're the one who's late now! What's wrong with you?"

Tessa frowned as she tried to explain herself. But before she could say anything, Kathleen bombarded her with a string of words. "You may not have to perform, but the orchestra members have to show up every day. Look at the time! Can't you manage your time a little better?" Kathleen spoke at the rate of a machine gun's bullets.

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Tessa couldn't find a comeback-it was true that she was late, after all. The members around her tried to speak up for her, but Kathleen shot them a warning glare the moment they spoke. Hathaway couldn't bear to look at how pushy and domineering her daughter was, so she went over to stop the conversation. "That's enough," she barked.

Kathleen finally kept her mouth shut after that, but a grim look formed on her face. Hathaway didn't seem to care about this-she simply turned to look at Tessa with concern-filled eyes. "Did something happen to you?" Hathaway was questioning Tessa because Tessa was usually punctual in rehearsals.

Tessa apologized before explaining herself. "I drank some alcohol last night, and my stomach was acting up after that. So I went to the hospital at night, and I got up a little later this morning." Hathaway's expression softened upon hearing Tessa's explanation. "You should get more rest if you're not feeling well."

"I'm fine. Thank you, Miss Hathaway." Tessa nodded. Hathaway smiled at her before turning back to Kathleen, and her expression changed in a matter of seconds. "Why did you get Tessa to drink last night? You're the reason her stomach was unwell. She even had to go to the hospital at night."

Kathleen was furious upon hearing what her mother said. However, she was too afraid to talk back at her mother, so she had no choice but to glare in Tessa's direction. At that moment, she just felt that hypocrisy filled Tessa's actions

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She claims that she got a stomach ache after drinking a few glasses of alcohol! Who is she trying to fool here? I don't know how that b\*tch managed to trick or hypnotize my mother, but my mother seems to always be on her side, Kathleen thought.

Tessa simply pretended not to notice Kathleen's glares as she turned around to help her other members. Kathleen was extremely obedient for the rest of the day, perhaps because her mother had lectured her. When they got off work in the evening, Kathleen's voice sounded in Tessa's ear while Tessa was packing up to leave. "Why don't we go for

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a drink or two tonight? We have been so worried about the upcoming performance, and we haven't gotten the time to relax," Kathleen uttered cheerfully.

Many of the members were tempted by this suggestion, and they all agreed to Kathleen's idea. "We've been talking for so long, but we still don't know where's the best bar in Southend," someone said after a while.

"I bet someone else knows the answer to that." Kathleen's gaze fell on Tessa after she finished her sentence. "Can you recommend some fun bars, Tessa?" Kathleen spoke in a slow, arrogant tone.

"I don't really drink. Perhaps you guys can do some research online." Tessa was telling the truth, but her words sounded like an excuse in Kathleen's ears.

"We might be able to find some spots online, but we don't know the way there. So you will have to go with us. After all, the orchestra only allowed you to join us because you're familiar with this area," Kathleen muttered hostilely.

In the end, Tessa had no choice but to lead the way. She found a clubhouse with high ratings on the internet before she got a cab for the members and led them over to the location. They arrived at a place called Cosine Club which was situated on one of the busiest streets in the city center.

After they got out of the car, Tessa only took one look at the grand and luxurious front doors of the building. She didn't seem like she intended to follow them in. "I'll head home now. You guys should enjoy yourselves. Don't stay out too late!" she said to all of them.

"Heading home? What do you mean? Who's going to send us home when we get drunk tonight?" Kathleen stepped forward to stop Tessa. Kathleen's tone was firm and demanding-she spoke as if Tessa was their nanny. The rest of the members didn't realize anything-they simply agreed to Kathleen's words.

"Since you're here, you should have some fun with us too, Tessa," someone said. Tessa was about to reject their offer when she felt someone grabbing her arm and dragging her into the clubhouse. "Let's go. Let's have fun!" Tessa had no choice but to stay with them.

When all of them entered the clubhouse together, they attracted the people's gazes around them. The reason was simple-it was because everyone in the group, except for Tessa, were foreigners to the country.

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Tessa didn't like being the center of attention, so she hurried over to look for a waiter to book a private room. But her body stiffened when she turned around and saw Hayley walking in her direction. Hayley noticed Tessa at the same time, and she tugged a pleasant smile onto her face.

That night, Hayley had dropped by to drink with her best friend, Marianne. She hadn't expected to bump into Tessa there. Nevertheless, a series of thoughts flashed across Hayley's mind, and her friend, Marianne, immediately noticed when Hayley's footsteps slowed down. "What is it, Hayley?"

"Nothing much. I'm just staring at the person I hate and wondering how I could deal with her," Hayley replied. Tessa had no idea what Hayley was thinking about. After giving Hayley a polite nod, Tessa got the waiter to prepare a room for them. However, the waiters told her that there were no longer any rooms available for that night.

The group of them had no choice but to settle down on a large couch in the hall. Tessa didn't drink any alcohol because of her stomach. Instead, she ordered herself a glass of juice. Kathleen was unhappy to see this, but she didn't say much about it. She was the one who asked everyone out for drinks, so she didn't want to ruin the mood that night.

The members chit-chatted with each other, and they all looked like they were having a fun time that night. A while after that, a few tipsy young men visited their table. They all stared at Tessa and the rest of them with a sneaky look in their eyes. "Where's the fun in drinking on your own, huh? We'll come over to have some fun with you guys," the man offered.

The lead of the group of guys sent a playful smirk in everyone's direction before he landed his eyes on Kathleen's breasts.

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The men behind him laughed along with him. "Yeah. How could it be fun for you girls to drink on your own? You need a little something to spice your night up. Let us do that for you."

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Tessa knitted her brows as she watched these men who had just approached them.—.. The rest of the people wore looks of displeasure on their faces as well. Kathleen wasn't interested in these young men, so she reprimanded them in a high-pitched voice. "How dare cheap men like you guys come over to hit on me? Get lost." But the more she played hard-to-get, the more those men craved for her.

"This girl's a feisty one. I like her," one said.

"I like her too," another one said. All of the men began to scan Kathleen from head to toe. She could sense the men's perverted gazes all over her, and she fumed at the thought of these men checking her out. How dare these rotten apples look at me like that? "Take your eyes off of me!" she hissed.

Right after that, she picked up her glass of alcohol before splashing it at the man, who looked like the group leader of those men. The man had never been treated that way, so he lost his temper immediately. "F\*ck! Get her!" The rest of his men didn't dare to disobey his words, so they immediately followed his orders. The reason was simple—the man who had just been splashed was also the young master of the Abrams Family, Colin Abrams.

The rest of the men weren't as well off as Colin was, so Colin was naturally the head of their pack. Although Tessa and the rest of them attempted to stop his men, they were one step too late. The men grabbed onto Kathleen's arms and brought her over to him. "Let me go. Let go of me!" she howled as she thrashed her limbs angrily.

Unfortunately, her actions were of no use at all—she wasn't able to resist the grip of two strong men with her limited strength. Then, he wiped off the alcohol on his face as he glared at her. Finally, he gripped her chin harshly before curving his lips into a cunning smile. "You're pretty aggressive for a foreigner."

Kathleen couldn't contain her anger—she spat directly in the man's face. Colin couldn't dodge her spit in time, so her saliva splattered all over his face. He froze for a moment before he twisted his expression into one of rage. Then, in a split second, he slapped her across her face. "You b\*tch! I was nice enough to be interested in you. You got lucky there! If you don't satisfy me tonight, I'll make sure you're miserable for the rest of your life!"

He grew up as the treasured child of a powerful family, and there were only a few people in Southend who had the guts to go against him. So, naturally, he didn't feel the need to

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show any respect to a foreigner like Kathleen. She was so furious that she felt like she would lose her mind.

Kathleen, too, had been pampered since she was a child. So, she had never been shamed in such a manner before this incident. After giving Colin a furious glare, she addressed the rest of the orchestra members. "Are you guys dead? Why aren't you guys coming over to help me?!"

Tessa and the others immediately hurried over to help her out. Although they were women, they largely outnumbered the small group of men, so they soon managed to rescue Kathleen out of the man's grip. Kathleen was shocked, and she instantly hid behind the backs of the other girls after she was saved. Colin was infuriated to see that his prey had escaped his grip. "You guys are useless!" he hissed. After cursing at his men, he turned to fix his hostile gaze on Tessa and the rest of the girls. "I won't allow you guys to leave until you guys give me an explanation today." With that said, he pulled his phone out to make a call. In less than a minute, a group of well-trained bodyguards appeared in the hall, and all of them were dressed in black suits. When he saw that his bodyguards had arrived, he pointed a finger in Tessa and the other girls' direction. "I want you guys to surround them," he ordered in an arrogant tone.

"Yes, sir!" The leader of the bodyguards shouted before he instructed the rest of his subordinates to form a human barrier around Tessa and the other girls.

All of the girls' expressions dimmed when they saw the size of the bodyguards. They knew that they were no match for these bodyguards. "What should we do now? Should we call the police?" one asked.

"It's too late to call the police," another commented.

"What should we do, then?" another one asked. All of them were communicating in hushed voices. Like the others, Tessa knitted her brows as she began to think of what she could do. Kathleen hid behind the group of people, with her face filled with worry and frustration.

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Kathleen realized that she might have actually caused a mess this time, so she panicked on the inside. What should I do? What should I do? While she was worried about her next step, her gaze happened to land on Tessa.

An idea popped up in her mind right then. "Aren't you local, Tessa? Hurry up and find a way to deal with this."

Her idea was to force Tessa to take responsibility for this. Tessa was local, anyway, so there would be less of a problem. When the rest of the people in the orchestra heard Kathleen's words, they frowned in disapproval. However, they didn't seem to have a better plan, so they had no choice but to gaze at Tessa hopefully.

Tessa didn't blame the rest of them, but she was furious at Kathleen. She was the one who caused this whole commotion. Yet, she can free herself from all responsibilities by pushing them all on me, who's a local. Well, in her dreams!

"I may be able to help mediate the situation, but you're the one who caused this whole fight. So, you should be the one to apologize, right?" Tessa replied.

"Why should I apologize? He was the one who hit on me first!" Kathleen insisted. Her eyes bulged and she looked as if she had just heard some utter nonsense that she couldn't comprehend.

Tessa scoffed in anger; then, she simply turned around to look at the rest of the orchestra. "Do you guys think it's wrong for me to tell her to apologize?" The rest of the members gazed at Kathleen while showing their support for Tessa's words.

"I think you should apologize, Kathleen," one added.

"Yeah. Those people may have been rude, but those were just words. They didn't get aggressive," another one reminded.

"None of them would have gotten mad if you didn't throw your alcohol at them," someone uttered. Although they were usually more tolerant of Kathleen's actions, they felt the need to stand firm on their ground in this situation.

Kathleen's face turned exceptionally dark as she glared at Tessa angrily.

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"There's no way I will ever apologize. It's impossible! If you want to apologize, you can do it yourself!" Kathleen leaned closer to give Tessa a rough push on her shoulders upon finishing her sentence.

Tessa, who hadn't been prepared for the attack, felt herself stumbling back and away from her group of people. "What are you doing, Kathleen?"

She had to steady herself before she could shout at Kathleen. The rest of the orchestra members couldn't understand Kathleen's actions either. "How could you push Tessa away, Kathleen?"

But Kathleen didn't feel like dealing with them at all. She turned around to stare at Colin, who was standing beside them. "I don't know how you would like to deal with this matter, but if there's anything you need, you can just look for her!" Kathleen pointed her finger at Tessa.

Tessa felt like she was about to burst out in anger when she heard Kathleen's words.

As Colin turned to look at Tessa, his gaze lit up a little as he had just realized how gorgeous Tessa was. She might not be as sexy and seductive as the foreigner whom he had been talking to earlier, but she had her own aura that made him want to look at her for a while longer. "So, are you the one who's responsible for this now?" His lips spread into a nasty smirk as he sized Tessa up and down.

Tessa was mad when she first realized what the man was doing, but her instincts told her to apologize to him first. "I'm sorry. My friend was immature, so I'd like to apologize on behalf of her. I hope we can settle things with my apology." Unfortunately, the other party didn't look like people she could afford to mess with, so she figured that she would only cause more issues if she were to infuriate anyone else that night.

He curled his lips into a disdainful smirk when he saw how nice and proper Tessa seemed. "Your apology is nothing more than a bunch of words. That's too insincere," he muttered.

"What do you want me to do, then?" She furrowed her brows in worry as she gazed at him.

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Colin rubbed the bottom of his chin upon hearing her question. After that, he took a long look at both Tessa and Kathleen, and he spoke in a devilish tone, "If you insist on apologizing, I'll have to take one of you to bed with me tonight."

He was staring at Kathleen and Tessa when he came up with this idea.

Tessa held her breath for a moment in shock. The rest of the orchestra members wore sour looks on their faces when they heard the man's words. Even the audience that had formed around them shook their heads in pity—they figured that one of the girls would have to be trampled and tortured that night.

Right when the atmosphere was starting to get tense, a clear and stern voice sounded from the back of the group of people. "I'm not sure if you'd dare to sleep with her even if she said yes to you." Everyone immediately turned their heads around when they heard the person's voice.

It was Nicholas—he stepped forward in a black, formal suit. The rest of the crowd froze in response as they were attracted by his powerful and charismatic aura.

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