

Always Been Yours Chapter 421

Chapter 421 Tessa's Performance

"Why are you hiding here on your own?"

When Tessa opened her eyes, she found Scott—with a glass of wine in his hand—sitting on the sofa next to her. Behind him was Kathleen, who was wearing a long face.

Tessa pretended not to have seen Kathleen's displeased look and replied, "I can better enjoy the music since it's quiet here."

After all, for Kathleen to continue being eccentric even after Tessa had already expressed clearly that she had a loving boyfriend, there was no longer any need to concede to her anymore.

She wouldn't stop staying friends with Scott just because of someone like Kathleen.

And so, Scott and Tessa engaged in a conversation regarding music.

Scott explained to Tessa about each of the performers on stage as well as their signature songs.

"If you have the chance, you should try watching all these musicians' performances when you have the time. Especially the ones performed by our senior, Bird. I've always learned a lot every time I watch his performances."

Scott concluded at the end of his explanation.

Tessa thought about it before mentally noting down the name Bird. She thought that if she ever found the time, then she would watch this senior's performances.

In the time the two continued to chat pleasantly, Kathleen had tried to forcefully join the conversation, but to no avail.

For this reason, she grew discontent with Tessa with her eyes becoming sinister by the minute.

Suddenly, someone around Hathaway spoke up, saying, "Hathaway, I heard you've gotten a beloved disciple recently, and that their talent is astonishing. Why didn't you arrange for them to perform on stage tonight?"

"I've never said she would not be performing. I was planning to let you guys finish your performances before letting her out to play."

After Hathaway finished explaining herself, she glanced around the area to look for Tessa.

Their talks weren't loud but were audible enough that Tessa and Scott could pick up on the conversation.

Scott smiled. "Go ahead. It's your turn to perform now."

With a nod, Tessa then stood up and walked over to her mentor's side.

"Miss Hathaway."

"You heard what they said, right? Do well in your performance. Don't make me lose face as your mentor." Saying that, Hathaway patted Tessa on her shoulders as a form of encouragement.

Tessa nodded and smiled before going backstage.

After a few minutes, Tessa—who was wearing stiletto heels—came onstage with her violin. Her walking posture was elegant while she held onto the hem of her dress with one hand.

The audience became silent the moment Tessa appeared onstage.

After she bowed to the audience, she placed the violin on her shoulder and got ready to start her performance.

However, she had not expected the violin's tight strings to snap just after playing three bars. The beautiful melody immediately fell through.

The audience was in an uproar after witnessing the snapped violin strings.

Even Tessa was taken aback by this situation.

After all, this violin was given to her by Nicholas. It was impossible for the strings to snap so easily.

The guests offstage were also discussing what just happened.

"What's going on? How did the strings snap? Don't tell me she went onstage without checking her instrument?"

"Arguably, it is not easy for the violin strings to snap so easily. There must be something going on behind the scenes."

“Regardless, I think Hathaway’s beloved disciple’s performance was not meant to be on this night.”

“What a pity. I’ve heard talks of how talented Hathaway’s beloved disciple was in the prior celebration hosted by Vienna Conservatory. Here I thought I can finally hear for myself if the rumors are true.”

“Shame. Truly a shame.”

As she listened to the constant lamentations of the audience, a smile formed on Kathleen’s face.

Yet, Scott did not notice the peculiar expression Kathleen was showing.

Instead, he had wanted to go onstage and try to salvage the situation. However, he was shocked to the core just after taking one step forward.

It turned out that Tessa had also heard the audience’s lamentations. She wasn’t willing to have her opportunity to perform onstage ruined just like this.

And so, she forcefully composed herself.

Just because there was only one string left on her violin, it did not mean that the show wouldn’t go on.

With such thoughts, she ignored the audience and went into position, ready to perform again.

“What is she doing? Is she still planning to continue the performance with those broken violin strings?”

“That can’t be right. Playing the violin with only one string is difficult!”

“She must be confident with it since she has made such a decision. I ask for you all to be quiet now, lest it affects my appreciation of the number.”

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Chapter 422 Air on the G String

The chatter offstage gradually died down with these words.

Hathaway’s displeased expression gradually improved, and she looked at Tessa in pleasant surprise.

She felt that it was a good decision on her part to accept Tessa as her protégé.

And so, amid the surprised audience, Kathleen was in disbelief over what was happening. With the deep and eloquent melody enveloping the room, the audience couldn't resist but close their eyes and immerse themselves in the music with how poetic the melody was.

"It's Bach's Air on the G String."

Finally, someone said the name of the song.

Yet, as though Tessa did not notice what was said, she closed her eyes as she immersed herself in the music while performing the one-string piece in her own method, flawlessly demonstrating the high level techniques she possessed.

The bigwigs of the music industry were stunned.

'Air on the G String' was considered a difficult piece to perform with the violin.

Due to the restriction on the other three strings, the musician had to play the piece mainly on the G-string. With the varying range of tone as the accompaniment, it created layer after layer of sound, as it allowed for a richer variation in the melody.

"Amazing. I can guarantee you that she has definitely practiced single-string performances before."

"Definitely. To play a single-string piece on the G-string requires a high level of force."

"She looks pretty young to me. For someone as young as her to have mastered the technique in playing a single-string piece, I'm sure playing with all 4 strings available would further shake us to our cores."

"It's a shame that her violin strings snapped. Otherwise, we would be able to witness her skills in playing with 4 strings."

Kathleen listened to the admiration of the audience and had never expected for the prior incident to have become the catalyst for Tessa's current achievement.

Consumed in anger, Kathleen clenched her hands into fists while her gaze was filled with discontent.

Meanwhile, Hathaway's close friends were singing Hathaway's praises for having an excellent judgment in accepting such a good talent as her protégé.

Naturally, some of the guests were envious of her.

"Hathaway, just what kind of luck did you stumble upon for you to have such a talented student?"

“With such talent, given time, she’ll definitely become a master.”

“I’m suddenly feeling the temptation to poach a talent.”

Listening to her good friends expressing their envious thoughts, Hathaway failed to keep a hold of her expression as she had a triumphed look on her face.

“She is my protégé. You won’t be able to poach her away no matter what.”

Hathaway’s friends were speechless, feeling downhearted at her confidence, which was why they decided to just ignore the pleased yet carried away woman, and focused on appreciating the music.

After some time, Tessa’s performance came to an end, which prompted thunderous applause from the audience.

Tessa then flashed a courteous smile and bowed to the audience before leaving the stage with her violin in hand.

When she was in the backstage resting lounge, tears started to well in her eyes as she stroked the violin in her arms with a heartache.

The other members of the orchestra had heard about what had happened onstage, which was why they came over and tried comforting Tessa.

After all, a violin was the most cherished item to a violinist.

Especially the violin that was in Tessa’s hand. Not only was it expensive, but more importantly, it was gifted to her by her beloved person.

She rarely used this violin, but would always take it out for maintenance. Yet, the strings were now snapped.

With such thoughts swirling in her mind, it gradually grew unbearable for her, resulting in her urge to cry as tears welled up in her eyes.

The members tried to comfort her after seeing the state she was in.

“Tessa, please stop crying. I know a good instrument repair technician. I’ll introduce him to you.”

“Yes, that’s right. A skilled technician would be able to repair a violin to the extent as if it was never broken before.”

“Tessa, you can ask Miss Hathaway if you don’t believe us. She’s much more experienced and knowledgeable than us. I’m sure that she definitely has connections to better technicians compared to ours.”

Seeing the members going through painstaking efforts to comfort her, Tessa was enveloped with warm feelings, though she was still sad.

She blinked her eyes several times before forcing a smile and thanking them. “Thank you, everyone. You guys don’t have to worry about me. Your turn is coming up soon. Go ahead and get ready for your performance. I’ll be better after resting for a while.”

It was clear to the members that Tessa was putting up a tough front, yet their turn coming up soon was also true.

“Tessa, if you’re feeling down, then come watch our performance.”

Some of them invited Tessa.

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Chapter 423 Commotion Backstage

Although she wasn’t in the mood to watch, Tessa nodded in response.

The orchestra members knew but couldn’t say anything more. They then went off to prepare for their performance.

When everyone had left, Tessa wiped her tears from the corners of her eyes before rousing herself up to find out the reason for her violin strings to snap.

However, it was a fruitless endeavor, as she had no knowledge when it came to something like this.

It was at this time that Scott entered the lounge.

“Let me take a look.” Scott had his hand out while standing in front of Tessa.

Slightly taken aback, she managed to nod before wordlessly passing her violin to him.

Scott took the violin and started examining the violin in his hands. He placed one of the strings under a light and made his observation. “The strings seem to have been cut by something external; the area where the strings snapped is smooth.”

When he uttered those words, everyone immediately gathered around them.

With a frown, they questioned Scott, “Mr. Scott, are you sure someone maliciously caused this?”

“I’m sure,” he answered with confidence in his tone.

All at once, the crowd went into an uproar.

“My God, just who would be this unethical so as to maliciously damage someone else’s violin?!”

“But the only ones backstage here are part of our orchestra. Could it be an inside job?”

“Are you saying that someone from our ensemble ruined the violin? God, that’s just terrible. Was it done out of jealousy toward Tessa?”

Just when the discussion was turning heated, Hathaway’s voice—that carried an authoritative tone—came from the back of the crowd.

“What do you mean by jealousy toward Tessa?”

“Miss Hathaway.” The crowd immediately made way for Hathaway upon noticing her.

Hathaway glanced at the girls before asking, “What were you talking about just now?”

This question was actually directed at Scott and Tessa.

Before Tessa could get a word in, Scott immediately replied, “Miss Hathaway, I believe that Miss Reinhart’s violin strings were cut by someone with a malicious intent.”

Hathaway’s face grew dark upon Scott’s words. Immediately, she stepped forward and grabbed the violin in Scott’s hand before examining it. True enough, she reached the same conclusion as her expression turned into one of anger.

“Investigate this. I will find out who’s the fool daring enough to pull off this kind of foul play!”

Hearing this, Kathleen—who was standing at the side—turned slightly nervous.

The crowd held their breath when they noticed just how angry Hathaway was. The assistant heeded her order and immediately went to investigate the matter.

Fortunately, the emcee came into the lounge and broke the tension in the air by rushing for the next performance. “Mr. Brooks, Kathleen, your performance is coming up in 2 minutes. Please get into position.”

Scott nodded before offering words of comfort to Tessa. "Since your mentor has already ordered someone to investigate the matter, I'm sure that we'll find out about it soon. Kathleen and I will take our leave here to prepare for our performance. We'll come back to you after we're done."

Still standing at the side, Kathleen harbored a surge of resentment toward Tessa as Scott had never treated her the way he treated Tessa before.

However, Tessa did not notice the resentment in Kathleen's eyes. Instead, she urged for Scott to leave. "I'm fine. You two should hurry and make preparations. It's almost time for your performance."

When she was done, the emcee came in once more to urge them as well.

Scott nodded before turning back to Kathleen to leave the lounge with her.

Just before Scott turned to face Kathleen, Kathleen reined her emotions in and kept her expression in check. She then flashed a smile. "Mommy, it'll be my turn soon. Will you come watch?"

In truth, Kathleen did not want her mother to be with Tessa. Sometimes, she even had the feeling that her mother was becoming Tessa's mother instead.

This was because Kathleen had observed her mother's treatment of Tessa was gradually becoming better. At times, even more so than her own daughter.

Though Hathaway was unaware of what her daughter was thinking, she did not reject her daughter's request.

With a wave of her hand, Hathaway replied, "Just go ahead and perform. I'll head on over later."

Kathleen was slightly disappointed but could not delay the schedule any longer as the emcee came rushing the performers again.

"Alright, Mommy. Remember to come watch my performance."

Saying that, Kathleen and Scott left the area.

With the two out of the way, Hathaway waved her hand as a gesture for the other members to leave as well.

Soon after, the others left them alone.

Only Tessa was left where she sat while hugging her violin, as she remained depressed over the incident.

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Chapter 424 Tears on His Clothes

Hathaway patted Tessa on her shoulder while comforting her. "I will get to the bottom of this for you."

"Thank you, Miss Hathaway," Tessa replied with a depressed tone.

Hathaway understood what Tessa was feeling. She then continued, "I know a highly skilled technician that can restore your violin to its original state, so much so you can't tell that it was ever broken. When this matter is settled, I'll introduce you to him, so you'll just have to bring your violin over to him."

Tessa thanked her mentor, but her mood did not improve much.

She questioned in her heart whether the repaired violin would still be the same violin Nicholas had given her.

As she mulled over the question in her heart, unbearable feelings took place once more in her heart. It was at this time that she missed Nicholas very much.

Tessa took a deep breath before turning her gaze sideways. "Miss Hathaway, you should go ahead and watch Kathleen's performance. I'll be fine after resting for a while."

Seeing that Tessa did indeed have no desire for her company, Hathaway nodded and left her be.

As Tessa watched her mentor leaving, she grabbed her phone, went to an empty corner of the lounge, and called Nicholas.

"Is the party over?" Nicholas' attractive voice came from the phone. At this time, he was still handling some affairs back in the branch office.

"Not yet," Tessa replied in a soft voice to avoid others from listening in on her conversation.

Initially, Nicholas did not notice anything wrong with Tessa and asked, "If it's not over, then why did you call me?"

"I just... suddenly missed you, and thought I'd call you." Tessa exhaled and pretended to be cheerful in her reply.

However, Nicholas picked up on her odd tone and realized something was going on with Tessa.

“You’re sad right now. What happened at the party?”

Tessa was stumped. Due to her not expecting Nicholas to see through her so soon, she was momentarily at a loss for words.

On the other end of the line, worry started to creep into Nicholas’ heart as he listened to the long silence on his phone.

“Wait for me. I’ll come over now.” Saying this, Nicholas immediately took his car keys on the desk and left for the door.

When Nicholas reached the hotel, Tessa was already waiting by the entrance.

The moment Tessa saw him striding toward her, an inexplicable sense of grievance came washing over her. “Nicholas.” She immediately went and hugged the man, sobbing in the man’s embrace.

Nicholas tightened his embrace on the lady in his arms. His heart ached for her as he listened to her sobbing.

“Don’t cry. I’m here now. No matter what happens, I’m here for you. Tell me what happened here.” One of his hands gently patted Tessa on her back as he comforted her in a gentle tone.

It was only after Tessa cried for a while in the man’s embrace did her mood improve.

She then backed out from Nicholas’ embrace while wiping her tears in slight embarrassment.

When she saw the spot on the chest area of Nicholas’ clothes stained with her tears, her cheeks turned red from embarrassment.

“I’m sorry for dirtying your clothes.”

Nicholas looked down on the wet spot and paid no further mind to it. “This is not the time for this. Tell me, what happened to you?” He pursued the question once more with a serious expression as he stared deeply at Tessa.

Tessa bit her lip before finally telling him about the incident. “Someone broke the violin you gave me.”

As she said that, unbearable feelings came over her once more, and tears welled up in her eyes.

Nicholas was stunned for a moment before sighing out in relief.

He had assumed the worst had happened when he saw how upset Tessa was, but it turned out that it was only the violin he gave her that was broken.

With such thoughts, he took her into his embrace once more and comforted her. "It's fine. I'll definitely fix it for you since you cherish it so much."

"But, I failed to protect the violin." Tessa blamed herself while beads of tears kept rolling down her cheeks.

Heartbroken over the sight of her crying, Nicholas kissed her on the forehead and continued comforting her. "None of this is your fault. It's fine since I know how much you cherish the violin. Don't cry anymore. My heart aches whenever you do."

Tessa was startled by what Nicholas said. The man then continued in a gentle, warm voice, "In the meantime, you should use the violin Timothy gave you. It's also a good violin."

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Chapter 425 Baffled Hathaway

Tessa bit her lower lips. With Nicholas soothing her, her emotions gradually stabilized. She was moved to her core as she looked at that handsome and unrivaled man in front of her.

"Thank you, Nicholas." She buried her face into Nicholas' chest with a sweet smile on her face.

Thank you for always noticing whenever I'm feeling down, and thank you for always being by my side when I'm in a bad mood.

With a tender expression that had never been seen by others, Nicholas tightened his embrace on the lady. He took a glance at his watch before asking, "It's almost 10 now. Do you want to go home with me?"

Tessa shook her head before leaving Nicholas' embrace. "I can't leave when the party is still ongoing."

After all, it was the philharmonic's 20th-anniversary celebration. No one from the ensemble could leave before the party was over.

Nicholas nodded. "Then I'll wait for you down here."

However, Tessa was reluctant to let him wait here alone. "How about you go home first? I'll take a taxi back home after the party is over," she suggested.

Nicholas gave no reaction and only stared at her in silence. His focused dark eyes were just like an abyss, as though it could suck people right in.

Tessa was left with no other choice but to compromise with the man. "Alright, you can wait if you want, but you'll have to wait in the car. Since the weather has been cooling lately, I don't want you catching a cold because of me."

"Okay," he answered in a doting tone, the corners of his lips lifting and forming a faint smile.

Soon after, Tessa went back to the party while Nicholas stood alone at the entrance.

His eyes turned gloomy for a moment as his attention was on the direction Tessa had disappeared to.

He thought to himself that it wasn't all smooth sailing for Tessa as well, and that it wasn't as good as Tessa had made it out to be, especially when someone was picking a fight with her.

Though it was a competitive industry, it angered him to know someone was using such an underhanded tactic to get ahead of Tessa.

Naturally, what angered him the most was Tessa crying over this matter.

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. How dare they bring tears to her eyes when even I am reluctant to do so?

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Upstairs in a certain lounge room, Hathaway slapped Kathleen in anger.

"How could you have ruined Tessa's violin? What did she ever do to you?"

Kathleen touched her red cheek with her eyes full of resentment. "Because she seduced Scott!" she bellowed in discontentment.

Hathaway was stunned by her daughter's reason before frowning unhappily. "Tell me, how did Tessa seduce Scott? Is it just because Scott was teaching Tessa music?"

"It's different. Scott treats her differently from how he treats me," Kathleen complained with feelings of being wronged. "Scott always treats Tessa much more patiently and gently than he does with me."

Dumbstruck, Hathaway was taken aback and couldn't find the words to say. She finally understood why her daughter had acted in such a way, but this had further fueled her anger as well.

“Even if Scott treats Tessa differently, Tessa herself is already in a relationship. Don’t you find your own jealousy baffling? As a violinist yourself, you know better than anyone just how important a violin is to a violinist! How could you have done such a sacrilegious act?!”

Faced with her mother’s scolding, Kathleen parted her trembling lips as she answered in resentment, “I only wanted to teach her a lesson.”

It was at this moment that Hathaway really blew her top.

“Teaching a lesson by ruining her violin?! You’ve really wasted all that I have taught you all these years!”

Feeling disappointed toward her daughter for failing to meet her expectations, Hathaway glared at Kathleen.

Initially, she thought that it was the work of some scoundrel that was envious of Tessa. Yet, she didn’t expect that it was her own daughter who was caught doing the deed on the surveillance footage.

“Kathleen, I’m giving you one last warning—if you can’t keep your emotions in check in the future, I will refuse Scott Brooks from coming to the orchestra from now on.”

Looking at her mother’s serious expression, Kathleen knew her mother was extremely furious this time and became slightly afraid as a result.

Naturally, she did not want her mother to deny Scott from ever coming to the orchestra, as it would be difficult for her to meet Scott should this come to pass.

Always Been Yours Chapter 426

Chapter 426 Mother’s Love

“Mommy, I was wrong.”

She caved and apologized.

Hathaway snorted coldly. “The one you should be apologizing to is Tessa, not me.”

Kathleen’s expression turned dark upon her mother’s words. She really did not want to apologize to Tessa.

“Mommy, everyone in the orchestra would know that I’m the one who ruined Tessa’s violin if you make me apologize to her. How will I ever be able to have a standing in the orchestra from then on?”

Hathaway hesitated after hearing her daughter's persuasion.

Seeing that what she said was effective, Kathleen continued, "Mommy, I promise to behave from now on as long as this matter is covered up."

Hathaway's expression remained displeased as she continued to stay silent.

Seizing her chance, Kathleen stepped forward, grabbed her mother by her arm, and behaved in a spoiled manner.

"Mommy, I was wrong. Since you've already given me a lesson both physically and verbally, please don't ask me to apologize once more. Moreover, Scott absolutely must not know of this. Otherwise, he will alienate me even more in the future. I really do like him."

Hathaway gazed at the spoiled Kathleen as she remained in anger.

It was just as Kathleen had said. Hathaway knew that if this matter were to spread, her daughter's career in music would come to an end, and she would be cast aside in unimaginable ways.

When all was said and done, Kathleen was still her daughter and her heir in training. She couldn't allow this matter to ruin her daughter.

"Just this one time. Otherwise, I will strip you of all your achievements." Hathaway pretended to be serious and intimidated Kathleen.

Kathleen sighed in relief before immediately agreeing. In truth, she did not take her mother's words to heart. After all, she knew her mother would never ruin her when her mother had already spent so much effort over the years on her.

On the other side of the door where the party was, Tessa was unaware of the mother-daughter confrontation.

She was about to rejoin the party but had unexpectedly met with Scott.

"Miss Reinhart, you went out?" Scott gave a slightly surprised look at Tessa. In fact, he had been searching for her right after his performance ended.

Tessa did not deny his assumption. "Just for a little while."

However, Scott's attention was on her reddened eyes as he stared blankly at her. "You've been crying?"

At this moment, there were peculiar sentiments creeping into his heart as he remained unaware that the tone he used was laced with a sense of heartache.

Tessa was taken aback for a split second; she did not expect Scott to suddenly pose such a question.

Nevertheless, she managed to put on a faint smile after composing herself. "It's alright now. Thank you for worrying about me, Mr. Brooks."

Scott nodded, and then followed Tessa along into the banquet hall.

As they were walking together, Scott remembered something he said before. "I'll introduce you to the technician I've spoken to you about sometime later."

"Alright. Then I'll take you up on it." Tessa did not reject his offer.

The two were talking when they saw Hathaway walking over with Kathleen in tow.

As Kathleen watched Tessa and Scott standing side by side, jealousy flashed in her eyes. However, she greeted Tessa with a smile as her mother was beside her.

"Tessa, my mother has something to discuss with you. Leave entertaining Scott to me." Saying this, she forcefully dragged Scott away without giving him the chance to reject.

Tessa frowned at the figures walking away while feeling that Kathleen was acting rather peculiar tonight.

In the past, Kathleen's expression would always be one of despise whenever she saw Scott and Tessa together, yet now she was smiling so affectionately.

Regardless, Tessa did not think too deeply about it as her mentor's voice interrupted her thoughts.

"Tessa, we've found the culprit of the incident. This is not the appropriate place to tell you. Come with me."

After that, Hathaway brought Tessa into the resting lounge backstage.

After they took a seat, Tessa hurriedly asked, "Miss Hathaway, who was the one who ruined my violin?"

"We've gone through the surveillance footage and found that it was one of our staff that accidentally damaged your violin."

With an apologetic look, Hathaway recited the reason she thought up from a while ago.

As for the loss Tessa had suffered, she had already decided to give more performing opportunities to Tessa in the future as a form of compensation.

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Chapter 427 Elevator Trouble

Yet, Tessa remained unaware of what her mentor was thinking. She was in shock and had a difficult time accepting what her mentor had told her. "Miss Hathaway, can I meet with that staff?" She wanted to know what she did to offend that staff for them to treat her this way.

Hathaway had somewhat guessed correctly in regard to what Tessa was thinking. However, the staff in question was not real as it was only an excuse she fabricated.

"That may not be possible. After finding out about the staff, I fired them on the spot in a fit of anger."

After listening to her mentor's explanation, Tessa felt surprised, but also felt that something was weird with what she was told.

Miss Hathaway settled this a little too quickly, no? I haven't even been granted the chance to meet the culprit, yet the culprit was fired?

With such thoughts in her head, she asked, "Then can you tell me who that person was?"

"It's one of the cleaning staff named Leanne."

Hathaway knew that Tessa would be suspicious should she choose to not give a name to the "culprit," which was why she had made up a name to give to Tessa.

Remaining unaware of Hathaway's thoughts, Tessa noted the name down as she planned to reflect on herself and think back to whether she had done something to offend this person before.

Seconds later, her mentor spoke up.

"The orchestra will cover the compensation for your violin as Leanne was a staff of the orchestra. What do you think of this decision?"

Tessa nodded slowly in response to indicate her approval. But in truth, she still had doubts in her mind.

Logically speaking, the violin strings were made with special materials; it would be hard for them to snap after being damaged in just a minor accident. Only those harboring the intention to do so would be able to make the strings snap.

Regardless, since her mentor had already explained the result of the investigation to her, Tessa felt that she would be questioning her mentor should she voice her doubts. She was worried that doing so would upset her teacher, thus decided to investigate this matter privately.

Beside her, Hathaway was unaware that Tessa was harboring such thoughts.

Though she sighed in relief when Tessa did not pose any more questions, she still felt slightly apologetic toward Tessa about her decision.

Later that evening when the party ended, the guests were bidding their goodbyes to Hathaway.

Unsure whether it was as a form of apology, Hathaway had Tessa by her side the whole time.

All of the major players in the music industry had a very good impression of Tessa, which was why all of them remembered to shower her with words of encouragement when bidding their farewells.

“Learn well from your mentor now.”

“Good luck. I hope I’ll be able to see you one day when your orchestra performs.”

Due to the encouragements, Tessa’s mood—which was initially down—became much better.

Soon after, only the people of Hathaway Philharmonic and Scott were left in the banquet hall.

Tessa had changed out of her dress backstage and was about to leave until she saw Scott walking over toward her.

“Miss Reinhart, let me send you home.”

“Thank you, but my boyfriend is already waiting downstairs for me.”

Tessa rejected him with a smile while slinging her violin case over her shoulder. “I’ll be taking my leave here.”

As Scott watched the back of that girl who seemed to be in a hurry to leave, his eyes—that was like a star in a night sky—turned bleak as he stopped in his tracks.

He didn’t know what was wrong with him, as his mood abruptly went down.

Not far away from where Scott stood, Hathaway and Kathleen had witnessed the scene.

Kathleen's expression immediately turned sour.

Hathaway frowned at the situation before stepping forward with her daughter in tow. "Scott, since it's already so late, could you be a dear and send us home?"

Naturally, Scott would not reject their request.

On the other side of the hall, Tessa had gone into the elevator directly after leaving the banquet hall.

Just as she was about to press the floor number, two attendants, who were dressed in hotel uniforms, came in.

She didn't take further notice of them and merely took a step back before using her phone to type a text.

'I'm already coming down. Be there soon.'

As Tessa lowered her head to send the text to Nicholas, she suddenly caught a whiff of something pungent.

Before she could react, someone covered both her mouth and nose with a handkerchief—one doused with ethanol LSD—after locking their arm around her neck.

"Hmmp..."

She widened her eyes in panic as she continued to struggle free with both legs kicking, but to no avail.

Gradually, she started to lose focus and finally lost consciousness.

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Chapter 428 Looking For Tessa

With a chime, the elevator stopped on the first floor and the door opened. Originally, there were people outside the door who were waiting to enter the elevator, but they were chased away by the two attendants in the elevator. Soon after, the two attendants took Tessa, who was unconscious, out of the parking lot.

In a black car, Nicholas stared at the entrance of the hotel with a frown. He had been waiting downstairs for a long time, but he couldn't see any trace of Tessa at all, even though she said that she would come out soon in the text message she had sent him. As the thought arose, he started to feel a little uneasy, so he picked up his phone to give her a call.

“Sorry, the number you have dialed is currently unavailable.” The robotic voice that came from the phone caused him to furrow his brows even more as his anxiousness grew.

Soon after, he hung up and opened the door before getting out of the car, intending to enter the hotel to see what was going on. However, he had just taken a few steps when he bumped into Scott, Hathaway, and Kathleen, who had exited together.

Scott was stunned when he saw Nicholas. He knew Nicholas as he had seen him in the country before and knew that this man was a friend of Tessa. However, what puzzled him was the reason for this man to be here. Is he waiting for Tessa?

Wait a minute. Scott looked at Nicholas dubiously. Is this Mr. Sawyer the boyfriend that Tessa talked about just now?

Hathaway and Kathleen, who were standing next to him, were also surprised by the man who appeared in front of them. A pair of black trousers enveloped the man’s straight and slender legs as they watched as he walked toward them gracefully. Under the light, his facial features seemed to be carefully carved by the hand of God, and they were perfect without any flaws. At the same time, his whole body exuded the aura of someone of high status, making them feel pressured.

“Hello, I’m Tessa’s boyfriend. May I know where is she?” A cold voice came from Nicholas. As he knew Hathaway, his dark eyes stared at her intently.

Meanwhile, Hathaway and Kathleen, as well as Scott, were stunned by what he had just said. They hadn’t expected Tessa’s boyfriend to be so perfect and handsome. It was clear from a glance that this man was not an ordinary person.

Nicholas returned their stunned gazes, his frown deepening.

Fortunately, Hathaway quickly recovered and answered, “Tessa came down a long time ago. Why? Didn’t you see her?”

Nicholas’ expression slightly sank. “I’ve been waiting at the door, but I didn’t see her coming out.”

“Perhaps she’s being held up by some matters?” Scott looked at Nicholas in trepidation.

Glancing at him, Nicholas said coldly, “If something cropped up, Tessa would tell me in advance.”

Scott was dumbfounded, not knowing what to say, but there was also worry on his face.

On the other hand, Kathleen felt extremely unpleasant as she listened to the conversation between the two. Why do all the good men have a soft spot for Tessa?

Thinking that, she couldn't help but remark sourly, "Tessa isn't a child. It's not like she can get lost in the hotel."

The moment her words fell, Nicholas and Scott looked at her in displeasure.

Hathaway, who had also gotten a little angry, scolded, "Kathleen, watch your words."

"Mommy, why are you yelling at me? I'm not wrong."

Kathleen pouted in hurt, but as soon as she spoke, she felt an unfriendly stare boring into her. When she looked up subconsciously and met Nicholas' sharp gaze, she was shocked and hid behind Hathaway in fear.

At that moment, Hathaway didn't look pleased either. However, it wasn't because of Nicholas, but because of Kathleen. This child really got spoiled by her daddy!

In an instant, the atmosphere became stiff. Just then, Scott stood up and suggested as a peacemaker, "If you aren't at ease, Sir, why don't we go in and look for Miss Reinhart?"

Nicholas did not refuse. For some reason, the anxiety in his heart was getting heavier and heavier, and he vaguely had a bad feeling. With a sullen face, he strode into the hotel. After glancing at each other, Scott and Hathaway followed behind him, intending to help him look for Tessa.

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Chapter 429 Tessa Got Kidnapped

Seeing this, Kathleen stomped her feet unwillingly, but still followed the others in. However, after they looked around, Nicholas and the others still could not find Tessa in the hotel.

"What if something bad really happened to her?" Kathleen asked in shock.

Nicholas glanced at her coldly, his expression terrifyingly gloomy.

Seeing that, Hathaway glared at Kathleen angrily and reprimanded, "Shut your mouth."

Even though Kathleen was unwilling, she didn't speak anymore, mainly because the cold aura that exuded all over Nicholas' body scared her to the point where she didn't even dare to breathe.

Meanwhile, Hathaway and Scott wore similar worried expressions. After all, there was no reason why they couldn't find someone who hadn't exited the hotel.

“How about this, I’ll ask the hotel manager.”

Saying that, Hathaway took out her phone to contact the hotel manager. After a while, a plump and middle-aged man hurriedly walked over.

“Miss Hathaway, did something happen?”

“My student went missing from your hotel. I need your help.”

After Hathaway briefly explained the issue, the hotel manager nodded profusely and assured her, “Don’t worry, we’ll definitely find your student.”

As soon as he said that, he ordered a few hotel staff to look for her.

Just then, Nicholas stepped forward and said in a voice that wouldn’t accept refusal, “I want to see all the surveillance footage of your hotel!”

Although the hotel manager didn’t know Nicholas, the aura of the man in front of him made him give in. Unexpectedly, he nodded in agreement.

After that, the group went to the hotel’s surveillance room. Nicholas informed them of the last time Tessa had contacted him and asked the staff to pull up the footage in the elevator. Soon, they discovered the reason for her disappearance. In the surveillance footage, she was knocked unconscious by two people dressed in hotel attendant uniforms and taken away from the parking lot.

Seeing that, Hathaway was stunned.

“How could this happen?” She looked at the hotel manager in shock and interrogated angrily, “Aren’t these your attendants? Why are your hotel staff kidnapping my student?!”

Breaking out in a cold sweat, the hotel manager quickly denied, saying, “Miss Hathaway, they are definitely not our hotel staff. I’ve never seen them before.”

“If they aren’t working at your hotel, why are they wearing your hotel uniforms?!” Hathaway pressed.

At the same time, Nicholas’ sharp gaze was also piercing into the hotel manager, who felt like he was being targeted by a demon. He was so frightened that he trembled subconsciously, and even his teeth chattered.

“Miss Hathaway, they obviously stole those uniforms. If you look closely, the pants don’t fit them, their ankles are exposed, and the sleeves are also too short.”

Hearing that, Hathaway, Kathleen, and Scott immediately went to review the footage, and sure enough, they found that the uniforms of the two attendants in the video were extremely ill-fitting. When he saw that, Nicholas' expression turned dark. Thinking of Tessa, whose whereabouts were unknown, he turned around abruptly and strode away.

Scott hurriedly chased after him and said, "Mr. Sawyer, are you going to look for Miss Reinhart? I can provide some help."

Nicholas stopped and turned around to glance at Scott coldly. As their eyes met, Scott felt even more pressured.

Then, Nicholas' firm voice sounded. "I don't need your help. I'll get Tessa back myself."

As soon as he finished, he left without looking back. When he walked out of the hotel, he immediately took out his phone and called Austin, one of his subordinates who was abroad. "I want you to send people out to find out Tessa's location immediately."

In an abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of the city, Duane glanced at Tessa, who was lying unconscious on the ground, and took out his phone with an air of satisfaction to contact Hayley to take credit for his deeds. The video call quickly went through, and Hayley's disheveled and bleary-eyed appearance appeared on the screen, obviously having just woken up.

With furrowed brows, she asked unhappily, "Why are you calling me this early in the morning?"

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Chapter 430 Buying Time

Duane was unfazed. Because he was too overjoyed, he had forgotten that there was a time difference of several hours between them.

"Sorry, I forgot about our time difference, but I called you because what I promised you before has now been done."

Saying that, he pointed his phone camera at Tessa lying unconscious on the ground.

When Hayley saw this, her expression of displeasure eased.

At this moment, he turned the camera back to himself again and asked, "Are you really planning to let people assault her?"

"Do you think I'm joking?" She glared at him coldly.

“Just pretend I didn’t say anything earlier.” Duane looked at Hayley with a smile and quickly changed the topic. “In that case, is three people enough? My men are strong, so I’m scared she might die if I add any more.”

“Fine.” Hayley didn’t want to kill anyone either. After nodding in agreement, she suggested, “You better remember to record it.”

She planned to show Nicholas the video when the time came so that he would know how impure Tessa was.

Naturally, Duane listened to Hayley’s words. After hanging up the phone, he asked his subordinates to look for some recording equipment and point them at Tessa.

“You, you, and you. I’ll hand this woman to you. Take care of her well.”

When everything was ready, Duane called out three of his muscular men before he turned around and left with the others. The three men who had been called were elated as they hadn’t expected to be able to reap a benefit like this. Just as they were about to begin, Tessa, who had been unconscious, woke up with a groan.

“Why is she awake?” the three men asked dubiously.

At the noise, Tessa looked up in shock as the scene before she fell unconscious played back in her mind. It was clear that she had been kidnapped. At that thought, fear appeared in her eyes, but she kept forcing herself to calm down.

The unkind voices of the men sounded in her ears. “It’s even better that she’s awake. We can have more fun.”

When she heard this, Tessa’s face paled immediately. Her eyes widened, and her whole body began to tremble involuntarily. Although she didn’t know who kidnapped her, from the conversations of the kidnappers, she knew that they were planning to humiliate her! No, this won’t do. I can’t sit still like this. I have to do something.

“Although I don’t know who hired you to kidnap me, I can pay you twice the price.” She took a deep breath, resisted the panic in her heart, and tried to negotiate with the three kidnappers. Even if she couldn’t save herself, she had to delay things as much as she could. Suddenly, she was glad that she sent a message to Nicholas when she entered the elevator. She believed that he would definitely notice something wrong if she didn’t show up after a long time.

The kidnappers didn’t know what Tessa was thinking, but were surprised by her courage and calmness as they didn’t expect her to take the initiative to negotiate with them. They shared a glance, suddenly unsure whether to continue or inform their boss.

On the other hand, she breathed a sigh of relief when she saw that they were not moving. After a brief thought, she increased her offer and continued, "If you think twice the money is still not enough, you can name a price, as much as you want. I promise that as long as you let me go, I won't call the police and I'll treat it as if it never happened."

Of course, her offer was really attractive. The kidnappers were shaken for an instant, but those thoughts were quickly dispelled, because they were afraid that they wouldn't get to live to spend the money. After working under Duane for many years, they knew very well that their master's methods were not comparable to an ordinary person. If they disobeyed his orders, they would be the ones getting the short end of the stick.

"Even though your offer is very enticing, it's a pity that we are just acting on orders, so don't waste your energy."

Saying that, the kidnappers once again approached her with bad intentions.

Tessa thoroughly panicked. They don't even want more money!