

Girl Boss 811

## Chapter 811 We Will Talk During the Meeting

This was the only way in which Jessica's flaw—her personality—had a chance of being erased.

However, searching for such good genes was a difficult feat on its own. It was usually successful men that would have the traits Sonia was looking for, and yet, men like this don't typically offer their semen to a random stranger.

Of course some would, but those were usually foreigners.

Looking for such genes with the limited ability she had was no easy matter. Even if she somehow managed to find one, the man would most probably not sell it to her.

For the sake of getting a higher profit, sperm banks would definitely prioritize customers who were richer and more powerful if they had top-tier genes like that in their inventory.

Left with no other option, Sonia could only enlist Zane's help with his connections to look for a donor with that kind of genes..

As for why she didn't ask Toby...

Indeed, Toby would be able to find her what she wanted much quicker than Zane ever could. Not only that, knowing what an influential person Toby was, the sperm bank would not hesitate to sell him anything he requested.

In spite of that, on top of being someone who found it hard to reach out for help, Sonia also absolutely disliked having to owe anyone anything. She even found it uncomfortable to owe her lover a favor. She knew better than to ask for Toby's help when she fully knew how she would have to pay him back in the future.

If she had requested for his help, she would definitely feel burdened by the fact that she had unpaid dues with him until the day when she repaid everything to him.

It was a feeling that she couldn't get herself to overcome, and so she quickly threw the idea of asking for Toby to the back of her head, and went for Zane instead.

She would feel less of that pressure even if the one she owed favors to was Zane.

After all, Zane wasn't someone important to her. He wouldn't have a reason to reject her when she repaid him someday.

Toby, on the other hand, was her lover. He would gladly help without expecting anything in return. He might even get mad if Sonia were to insist on repaying him since he wasn't the type to draw lines when it came to his romantic partner.

She wanted to avoid any possible arguments from happening, and so, she would rather get someone else to help her with it.

Furthermore, the procedure would still work smoother if Zane used his authority to get it done.

Thinking about this, Sonia held her phone with a much tighter grip than before and hurriedly asked, "How many did you manage to get?"

"A little more than 10 that somewhat meet your requirements," Zane answered while waving the documents in his hand.

She lightly nodded at that. "That is quite a lot."

"So, go ahead and take your pick," he continued. "Their lineage, their personality, their educational background... I have all the information you need here."

Softly chucking, she replied, "You are pretty thorough with your work, huh?"

"Of course! How can I not do a good job when this is the first time you have ever asked for my help?" He proudly lifted his chin before asking, "Should I send this to you or would you prefer the original files?"

She gave it a thought and finally parted her red lips. "I'll take the original files from you. I'll also need to have a talk with you about the specifications of the sperm purchase."

"Sure! Where should I wait for you?" Zane immediately became energized when she mentioned meeting up. He quickly set his crossed leg on the floor and sat as straight as a pole while he tightly grabbed onto the documents in his hand. He had a look of absolute joy on his face.

It had been a long time since he had met up with Sonia.

He might have given up on pursuing her, but that didn't mean that he had gotten rid of his feelings for her.

There were times when he still thought of her.

Anyway, it wasn't like they were meeting up to do anything weird. Toby could be unhappy all he wanted, but he wouldn't be able to do anything to Zane, other than showing him that cranky expression of his.

Zane began to let out a series of devious laughs when he thought about that.

Truth be told, he was looking forward to seeing Toby's face if he were to find out that Zane and Sonia had arranged a private meeting. It would be so much fun! he mused.

"I can't now," Sonia said with a shake of her head. She was oblivious to the mischievous thoughts currently running through Zane's mind. "It is Jessica's court hearing today. I can only meet you in the afternoon."

"No need to wait until then. I'll go to court with you. We can have our talk right after the court hearing," he suggested as he waved his fingers in the air.

Sonia then raised her brows and laughed. "Sure, if you aren't busy. Why don't you wait for me at the inferior court?"

Jessica's primary offenses were tarnishing the country's prestige and dignity, and also defamation.

For the lack of severity in her offenses, her matter would only be heard by the inferior court.

“Alright. I’ll head over now. See you in a bit,” he singsonged as he stood up.

Sonia gave him acknowledgement as she, too, bid him goodbye.

After the call ended, she placed her phone down on the table and massaged her neck. She then stood up and headed to the kitchen to prepare something filling.

She had not expected Zane to be done with the job so soon.

Knowing how busy of a man he was, Sonia had initially thought that he would help out when he could take some free time out of his normally-packed schedule. Never would she have expected him to give his all into this little request of hers.

For him to prepare it so soon, she could only imagine how he must have pushed his other priorities aside for her. He wouldn’t have had the information ready so quickly otherwise.

I owe him big time! she mused.

She then helplessly smiled, but just as her gaze swept past the coffee table at the corner of the couch, her eyes stopped at an eye-catching strip of paper placed under a cup.

She hadn’t seen it the night before, which could only mean that it was put there earlier today.

As she began to wonder whether Toby had left her an important note, she made a U-turn and walked out of the kitchen. She eventually picked the paper up as she stood in front of the coffee table.

It was as she had expected. The neat handwriting definitely belonged to Toby.

Even though the characters looked sharp, the content was rather heartwarming. It was basically a note telling her that he had left for work, and she only had to go and collect her breakfast that he was going to have someone send it to her at the door. He also especially reminded her to fill her stomach well.

A gentle smile began to tug at the corner of Sonia’s lips after she read the last sentence of the note, and she softly mumbled, “Oh, Toby...”

For him to get her breakfast and remind her to eat, he must have really treated her like a precious child.

Does he not know that I am capable of getting my own breakfast? Sonia silently complained, yet her heart was filled with warmth and joy.

Alas, who wouldn’t feel happy about being on the receiving end of such care?

Then, she put the paper down, and after making sure that she had kept it safely on her, she went to the entryway and opened the door.

She was immediately greeted by the sight of a hotel attendant squatting at the same door as yesterday.

Upon closer inspection, she realized that it was the same attendant from before!

What an odd coincidence! she thought.

Sonia was the first to give her greeting, which prompted the attendant to do the same while passing her the breakfast.

He left soon after she took it and said her thanks.

After returning to her room, she didn't immediately dig in, but instead, she sat down and whipped out her phone. She then took a photo of the hearty breakfast and sent it to Toby, along with a text caption— I got the breakfast.

She set her phone onto the table right after she sent the message over.

Knowing that Toby had been dealing with a lot of work these days, Sonia hadn't expected to get a quick reply from him.

However, it hadn't even been two minutes since she sent the message when her phone screen lit up, showing that she had gotten a reply from Toby. In his message, he wrote: Good. I got you a Spanish breakfast. It's pretty light on the palate. I don't know if you'll like it or not.

Her eyes rested on the exquisite pastries and cakes on the plates, and with a smile on her face, she typed out another reply: I like it. I like anything that you get me.

As soon as Toby read the message, a smile began to appear on his thin lips. His dim and cold expression was replaced by a small smile that immediately brightened the mood around him. It felt like a warm spring breeze had come blowing after an excruciatingly cold winter.

#### Chapter 812 Misery

Toby was like a vengeful demon who suddenly overcame his resentment and in that instant, he became an angel that radiated warmth and love.

The rest of the people in the meeting room began to exchange gazes and let out breaths of relief after witnessing Toby being so different from how he used to be.

It was hard for them to not let their relief show.

Apparently, someone had misplaced a decimal point in an important project proposal earlier during the meeting. When Toby had noticed the hundred-million-dollar mistake, he immediately exploded and started biting everyone's heads off. Even the innocent bystanders were given a taste of his wrath. The atmosphere in the meeting room had become so tense that there wasn't one person in the meeting room, minus Toby, that wasn't on edge.

Just as they thought they wouldn't be let off easily, his phone started ringing. As soon as Toby held the phone in his hand, the scary Oni mask on his face had been replaced with a gentle, warm expression.

Everyone knew that only one person had the ability to make Toby transform like that. It was definitely Toby's ex-wife and also his current girlfriend—Sonia Reed.

They were extremely grateful for the sudden life-saving text she had sent him.

Otherwise, they would have to suffer more if it wasn't her message that came at the exact right time.

Even though no one spoke, everyone was thinking the same thing in their hearts. Sonia is my savior, and I'm thankful to her.

Despite his employees' evident change in mood, Toby was not interested to look at their faces. He only leaned against the backrest of his chair while his fingers swiftly typed out a message: 'I'm glad you like it. I was worried you wouldn't.'

Sonia smiled when she read the reply, and quickly wrote another message: 'How could I not? I quite like it! And you? You left pretty early today. Had your breakfast?'

Toby slightly nodded. 'I did.'

Sonia took a bite into her food. 'That's good. Are you busy?'

Toby's cold gaze averted from the phone screen and on the faces of his employees after he read that message by her.

Everyone instantly was on high alert again. Is he going to go off on us again? Did Miss Reed fail at calming President Fuller down?

Just as everyone was preparing themselves for what seemed to be a death sentence, Toby's eyes lowered to his phone once again. He then typed, 'I'm in a meeting. These high level executives are so bad that they're annoying.'

People like them who lived life rather comfortably were especially lax when it came to work. They even overlooked such an obvious mistake that they would've noticed if they paid more attention.

The company would have lost no less than a hundred million if he hadn't asked, and the proposal would have been executed!

It was only normal for him to feel annoyed by their incompetence.

Even though Sonia couldn't see him, she could feel through the texts that he wasn't in the best of moods.

She sent him a sticker of a head rub and wrote: 'Don't be mad. There's always someone like that in every company, but a small punishment would suffice if that employee hadn't done it on purpose or with the intention to betray the company. Don't fuss too much over them. All that anger isn't good for your health. So, don't be so angry, okay?'

Seeing the cute sticker and her words of consolation, his heart further softened again. That rare gentleness was almost flowing out of him for everyone to see.

Toby's thin lips curled into a smile. 'Okay. I'll listen to you. I'm not angry anymore.'

Sonia put down her glass of milk and wrote back. 'Attaboy. Alright, go ahead with your meeting. Don't let me disturb you. I'm almost done with breakfast too. I'll be heading to court after this.'

Toby slightly nodded. 'Okay. Be careful on the road. Let's have dinner together.'

Dinner together?

Her brows wiggled at that. 'Will you be done with work early?'

Toby pressed his lips together when he suddenly recalled how she said that he, a 30-year-old man, wasn't as energetic as a 20-year-old was. A glint of unknown emotion quickly flashed across his eyes before it disappeared. Then, he wrote, 'I'll be done and come home to you as soon as possible.'

Sonia didn't think too much into his words and only typed that she would be waiting for him before she placed the spoon in her hand back to the table.

She was secretly hoping for him to head home earlier as well, but of course, it wasn't because she wanted him to accompany her at home.

It was because she hoped for Toby to stop working so late into the night since it wasn't a healthy habit to have.

The smile on his face deepened when read her message, after which he wrote back. 'Okay. I won't disappoint you.'

Tonight, he would let her know that him being a 30-year-old man didn't matter. I'm definitely not worse than some 20 something stud, he grumbled. I might even outperform a younger man!

However, despite his gusto, Sonia didn't actually understand his last text.

Even though she couldn't quite connect his reply to her message, she simply sent him a smiley emoji before putting her phone down.

Toby knew from her smiley emoji that she was ending the conversation to let him focus on work, so he only let out a low chuckle before saving all the stickers she had sent him. The moment he kept his phone, the smile on his face had also disappeared. He coldly looked at the people before him and announced, "The person who is responsible for his mistake will have his employee bonuses, performance bonuses and executive benefits deducted. Add a 5000-word reflection essay on top of that. Any objections?"

His eyes fell on one of the department managers' faces as he spoke.

The manager was on his feet the next second, and with a forced smile, he quickly nodded and gushed, "None! I'll gladly take the punishment!"

How else am I supposed to continue staying with this company if I don't? He kept that last part to himself.

He was just a high-level executive. Unlike a shareholder, he still had the risk of being fired from the company.

For him to be at the managerial position he was in today, he had spent over ten years of hard work just to climb up the ladder. With a salary that could easily be more than ten million yearly, of course he wanted to stay!

It was an undeniable fact that the fault in the proposal was his mistake, which was why he had been concerned about being sacked. He had even mentally prepared himself to be fired, as there was a high-level executive who committed a mistake more minor than his and ended up getting laid off by the company. Toby was the kind of man who didn't tolerate the tiniest of mistakes, after all.

Unexpectedly, right as the manager was getting ready to look for his next workplace, there was a 180 degree change in the crisis as Toby had only wanted to deduct his pay and asked him to write a reflection. Writing a reflection essay at his age was embarrassing, yes, but it couldn't be compared to losing those yearly tens of millions salary. He was just glad that he wasn't fired!

Of course the manager knew that Toby hadn't kept him because Toby became soft-hearted. It was all because of Sonia who managed to ease Toby's foul mood that he was given another chance to prove himself.

If it wasn't for Sonia, he knew that he wouldn't have stayed a day longer at the company from the cold and emotionless look in Toby's eyes.

The manager sat on his chair and wiped the perspiration off his forehead. He thought with resolve, I must get Miss Reed a gift as thanks. I can't owe her my gratitude!

Toby had already turned his gaze away from the manager at that moment. This time, his cold gaze swept across the faces of all the other employees in the meeting room. "As for the rest of you, do a proper check on the documents or projects you have at hand. Amend it if it needs to be fixed. And if I still find a mistake in them, I'm going to fry your \*ss."

The crowd quickly nodded like chicks pecking on grains on the ground while chirping, "Yes, yes, yes!" They were relieved that they had gotten away with a mere warning.

They had known their president too well to be used to his unexpected kindness. He wouldn't have let them go just like that if he had been his old self.

Everyone who was familiar with Toby's style of punishment knew that it wasn't only limited to one person. He would always make sure to punish the whole team because he would expect the higher-ups to keep an eye on one another. If one person did something wrong, the other was supposed to notice it so that the entire project wouldn't go off track.

Yes, it was tough working under Toby, but they couldn't deny how much their work productivity had increased under Toby's ruling.

It must have been a while since anyone had made a mistake that they became more relaxed when checking their own and others' works.

However, who would have thought that a problem would arise the second that they slacked off?

As the thought slammed on all the high-level executives, they abruptly turned to look at the manager.

#### Chapter 813 Zane's Instigation

They wouldn't have been barked at if it hadn't been for the manager's mistake.

If it wasn't for Sonia, Toby would have incinerated them all with his flame of fury. The old Toby would probably have deducted their salaries for the month. It definitely wouldn't have ended with a mere self-reflection.

We are all indebted to Miss Reed, everyone quietly cheered in their hearts at the same time. We'll need Miss Reed's help again if President Fuller gets mad at us.

Tody, who did not have the faintest clue about the thoughts going through the employees' heads, lightly knocked his knuckle on the table. "Enough with that. We will continue the meeting."

"Understood," the crowd responded in unison before they started focusing on the meeting once more.

Sonia, on the other hand, had finished her breakfast at lightning speed after she placed her phone down. It took her only about 10 minutes to dust everything off.

After that, she stood up and made sure she looked presentable before she checked the time. She then picked up her bag and finally made her move.

It was around 8:30AM when she arrived at the gates of the courthouse.

Just as she was about to unbuckle her seatbelt and leave the car, someone suddenly knocked on her car window.

She turned to look and found a tall and big figure of a man dressed in casual clothes standing right outside her car. He had intentionally left the first two buttons of his top undone and she could see the sexy, manly collar bone that teasingly peeked through.

On top of that, he wore a necklace that completed his 'playboy' look.

And that person was Zane Coleman, the one supposed to meet up with Sonia.

Sonia rolled down her window and looked at the scantily-clad man. Then, the corner of her mouth began to twitch unconsciously. "Don't you feel cold being dressed like this?"

The Zane whom Sonia knew from before was not someone who would rock this style of clothes. Sure, his personality was considerably flamboyant and bubbly, but when it came to his fashion sense, he didn't dress all that different from Toby.

As someone who was always in a sleek business suit, his current fashion must have been greatly influenced by Charles, who would always have fancy prints or undone buttons on his clothes.

Sonia never thought there would come a day when Zane would turn into Charles 2.0.

Zane lowered his gaze to peek at the clothes he was wearing when he let out a bashful laugh as he fixed his collar. "I feel warm enough! How is it? Do I look good?"

Sonia opened her door and scrutinized him from head to toe before she gave an approving nod. "It is not bad. It is pretty chic, but why did you suddenly change your style?" she asked.

"I didn't do it just to meet up with you. I had a business engagement last night. A few of the second generation officials from Westsashire came and I as the Seaview's Official Second Generation Top Dog would naturally have to welcome them. I even heard some first-hand information about Westsashire," he explained while he helped to close the car door behind her.

"Is that so?" Sonia simply replied without asking about the information he had learned about.

Alas, it was an old rivalry between the different cities' officials, and she was but a mere businesswoman who had no right to stick her nose into such matters.

“Oh, right,” Zane exclaimed as he whipped out a blue file he had clasped between his arm and waist. “Here is the information you wanted.”

Sonia took it over, and as she flipped through the pieces of paper in the file, she could roughly see that it was filled with the personal information of the sperm donors.

She didn’t even take a closer look before she closed the file with a smile on her lips. “I’ll take a look later. It is about time. Let’s head into the courtroom.”

He had his hands comfortably tucked in the pockets of his pants when he suddenly mentioned, “Right, does Toby know that I will be attending the court hearing with you?”

Sonia seemed unbothered by his question as she continued to stride forward. “He doesn’t know. I didn’t tell him.”

“You didn’t?” Zane gasped in disbelief, his steps came to a slight halt.

He had planned to ask Sonia about the look on Toby’s face when she informed Zane about it. Zane probably would have had a good laugh, if it wasn’t for the fact that Toby had no idea the man was meeting up with Sonia.

Not comprehending his strong reaction, she turned to look at him and asked, “What is there to tell him about? It isn’t like it is something important.”

“That is true, but... Hello? You do realize that I’m accompanying you to a court hearing, yes?” He looked her straight in the eye. “You know how possessive Toby can be. I wouldn’t be surprised if he gets super pissed after knowing that you went to a court hearing with another man behind his back.”

Upon hearing that, Sonia stood there frozen.

She hadn’t considered this at all.

All she had in mind was that she was going to have a meet up with Zane to talk about the purchase of the sperm, and later allow him to join her for the court hearing.

She hadn’t thought to reject Zane’s request because they would have to meet up in the end either way.

Also, it wasn’t like she was going to talk about anything but matters about the sperm purchase.

It was after Zane’s ill-timed reminder when Sonia only remembered how easily Toby was always jealous. For someone who was jealous even over his biological younger brother, she could only imagine how much worse it would be if Toby found out about Zane.

She lightly pressed on her temples to massage the incoming headache away before letting out a long sigh. “It is fine. I’ll let him know, so he won’t get angry.”

Even though she was spewing random words of reassurance, she knew better than that. Her Toby would definitely throw a tantrum.

Also, now that Zane was already here, there was no way she could ask him to leave.

She was sure that Toby would get into a fit, but there was nothing more she could do at this point. Her only solution would be to continue with her busy schedule and return home at night to soothe Toby.

"I don't think he won't get mad."

Zane's eyes stopped at Sonia and he let out a mysterious smile. When Sonia turned to look at him, he inched even closer to her and added, "Sonia, I'm telling you. Toby will be mad for sure. Do you think he'll hit me if he was angry enough?"

She gave him a big eye roll at that and took a step back to create distance between them. "You think too much. He isn't that type of person."

A disappointment glint flashed across his face, but just as suddenly it had appeared, it was gone the next second. With the smile still on his face, he started provoking Sonia. "How can you say that for sure? I know how scary Toby can be. Of course, I can handle a few blows because I'm a man, but I'm worried..."

Zane trailed off without finishing his sentence, which piqued Sonia's curiosity.

"What are you worried about?" she asked while lifting her eyebrow.

"I'm worried that he will lay his hands on you when he gets angry."

She immediately waved her hands in denial. "That isn't possible. Stop talking nonsense."

Although she knew that Toby would be jealous about Zane sitting in on the court hearing with her, Toby would never direct that negativity to her. Zane would definitely be the victim of Toby's wrath instead.

Even if he did end up losing his temper with her, he couldn't possibly lay his hands on her, because she would otherwise break off their relationship with no hesitation.

"It is a hypothetical question." Zane shrugged and continued, "He does have a pretty bad temper. What if he really lays his hands on you? You know how volatile he is! But me? I'm his complete opposite! I'll always treasure you. Sonia, why don't you break up with him and, maybe, consider me? Unlike Toby, my temperament has always been on the calm side. Don't you feel insecure staying by the side of such an unpredictable man?"

After hearing his words, Sonia immediately glared at him and rebuked, "What the hell are you talking about? Toby is a great guy and even if he has a nasty temper, he has never shown me that side of him. You! I can't believe you call yourself his friend, and yet here you are, talking smack about him and trying to drive a wedge between us!"

Upon saying that, she stomped at Zane's foot with her high-heeled shoe and went straight into the courthouse without sparing him a second glance.

As he broke out in a cold sweat, Zane bent over from the excruciating pain in his foot.

He would have been hugging his leg and started hopping up and down if it wasn't because he needed to watch his image at such a somber place.

It really was painful!

What a heavy-handed woman! He squatted and buried his face in his knees as he waited for the pain to subside.

It took him a few long minutes before he felt well enough to stand up again.

After taking in a deep breath to steady himself, he limped all the way into the courtroom and reunited with Sonia at the plaintiff's table.

"I see that you still can walk," Sonia hissed while giving him the side-eye.

Chapter 814 Can't Wait to Kill Her Off

Zane couldn't help but feel that Sonia was hoping to have turned him into a cripple from that stomp she gave him. "Seriously?" The corners of his mouth made a small twitch. "Were you trying to immobilize me?! No wonder you went so heavy with your attack! I thought you had underestimated your strength by accident, but it turns out you did it on purpose!" he exclaimed as he bewilderedly pointed at her.

Sonia pouted and let out a huff. "It was your fault for trying to come between Toby and me. That was disrespectful, okay?"

Despite not looking like it, Sonia was, in fact, a little angry when she had heard Zane say those words.

He was trying to make Toby seem like the bad guy by accusing him of being an emotionally volatile and violent man.

As Toby's girlfriend, Sonia would naturally get defensive when Zane, someone whom Toby considered his friend, started slandering Toby.

Also, what kind of woman did Zane think she was, for him to suggest that she break up with Toby to get together with him?

Did he think of her as the kind of wanton woman who would get together with anyone whenever she wanted?

Who wouldn't be mad after listening to such insulting words?! she thought.

Her stomp on his foot was a result of her accidentally losing her temper. It was his little punishment for saying anything he wanted without a care.

As Zane looked at the icy expression on Sonia's face, he quickly realized that he had said things that he shouldn't have. "I... I was just kidding," he muttered while rubbing his nose in guilt.

"You can't joke about things like this." Sonia glared at him.

Feeling remorseful, Zane lowered his head and took a seat beside Sonia. "I got it. I won't do it again. I really don't want to end up becoming a cripple," he said as he pointed at his leg.

Even though the surface of his leather shoe was shining brightly, Sonia could see the dusty shape of a shoe print on it. There was also a wrinkled spot in the otherwise smooth surface as the left and right shoes didn't even look like they were a pair then.

Sonia finally burst out laughing when she couldn't hold it in after seeing how comical the shoes looked. "It is good that you know. Not everything can be made into a joke."

"Alright, alright. I won't do it anymore," Zane sighed as he waved her off. He then quickly cast his eyes down to hide the dejected look on his face. Even though he was only fooling around with her earlier, he did put his true feelings into the words that he seemed to have mindlessly sputtered.

He really did intend to gauge how deep Sonia's feelings for Toby were, which was why he mentioned to her about Toby's bad temper and how Toby might even hurt women when he became violent. Zane wanted to see whether she would start having doubts about the man she had chosen after hearing his words.

If she had shown the slightest bit of hesitation, or if she started to wonder whether Toby really would get physical with a woman, that would mean that her love for Toby hadn't returned to what it was during those 6 years. In that case, their relationship this time around would probably break off before long.

And that, of course, would be his cue to take his chance.

Zane knew how despicable it was for him to tarnish Toby's name in order to raise himself, but humans were selfish beings after all. It wasn't as though he had done anything other than smear some dirt over Toby's name. Zane was only doing what he could when he had the opportunity to. He didn't think that there was anything wrong with him fighting for the woman he liked.

Furthermore, if her love for Toby didn't run as deep as Zane thought and he still stood a chance to win her heart, he might just have to get involved and do something to make them split up quickly. At least that way, they wouldn't have to drag on a fruitless relationship that would eventually end with both parties being deeply wounded.

On the contrary, Zane would completely back off on his own accord if they were already head over heels for one another.

Despite his hopes, he had proved that Sonia had deep feelings for Toby. Not only did she trust him with all her heart, she also defended him when Zane had talked about him behind his back. She was the kind of lover and protector Zane was envious of Toby for having.

Maybe it really is time to let her go, he thought as a bitter smile appeared on his face.

Even though he had told Toby that he was going to give up on Sonia, a small part of him couldn't do it. His unwillingness only worsened when he saw her again today, which was why he momentarily set aside what he had promised Toby before, and went ahead to take a shot at Sonia again.

However, what Zane had received in return for his perseverance was, yet again, another rejection. It seemed like fate was not going to give him what he wanted. Toby you lucky dog, he sighed.

For the same woman whom Toby hurt before to somehow end up falling for him again, Toby must have had some kind of otherworldly good luck that normal people did not possess.

Sonia didn't know what Zane was thinking about, after seeing how sincere he was when he apologized, her anger began to subside.

It didn't take long after she had calmed down that she was overtaken by feelings of guilt.

It was her fault for hurting him even after he had put his all into compiling the list of compatible donors she needed. She hadn't even repaid him yet!

As she thought about that, she gave Zane an embarrassed look and apologized, "I'm sorry about earlier."

"Hmm?" Zane took a second to catch what she was apologizing for, and he quickly waved her off with a smile. "Don't worry about it! It was my fault for saying something I shouldn't have. It is understandable why you reacted the way you did. You don't have to apologize."

Sonia tucked her hair behind her ear as she listened to Zane's words. "Regardless of that, I did step on your foot. Are you hurt? If you are—"

"Nope," he interrupted with the shake of his head before she could continue saying the words he knew she was about to say. "It will probably bruise a little, but it won't affect my gait. I'll be okay in a few days, so stop feeling guilty over nothing!"

"But—" Sonia, with a frown on her face, was about to say something again when Zane pointed at the crowd that was gradually spilling into the courtroom. "We'll talk later. It is about to begin," he said in a hushed voice.

Sonia turned to look at the entrance and she immediately swallowed her words down her throat when she saw the related personnel entering the room. Her own expression soon became stern.

It didn't take long after the court hearing began for Jessica to be escorted by a bailiff into the room.

She was dressed in a yellow prison uniform from neck to toe. Sonia also noticed how both Jessica's hands and legs had been bound by cuffs.

Her hair that had been cut short partially covered her downcast head, and even though her expression didn't show much of how she was feeling, anyone could see how disheartened she was from her body language.

Her wrists that peeked from her sleeves were so scrawny that it was obvious how much weight she had lost during her stay in the detention cell—something she had not been coping well with. The uniform she had on looked extremely baggy on her torso.

For their father's sake, Sonia would probably have felt compassion for the pitiful Jessica in front of her if she was her biological sister, or if she had never poisoned their father.

However, despite how pathetic Jessica looked, she was not worthy of Sonia's pity. She was undoubtedly the sinner who had caused their father's death.

And so, Sonia only took a short glance at her before turning away.

Unbeknownst to Sonia, the moment she had looked away, Jessica suddenly lifted her head and stared directly at Sonia. The hatred in her eyes was so raw that even her face seemed twisted as she glared at her sister.

She probably would have charged at Sonia and ripped her throat out with her bare hands, if not for the bailiff beside her and the locked cuffs on her limbs.

The female bailiff escorting Jessica didn't miss her gaze at Sonia. Her eyebrows crinkled and she coldly barked a command. "Stop looking around and keep walking!"

The bailiff's blaring voice seemed to have reminded Jessica that they were in court, as she quickly shrank in fear and lowered her head. She was back to being the cowering, timid Jessica who entered the courtroom a moment ago.

"Jessica was glaring at you," Zane suddenly whispered to Sonia as his gaze rested on Jessica, who was standing behind the defendant's table.

"I know," Sonia replied in an equally hushed voice, but her eyes were looking ahead. "I can feel it. I bet she can't wait to kill me off."

Zane let out a soft 'tsk' at that. "What an interesting woman. She was the one who came for your neck, but how is she the one looking daggers at you like you owed her something after she lost? Did she think you would just take it lying down?"

The corner of Sonia's red lips curled into a snarl. "That is the kind of person she is. Nothing weird about that."

"To be honest, there is something that I really don't understand," Zane suddenly exclaimed, in which Sonia turned to look at him and ask, "What don't you understand?"

Chapter 815 The Lust for Freedom

Zane cushioned both arms behind his head and started complaining, "I don't understand how the two of you grew up to be so different when you were both raised by the same father! I know that you aren't sisters by blood, but how did you turn out so good while she became so bad?! Were you taught differently growing up?"

Sonia let out a chuckle at that. "Of course we were taught the same thing. The only different thing is our genes."

She then took a small pause as her eyes slowly fell on Jessica. "Sandra wasn't a good person, either. She only got married to Dad after her carefully planned pregnancy. Also, she... Never mind. Anyway, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. A daughter born from a woman like that can't be much different from the mother. Even if she was taught the right things growing up, it is impossible to remove the bad genetics she had received from Sandra."

"That is an interesting way to put it." Zane nodded his head in approval. "Is that the reason why you are insistent on finding a good man? So that you can erase Jessica's bad genes?"

Sonia nodded in return and said, "That is about right. If we are going to make an heir for the Reed Family, we can't be sloppy about getting the right genes. I sure as hell wouldn't want to raise a kid who will eventually turn into a second Jessica."

"You are doing a great job," he supportively reassured her, but just as he was about to give her a pat on the shoulder, he seemed to be stopped by his thoughts and only let his hand hover over her shoulder.

With a disappointed look on his face, he curled his fingers before nonchalantly tucking his hand into his bag. He then continued asking, "Why are you raising Jessica's kid for her after all the bullying she has put you through?"

"I'm not doing it for her. I'm doing it for the Reed Family." She shook her head as she lightly pressed her throbbing temples. "I may be a Reed in name, but it is for a fact that we are not bonded by blood. For Jessica to poison Dad and do all the other evil things, I'm sure she will stay in prison for life without having the chance to get married nor have kids. Also, I don't want to see her get married. She is definitely too much for any man to handle. This is the only thing I can do to continue the Reeds' bloodline."

After listening to her explanation, Zane looked at her with a complicated look. "But really, the reason you are doing this is because you feel guilty about continuing the family name yourself because you aren't related to them by blood, correct? I doubt you'll ever feel at peace if you were the successor."

Sonia lifted her gaze to look at him. Her red lips parted, but it took some time for her to finally say something. "Mm," she gave a hum of approval. "You are right. I'm the type of person who hates taking things for free, and I absolutely detest ever owing anyone anything. I would have gladly inherited the name if I hadn't found out that I'm not actually a Reed. I wouldn't even have the thought of letting Jessica give birth to a successor when my own child will naturally continue the legacy, but the truth is what it is. I'm not a Reed. Even if it is legal, the idea of continuing the Reed heritage doesn't sit right with me."

Seemingly lost in thoughts, she let out another sigh. "I owe Dad everything for his care all those years, but it is a debt that I can't and never will be able to fully repay him. Who in the future would still remember the Reeds' true legacy if I or my future child inherited the family name? That is why I want Jessica to leave a successor for me. I will raise the child and give them the right to inherit the Reeds' name one day. This is the only way I can ever repay Dad."

"I understand what you mean," Zane said after hearing her view. "To be honest, I don't see the need for you to worry about all this. You may not share the same blood, but your father has always treated you like his real daughter. I'm sure he thought of you as one, too. That shouldn't make it a problem for you to inherit the family's legacy. You are a Reed. Not by blood, but by name. And that is what matters more sometimes."

She let out a smile and replied, "I know that, but this is what I have decided to do. I don't want to change my mind."

"Are you okay with it, though?" he quickly asked with his eyebrows furrowed. "You worked so hard to build Paradigm Co., and now you are just going to pass it to Jessica's child instead of your own? Are you really okay with that?"

Surprisingly, she shook her head and confessed, "That is not it. Growing up, I've never had the thought of wanting to manage a company. I wanted to become a painter. I like to paint. It is a dream that no one other than Toby knows about."

"Oh?" Zane exclaimed, his eyes shining with interest. "Does this mean that I'm the second person to know about this?"

Sonia softly smiled at that. "Yes, you are the second one. I never even told Dad or Charles."

Zane's smile had blossomed into a full-blown grin by then. Anyone could see that he was in an extremely good mood. "What an honor!" he cheered.

Seeing him practically jumping with joy, Sonia let out a hearty laugh and shook her head. She continued talking after the smile on her face gradually faded. "Actually, there is another reason why I want to give Paradigm Co. to Jessica's child. I never had the chance to pursue my dream of becoming a painter. I want to someday let go of everything holding me back and chase after my dream. I want to live life again, and this time, it will be for the sake of my dream."

As she spoke, she slightly tilted her head upward and had a hopeful smile on her face. Even her eyes seemed to shine with anticipation.

A captivated Zane could tell that Sonia really didn't have the least bit of interest in Paradigm Co.. Sonia liked to paint and she was going to become a painter.

She radiated at the thought of throwing everything aside to restart her life.

Her fight toward freedom against the weight of the family name was so passionate that heat started to rise in his chest.

He slowly placed his hand over his chest to feel the rapid thumping of his heart, which seemed to have its every crook and cranny occupied by Sonia.

How could he ever stop his heart from racing every time he saw this radiant, confident woman?

People like him were always envied for having been born with a silver spoon in their mouths, but who other than themselves would truly understand the pain of coming from such families?

Ordinary people had the chance to choose a future they wanted, but people like him grew up having every decision in their life made for them. The men were raised like poisonous bugs whose sole purpose was to take the lives of their competitors whereas the women were raised to become tools for tying two families together.

They were but people who had their wings clipped. Even their thoughts were constantly denied as they were expected to be the puppets of their families. A lot of them longed for freedom to live their lives the way they wanted to, but they weren't allowed to do anything that didn't bring benefits for the family. They might even be cast out of the family if they had rebelled a little.

Those who were abandoned by their families, too, didn't get to live the life of an average Joe. Instead, they might be forced to leave the country and survive on their own. There were only bad endings waiting for those who were forgotten by their families.

That was the reason why people like him always ended up the way they were. They might hate living a life with no freedom, but they were unable to not do as their families had wanted them to. They gradually turn numb from it and stop dreaming at some point. That freedom they once longed for was only a faraway, unreachable dream. They had completely become the puppets their families were shaping them into with the rest of their lives being dedicated to their families.

Zane was a prime example of it.

With Toby being the only exception, Zane and the rest of the rich bunch were people who needed their families to live on.

Still, Zane was better than the others as he was never fully dependent on his family. He had always been tempted by the idea of breaking free from them, but that was a well-kept secret only he knew.

And that was why his heart began to beat uncontrollably when he saw how uninhibited and optimistic Sonia was about living the future she wanted.

#### Chapter 816 Stopped

Zane had fallen in love with Sonia because of her kindness, and more importantly, he could see hope when he looked at her.

Sonia had been so deeply in love with Toby, only to end up getting divorced by the very man she gave her heart to.

It was quite common for women to get their hearts broken by men in their circle. There were even a whole bunch who had it worse than Sonia.

Those women often give up on themselves, and eventually on life after getting hurt.

However, Sonia, on the other hand, was able to bounce back quickly. She even managed to make herself fall out of love soon after.

She always had that hopeful glint in her eyes. Not only did she not fall into a spiral, she put all her focus into saving the barely-salvageable Paradigm Co., and making it into what it was today.

Sonia was not someone who would stay trapped in a person or in a situation.

She might have battle scars all over her body, but she would always get out as soon as she could. Always one to have the right mentality, she never allowed herself to be drifted by the flow.

She knew that neither heartbreak nor Toby were her life's priority, and so she wasn't going to lose herself for the things and people that didn't matter the most to her.

Instead, she got them out of her head fairly quickly, and with that, she started to create a better, more productive life for herself.

As simple as it might sound, this wasn't something that just anyone could do.

Zane could even go as far as to believe that if Sonia had been forced to act as a puppet of her family, she would have never conformed. Instead, she would break free from them and create a path of her own.

He believed so because she was always someone with a clear head. She knew what she wanted, and she had the courage to go after her dreams.

She was unlike him and the rest of the bunch, who not only weren't gutsy enough, but would always end up being brainwashed by their family values, and eventually live the life they never wanted.

It was Sonia's hopeful gaze that never stopped looking forward that had first caught Zane's interest. At some point, that interest began to turn into romantic feelings.

Now that he listened to her share her plans for the future, he was suddenly hit by the realization that it was impossible for him to let her go.

Sonia soon realized the fiery gaze on her after she had shared her dreams with Zane. "What is wrong?" she asked, a frown on her face.

Fearing that she would see the raw emotions running in his eyes, Zane quickly dropped his gaze and shook his head. "It is nothing. I suddenly remembered something, that's all."

"Oh." Sonia nodded and didn't say anything more.

However, Zane was slightly disappointed by her lukewarm reaction, so he asked, "Are you not going to ask me what came to my mind?"

Sonia gently shook her head again. "What is there for me to ask? Everyone has a secret or two. I don't have to pry into everything."

More importantly, she wasn't at all interested to know what was in his head.

Also, they were only normal friends. She could never be thick-skinned enough to ask him something so private.

Zane shrugged when he saw that Sonia wasn't interested. "Okay, then," he huffed, even though he wouldn't have told her even if she had asked.

I'll probably scare her off if I told her, he mused.

He needed time to calm himself down too.

It had taken him a lot of strength to decide to give up on her, but now that she had rekindled the flame, he was reluctant to give up again.

He knew that it wasn't right of him to act that way, which was why he needed to calm down and adjust his mentality before he did something that he would end up regretting.

The two of them soon fell into silence as they waited for the court session to begin.

The wait went on for the next 10 minutes. After all the involved parties were present in the room, the judge took a glance at the time and announced the start of the hearing.

The court session was actually for the sake of formalities. They had solid evidence of both Jessica's offenses, after all. Jessica couldn't possibly talk her way out of her crimes since she had verbally confessed to them.

She was finally sentenced to half a year in prison, with the consideration of getting parole.

Despite it being a light sentence for someone who had committed those crimes, Jessica immediately panicked and wanted to appeal for a second ruling. Even half a year was too long for someone who didn't want to go to prison.

It was her constitutional right as a citizen of the country to file an appeal, so the court allowed it.

However, everyone knew that the court wouldn't change her sentence even if she had the second trial.

That was why Sonia wasn't that concerned when she heard Jessica's request to appeal.

Jessica knew better than to act out when she had so many scrutinizing eyes on her, so she gradually calmed down after her outburst.

She managed to calm herself down, but after learning about how the second trial would go, she sat there with a blank face, her eyes staring into the air. She looked as energetic as a soulless zombie.

An unperturbed Sonia threw her a glance before standing up to leave the courtroom.

There was no reason for her to stay any longer since the first hearing had already ended on a good note. She would come again for the second hearing.

Zane, too, stood up and followed after Sonia, but not before he glanced over at Jessica another time and clicked his tongue in disapproval.

They had to walk past Jessica to leave the courtroom, but just as they were walking by her, Jessica was enraged by how Sonia treated her as though she was invisible. Her eyes looked alive again then. She seemed to have thought of something suddenly when she let out a smirk and shouted, "Sonia, aren't you interested to know who your birth parents are?"

Upon hearing her words, Sonia froze at the spot before whipping her head around to glare at Jessica. "What did you say?" she growled.

The smirk on her face turned more evil when she saw the way Sonia reacted to her words. "I said I know who your biological parents are. I bet you would be so surprised to know that they are—"

Her words were interrupted when the bailiff suddenly covered her mouth.

"Shut your mouth. Court has been adjourned. You have to return to the detention center with us. Stop dilly-dallying and go!" the bailiff barked as she threw a glance at another officer.

As soon as the other bailiff caught her gaze, she nodded and stepped forward before the two of them brought Jessica out of the room.

In order to hide the truth from Jessica, they tried their absolute best to not show a trace of panic on their calm faces.

They were reminded to never let Jessica say a word about Sonia's birth parents, but due to their momentary negligence, Jessica had managed to reveal to Sonia a hint of the secret.

They could only blame their luck that they had let it happen under their watch.

Even though they had stopped her in time, those who had seen how abruptly they had covered her mouth could have easily guessed that they were trying to cover something up.

The only thing they could do now was hope that Jessica hadn't realized their true intention.

Sonia let out a frown while she looked at Jessica throwing a fit as she was dragged away by the bailiffs. "The officers looked like they intentionally stopped her from telling me who my birth parents are," she speculated.

Zane's eyes seemed to brighten when he heard her words. He then laughed. "How is that possible? You may not know this because you are not part of the system, but after the court has been adjourned, the criminal is the first person who has to be brought out. It could get nasty if the family members of the victim were to get aggressive. And that is why the bailiff was so rough with Jessica. She needed to bring her to the police car as soon as possible. She was just doing her job."

"Is that so?" Sonia raised her eyebrow and looked at Zane skeptically, in which the man gave a few serious nods in return.

"Of course!" he gushed.

Sonia began to chew on her lower lip as she pondered over his seemingly unbelievable words, but after a while, a smile broke across her face, and she said, "You are probably right. That officer doesn't even know me or Jessica personally. There is no reason she would do that, right? I probably thought too deeply into it."

Zane didn't answer, and only let out a forced laugh. After all, he did feel quite guilty for lying.

#### Chapter 817 Too Late for Regrets

Zane was someone from the organization, which was why he would know first-hand how there was no existing law that mentioned anything about having to escort the criminal out right after court had been adjourned. That had been something that he had made up on the spot to stop Sonia's suspicious mind from wandering.

He did notice how the bailiff, as Sonia suspected, seemed to have tried her absolute best to stop Jessica from revealing information about Sonia's birth parents.

By right, it didn't matter whether it was before or after the court session, but the defendant had the right to speak as long as they hadn't been restricted by the court.

However, the bailiff had suspiciously stopped Jessica from speaking.

The only plausible speculation Zane could come up with was someone had gone to the people of the organization before the court hearing today, and had specifically mentioned to keep an eye on Jessica in case she blurted out the truth about Sonia's birth.

As for who that 'someone' was, he could already somewhat make a guess.

There were only a few influential figures in Seafield who could get the organization to help with silencing Jessica, one of them being his own father and the other the political head of the Coleman Family.

However, it didn't seem plausible for either one of them to interfere with the matters of a woman they didn't know.

There was one more person other than them that had the ability to do this—Toby.

Zane was sure that Toby was the one who had talked the organization into it.

However, why would he do this? Zane wondered quietly. He didn't understand why Toby wouldn't let Sonia know who her birth parents were. Does Sonia's parents have some kind of secret they can't let her know?

The lingering question remained in his head all the way to the cafe, where he only snapped back to reality after Sonia waved in his face.

Seeing that he was gradually coming back to earth again, she put down her hand and asked, "What are you zoning out for?"

"It is nothing," Zane replied with a smile before taking a sip of water from the glass in front of him.

"What do you want to drink?"

He then put down his glass and passed the menu to Sonia.

She didn't take the menu, and instead shook her head. Then, she looked at the waiter standing beside their table. "I don't need the menu. Black tea with milk, please."

"Alright." The waiter took down her order and waited for Zane to place his.

Zane took the menu again and flipped through it for a while before finally ordering an Iced Americano.

After the waiter left to prepare their drinks, Sonia took out the file containing the sperm donors' information and gave it a careful read.

"I was super serious when I gathered this list for you. These guys are all highly educated. There are a few that are from a poor family, but they have good character. I'm sure you will find at least one satisfactory one from the file," he confidently said after seeing her scan through the papers.

Sonia's eyes never stopped looking as she flipped the papers. "Indeed. These guys are great."

"No, they are the greatest! These kinds of genes are treated like treasure at the sperm banks. Those without a net worth of at least ten billion aren't even taken into consideration. I heard that a lot of women abroad want these genes to give birth to quality babies, but they were all rejected because their worth isn't high enough. These sperm banks target rich clients who don't want to get married, but still need a successor to inherit their legacy."

Sonia gently closed the file and smiled after hearing his words. "Seems like we will need Jessica to play the role of a rich woman with a ten billion net worth."

"It seems so," he chuckled and took a sip of his cold drink. He then asked, "Oh right, which one do you fancy? I'll book the person for you first in case some other rich lady comes along and brings that semen away."

"Let's go with the third one," she concluded as she handed the file back to him. "I'm satisfied with what I have seen. He must be a smart guy, for him to be a university professor. And it says here that he is an orphan that is about to pass on soon because of his sickness. This is wonderful. At least the child won't have any contact with its father in the future."

Sonia needed a child, but she wanted one that wouldn't start searching for its father after asking her how they came about.

That would end up becoming more troublesome than she liked.

She had seen many similar cases on the news where a lot of children born this way would eventually set off on a search for their fathers. Some would accept them as their biological father while there were others who went as far as to connect both families together.

That was why she hoped that the father wouldn't have any next of kin. She could save herself from a whole lot of trouble in the future if she had prevented it earlier on.

Zane understood where Sonia was coming from as he listened to her. Having a child this way was equivalent to buying it, and like any other business transaction, the buyer-seller relationship should only last until the moment the goods arrived. He didn't think there was anything wrong with Sonia's plan at all.

Furthermore, anything could happen especially when the rich mother was a member of the Reed Family. She is right, Zane thought approvingly.

"I like the third one too! I was going to advise you to pick the third one, but I didn't want your decision to be affected by my unsolicited opinion. I can't believe we both like the same one. We are so in sync!" He laughed while stirring his coffee..

Ignoring his words, Sonia took a sip of her tea and continued, "You can go ahead and bring Tim the sperm sample. He will get everything else ready. I told him about this a while ago. All we have to do after this is to wait for Jessica's discharge, after which we can proceed with the procedure."

"You have everything planned out!" he exclaimed, his brows wiggling in the process. "I was going to ask you if you have found a hospital. I would have arranged it for you if you haven't, but it turns out you already have everything set up."

"I have been setting everything in place from the moment I made up my mind to do this. All that is left now is for the IVF procedure itself, but we will have to wait for at least another 6 months. Jessica is in no condition to be a mother now." Sonia sighed.

He looked at her and quickly reassured her then. "Don't hurry. You can't rush things like this. Just take your time."

"Yeah," she replied. "I got it. Alright, enough of that. How has Douglas been doing lately?" She changed the conversation by mentioning Zane's nephew.

Zane's lips immediately formed a grumpy pout at the kid's name. "Don't even talk about him. He is so infuriating. He made me so angry that I almost had high blood pressure the day before!"

"Why? What happened?" a curious Sonia asked.

He started to tell her about all the mischief that the young boy caused, and by the time he was done with his story, he had his hands up in resignation while his head was throbbing. "What more can I do? He is at that super annoying age."

Sonia covered her mouth and giggled, clearly entertained by the boy's antics. "Don't say that. Douglas is such a cutie pie!"

“To you. Not to me.” He rolled his eyes.

Just as Sonia was about to say something in return, her phone suddenly rang.

She quickly apologized to Zane and took out the phone from her bag, and in the instant that she saw the caller ID, the smile on her face grew.

Zane could tell from the happiness showing on her face that she had probably received a call from Toby.

All it takes is one phone call from Toby to make you smile like that? You are in so deep, Sonia, he grumbled as jealousy began to grow. He held his coffee cup tighter, and he let out a self-ridiculing laugh when he started to reminisce about the past.

Zane regretted not knowing Sonia earlier.

There was a common saying that one can easily move hearts if they had reached out during times the other party needed help.

If only he had been there to give her warmth during the 6 year she had to endure the Fullers’ cold treatment, he would have had the chance to be with her after the divorce.

He had found himself wondering about Sonia during the past 6 years. At times, he would question the reason why she was so loyal to the man even though he hadn’t shown her an ounce of kindness. He didn’t understand why she chose to stay with Toby.

#### Chapter 818 Jealous Rage

His curiosity and desire to see her were always on and off, which was how he dragged it on for 6 years before he finally met her. He kept telling himself that he wasn’t romantically interested in her—she was only someone whom he occasionally thought about. Someone whom he sometimes wanted to see. Someone whom he was curious about every now and then.

That was the reason why he didn’t think it was important whether they met or not, and it was for that exact reason that he missed the opportunity to strike when the iron was hot.

He truly regretted not making a move.

Would the outcome have been any different if he had spent time seeing her?

At that, Zane was so dismayed that he suddenly let out a weird howl before he covered his face, and his torso leaned into the chair.

Not only was Sonia surprised by his odd actions, the other patrons of the cafe also turned to look at the two of them.

As she was uncomfortable at having the spotlight shining on her and Zane, she apologetically smiled at them and forced out two small hacks to cough away her embarrassment. “Zane,” she called out in a whisper. “What the hell are you doing?”

Zane had a smile that looked even worse than the ugliest cries on his face as he looked at her. He seemed to be feeling all the sorrows in the world when he waved his hands dejectedly and moaned,

“Nothing. I was just thinking about that one time I lost an opportunity of a lifetime, and how much I want to knock myself out, is all.”

“Huh?” Sonia didn’t understand a single word that Zane said.

He only shook his head without further explaining himself. “It is nothing. Go ahead and answer your call.”

“Oh.” She could tell that he wasn’t going to say more, and so she simply gave him a short reply as she nodded. She then pressed her phone to her ear and said gently, “Hello?” Her attention was now fully on the phone call.

Her voice put Toby to ease in an instant. Even the frown between his eyebrows had disappeared. “Why did you take so long to answer the call? Has the court hearing not ended yet?” he asked.

“It ended some time ago,” she answered. “I was talking to Zane.”

With that, she threw a glance at Zane, only to see him raising his cup at her with a smile on his face.

Toby immediately jumped out of his office chair when he heard her saying the name of Zane Coleman. “Zane?” he repeated, his thin lips pursing.

“Yup.” Sonia nodded.

After making sure that he hadn’t heard her wrongly, Toby’s eyebrows knitted together again. “Is he there with you?”

“Yeah.” She nodded again. “I’m meeting up with him because we have something to discuss.”

“What kind of ‘thing’ is it that you need to meet up to discuss?” His low voice rang out as his grip on his phone was getting tighter by the second.

Zane might have said that he had given up on pursuing Sonia, but it was hard to draw the lines when it came to feelings.

What if Zane suddenly didn’t feel like giving her up after he had seen her?

Anyhow, Zane was a ticking time bomb that Toby wasn’t sure when it would go off.

Even though he knew that his friend wouldn’t possibly attempt to blatantly snatch Sonia from him, Zach was still a love rival that was on par with him.

It was difficult for Toby to be at ease, knowing that his lover was with someone who had eyes on her. Even his sense of danger was telling him that one wrong move from his side and he could potentially lose Sonia to his love rival.

The more Tony thought about the possibilities, the angrier he became. If circumstances allowed, he would have loved to toss his work aside, head straight to them, and kick Zane away from his woman.

However, much to his regret, the only thing he could do was become grumpy.

A smiling Sonia began to shake her head in all helplessness when she detected the jealousy in his voice. Doesn’t sound like he is only a little jealous, she mused.

He was reacting exactly as she imagined he would, which was why she didn't even think to tell him about Zane accompanying her to court. He might just get so jealous that he'll come here right away!

"We have business with each other. You know that he and I are collaborating to deal with the Gray Family. We are just talking about our next steps." Sonia's eyes were twinkling when she said that.

Zane, who had already calmed his hysteria, placed his cup of coffee down and looked at her strangely. He didn't understand why she had to lie about their meeting.

Sonia, on the other hand, only shook her head at him without any explanation.

Toby's face on the other side of the call had visibly relaxed after hearing her explanation.

He had thought that Zane was the one who asked her out and that he was probably waiting to confess to Sonia.

Toby had always found people who confessed despite knowing that the other party already had their own partners extremely disgusting. He never understood why they felt the need to do something so that they wouldn't feel like their one-sided feelings were a waste.

He was relieved that it wasn't as he had thought because he would have personally dragged Zane to hell otherwise.

Toby didn't hesitate to trust Sonia's words, and he only nodded slightly as he reminded, "Go home earlier after your discussion. Don't stay with him for too long. He is a bad guy."

A wave of guilt was just about to hit Sonia for lying to Toby, and that was until his childish warning that she didn't know whether she should laugh about it.

There was no doubt that Toby and Zane were lifetime friends.

One told her that the other was an emotionally unbalanced man while the allegedly emotionally unbalanced man was calling his friend a bad guy.

Now that she knew that bickering was the two men's usual conversation style, she couldn't believe how angry she became when Zane had 'slandered' Toby.

Thinking of that, Sonia lifted her gaze and humorously looked at Zane. "Okay, I got it. I'll be right back after the discussion," she said into the phone.

Zane began to wonder whether Toby had mentioned him, and so he pointed at himself and moved his other hand around.

Bingo, Sonia thought while nodding at Zane.

Knowing that Toby probably said something funny about him, he immediately rolled his eyes.

On the other side of the phone, Toby was in a better mood after Sonia had reassured him, but the heaviness in his heart still wasn't completely gone.

This time, he was worried about Sonia's plan to confront the Gray Family with Zane.

He knew that she had decided to partner up with Zane for a better revenge, but what he couldn't understand was why she went to Zane instead of him for help.

With what Toby was capable of, it would only take a snap of the finger to execute the revenge she was looking for. However, she had insisted on doing it without his help, and that she wouldn't forgive him if he were to lend her a hand without her knowledge.

He knew that she was doing so for his sake, but he couldn't get himself to be okay with the fact that she would rather depend on someone else rather than him.

Toby pinched the bridge of his nose as he forced himself to stop thinking about the thoughts that were starting to get overwhelming.

He had to stop himself now if he didn't want to be paranoid about Sonia. He was afraid he would start assuming the worst with Sonia, should he allow such negative thoughts and emotions fill his mind.

I have to stop this. I can't ruin it this time, he sternly warned himself. Sonia might have said that she didn't want me to help her behind her back, but I can always find a way to lend her a hand in broad daylight!

He finally started to calm down a little when he placed himself in the right mindset.

"Oh, right! Are you busy now?" Sonia suddenly asked.

Toby hummed an acknowledgment. "I'm taking a short break. I have a meeting in a bit."

Her heart slightly ached for her man who didn't seem to have the time for a good rest nowadays. "Good work," she sighed.

Toby let out a gentle smile at that. "It is only for now."

"Okay," she hummed, a smile appearing on her face as well.

He suddenly thought of the court hearing earlier and swiftly asked, "What was the court's ruling?"

"Half a year, but Jessica went for a second appeal. She didn't seem like she was happy with the court's decision." Sonia's smile now turned bitter as she replied.

"Don't worry, the court's ruling won't change no matter how many appeals she makes."

"Right, and that is why I'm not worried at all," Sonia answered with a shrug.

A seemingly nervous Toby began to squeeze his fingers and, as nonchalantly as he could, asked, "Did Jessica behave strangely at court today? Or did she say anything weird?"

Chapter 819 Don't Wish to Trouble Him

"Anything strange?" Sonia straightened her back and frowned. "What do you mean?" she asked tentatively.

She couldn't understand why Toby had asked this question.

In the court, Jessica had indeed said something weird to her—she asked if Sonia would like to know who her biological parents were.

Could this be what Toby was referring to?

On the other hand, Toby naturally perceived the doubt in Sonia's tone too. With downcast eyes, he responded calmly, "I'm asking whether Jessica said nasty things to you or threatened you in court."

"Oh, so this is what you're referring to by 'strange words'." Sonia's knitted brows smoothed as she heaved a sigh of relief inwardly.

She actually thought there was something that he didn't want her to find out.

Toby pressed his lips and said, "Yeah. What else did you think I'm referring to?"

"Nothing. I overthought." Smiling, Sonia waved her hands about and continued, "Of course she said nasty things to me. You knew how much Jessica hates me. How could she possibly not be agitated upon seeing me?"

Toby hummed in response, "That's true. Besides that, did she do anything else to you?"

Sonia shook her head. "Not really. She actually almost dashed over to rough me up, but there were court officers at the scene and she was handcuffed, so I'm very safe."

"Good." Toby nodded slightly as he could finally stop worrying.

Although he did not ask Sonia directly whether Jessica told her about her biological parents, he could deduce from the conversation earlier and from Sonia's calm tone that Jessica most likely did not.

If she did tell Sonia about her biological parents, Sonia wouldn't possibly be this calm.

Anyway, Toby was relieved that Jessica did not say it.

He knew the most effective way Jessica could seek revenge against Sonia was to tell her about her biological parents, and by doing so, defeat Sonia's conviction to seek revenge against the Gray Family besides putting her into agony and desperation.

He could prevent Jessica from seeing and keeping in touch with the outsiders when she was in the detention center or prison, but he couldn't stop her from meeting Sonia in court.

As such, in order to prevent Jessica from taking extreme measures to tell Sonia the truth while at the court, Toby had informed the court before this to keep an eye on Jessica so that she could not possibly come into contact with Sonia and mention to Sonia anything about her biological parents.

In fact, Toby was extremely nervous throughout the entire trial today. Because he couldn't head to court and did not know whether the officers there would keep an eye on Jessica as per his instruction, he actually couldn't focus at work today and couldn't help checking the time now and then.

When he thought it was about time for the trial to be over, he quickly called Sonia to check in on her.

If truth be told, he was on pins and needles during the few seconds that Sonia had yet to answer the call. He was worried that Sonia might have been made aware of the matter about her biological parents and was having a breakdown, hence did not answer the phone.

Fortunately, the outcome was not as serious as he had thought.

At this thought, Toby supported his forehead with one hand as his nervous look and stiff mood finally relaxed.

“Alright Toby, I’m going to hang up first. I still have some important stuff to talk to Zane. Don’t you have a meeting soon too? I shall not disturb you first. We can talk at night if there’s anything else,” Saying that, Sonia cast a glance at Zane, who was seated across from her and looking dispirited.

Toby’s pupils dilated when he heard Sonia call him ‘Toby’. Stirred up, he gulped and exclaimed agitatedly in a hoarse voice, “What did you just call me?”

Sonia actually called Toby by his first name.

Truth was, ever since their divorce, she had always addressed him in a formal and distant way—she would either call him President Fuller or Mr. Fuller.

Even after they reconciled, she had only addressed Toby by his full name.

Before this, Toby did not think it was inappropriate for Sonia to address him by his full name. However, it was only earlier that she called him by his first name did he suddenly realize it actually felt distant to be addressed by his full name, and of course, it sounded more intimate when Sonia called his first name directly.

Humans were made of greed. At this moment, Toby realized he couldn’t accept Sonia addressing him by his full name anymore. Now that he had heard her call his first name, he wished she would always do the same moving forward.

The smart Sonia naturally perceived the suppressed joy from Toby’s tone at once, and she knew what made him so elated all of a sudden. It’s just a name and he’s actually this happy. This guy is so easily satisfied!

Sonia shook her head with a smile and answered generously, “I’m calling you ‘Toby’.”

It was not an accident, nor did he hear it wrongly.

Sonia had indeed genuinely called him that.

A joyful smile spread across Toby’s face. His voice became increasingly hoarse because he was agitated, but it was attractive and pleasing to the ear. “I like the way you addressed me just now. Can you keep it that way from now on?” he asked in anticipation.

Sonia didn’t want to disappoint him either, so she nodded without hesitation and agreed gladly, “Sure.”

The smile on his face widened.

Thereafter, the two said goodbye in a clingy manner before ending the call.

Opposite Sonia was Zane, who was extremely jealous and tinged with sour grapes as he saw her keeping away her phone with a sweet smile, but he still feigned a disgusted look and teased her as chills ran down his spine, “Hey, that’s enough, you guys. Do you have to be so clingy even over a phone call? I’ve witnessed too much PDA already!”

Saying that, he rubbed his eyes in a cheeky manner.

Sonia glanced at Zane and made a dry cough in embarrassment. “You’re exaggerating! Why don’t I feel like we’re being clingy?”

“Of course you don’t.” Zane pouted. “Isn’t there a saying that goes like this—love makes one blind. Anyway, I think you guys are clingy. By the way, did you and Toby mention me just now?” he stared at Sonia and asked, to which Sonia nodded in response.

Zane fiddled with the teaspoon in his hand and muttered, “Did he talk bad about me?”

Sonia lifted her brows. “You actually guessed it right!”

“Hmph!” Zane rolled his eyes. “Toby and I have been friends for more than 20 years, so of course I know him well. After you told him you met me, he would surely taint my name to ruin your impression of me, given how possessive and jealous he is. So, tell me—what did he say about me?”

Smiling, Sonia took a sip of black tea and said, “Nothing much. He just said you’re not a good guy and asked me not to hang out with you for too long and to go home earlier.”

Zane tutted and blurted, “This fellow... How dare he say I’m not a good guy!”

Following that, he waved his hands about and said, “Forget about it. Since I’ve talked bad about him too today, we’re all square now and I shall not go after him. Sonia, I’d like to know why you didn’t tell him directly that we met up to discuss the matter regarding Jessica’s child’s gene, though? Why did you have to lie to him? You didn’t tell Toby that I’m helping to find a compatible gene?”

Zane’s expression became slightly more solemn.

Sonia nodded and answered, “Yeah. I didn’t tell him.”

“Why?” Zane couldn’t understand.

Leaning backward, she rested a finger on her lips and said in a nonchalant manner, “Because I don’t want to trouble him. I know you’ll surely have doubts—Toby is my boyfriend. Isn’t it reasonable for me to ask for his help? Why did I say I don’t wish to trouble him?”

“Yeah.” He nodded. “Exactly what I’m thinking.”

Sonia smiled and continued, “It’s very simple, actually. I don’t wish to owe Toby favors anymore. He has already helped me a lot and saved me several times before we got back together. I’ve already owed him too much, so I don’t wish to continue adding more to that.”

Chapter 820 Buy You a Meal

“That’s not an issue. You guys are boyfriend and girlfriend now. If everything goes smoothly, both of you will even remarry and become husband and wife by then. You’re not really owing him or whatsoever. Isn’t it reasonable for him to do these for you?” Zane shrugged disapprovingly.

However, Sonia shook her head and replied, “Nothing in this world should be taken for granted. True enough, Toby and I are boyfriend and girlfriend now and will eventually become husband and wife, but this doesn’t mean that he has to do everything for me. This concept is wrong per se. Besides, I don’t prefer owing favors to others to begin with because it makes me feel uncomfortable as if there’s a weight on my mind. I can only feel relieved upon returning those favors.”

“Yeah, I can tell that.” Zane looked at Sonia and agreed.

Sonia smiled and continued, “I’ve just said that I’ve already owed Toby too much even before we got back together, so I don’t wish to owe him more. Moreover, now that we’ve reconciled, I’ll feel inferior to him and that we’re not equal in this relationship if I have to trouble him with everything and owe favors to him. In addition, if I’m counting on him to solve all problems for me, I’ll lose my problem-solving skills and the ability to think independently. Eventually, I’ll think of asking for Toby’s help whenever I encounter a difficulty, but have you thought of this...”

“Think of what?” Zane blinked in confusion.

She put the cup of black tea on the table. “At this moment, Toby is very much in love with me. I believe he’ll not turn down any requests from me and he’ll try his best to achieve them. As much as this is great, if our love for each other fades off someday and he stops loving me anymore, but it has already become a habit for me to rely on him, will he continue helping by that time?”

She shook her head and added, “I don’t think so. Sometimes, love will cease to exist after it is depleted. So, I don’t want to treat Toby like a handyman who can handle everything for me. Not only is this unfair to him, it’s also a misjudgment and distrust of my own ability.”

Zane was completely stunned upon hearing Sonia’s statements. He parted his lips but couldn’t say a word to refute her.

In his original conception, a man should pamper his woman and directly help her to solve any problems or difficulties when one arises. He thought it was the right thing to do because it was a man’s responsibility.

However, after listening to Sonia’s opinion, he was able to look at things from a different perspective. All of a sudden, he thought his original conception didn’t appear to be right after all.

Indeed, it was a way to show one’s love and care toward his lover by helping his lover to solve every problem.

Nonetheless, this love would indeed make his lover lose the ability to be independent, and make the other party become someone who couldn’t handle situations independently. So, was this actually an act of love or harm?

Zane reckoned the answer was both. It was not wrong to lend a helping hand, but one shouldn’t do it blindly in an obsequious manner. It would only be truly meaningful for one to extend his support to his lover when the other party ran into bottlenecks.

Besides, Zane totally agreed with one point that Sonia brought up—when one was in love with another person, he or she would not mind taking all the trouble to solve every problem for the other party. However, once the love ceased, the person would start feeling annoyed.

As much as the person might continue helping the other party for the sake of the relationship that they once had, he or she would become tired of it after several times.

At this thought, the affection in Zane's gaze toward Sonia increased. "Indeed, you're still so unique and sober when looking at things." And that was exactly the reason why he couldn't let her go.

Nonetheless, Sonia did not perceive the implication in Zane's words. Smiling, she said, "Besides these reasons, there's another one—Toby will definitely not allow me to return him favors even though he has helped me this much. If I insist on returning him favors, he will surely be displeased, but I don't wish to have arguments with him. So, when I face some difficulties that can't be solved on my own, I'll think of you and Charles. At least, we're friends, so you guys can't reject it when I want to return you favors because you know I'll be unhappy if you actually did."

With a sudden realization, Zane wore an unfathomable smile. "No wonder. I was thinking why you didn't seek Toby's help for this matter but actually came to me. So, it turns out that it's because I won't and can't reject your return of favor. I guess the same reason goes to the pursuit of the Gray Family, then."

"Hmm?" Sonia stared at Zane.

Zane leaned forward slightly and explained, "Before this, I couldn't understand why you didn't ask for Toby's help to seek revenge because that would be much easier. Although Toby can't tackle the Gray Family directly because he might receive warning from the authorities, given his power, it's a piece of cake for him to destroy the Gray Family in the dark. Even if the authorities know it is Toby's doing, they can't really give him warnings since he did not do it outrightly."

He tapped his fingers on the table and continued, "So, if you actually asked Toby to help you go after the Gray Family, the Gray Family would have long been gone and won't be alive and kicking until today. However, you did not seek Toby's help all these while and insisted on relying on yourself. After so much effort, the effect is still vague. I was wondering what the reason behind your approach was, but I didn't expect it is actually because of this."

"Well, this is not the sole reason," Sonia said with downcast eyes. "The main reason is that the grudge is between the Reed Family and the Gray Family, so what's the point of leveraging the Fuller Family's power to seek revenge? The Fuller Family has such achievements today thanks to Toby's grandfather. His grandfather is one of the pioneers in developing this country and has left a very good impression on the authorities. I don't wish the positive image of Toby's grandfather, which he had diligently built all these years, to be affected in the authorities' opinion just because Toby helped me to seek revenge. I can't be that selfish."

"Well, it's not wrong to say that, but have you thought that Toby actually will not let the Gray Family off too? Tina Gray hypnotized Toby—this alone has started a feud between Toby and the Gray Family, yet he has not gone after the Gray Family all these while. Have you thought of the reasons behind it?" Zane asked.

Sonia smiled and replied, "I'm actually aware of it because I've asked Toby the same question before this. He said it's because of me. He knew I wanted to seek revenge on the Gray Family with my own ability. So, after I rejected his help, he established that he can wait for me to finish taking vengeance first, then he'll handle the remaining powers of the Gray Family and take that as a revenge on Tina for hypnotizing him."

"So, you guys actually have had everything arranged. It seems like I've been worrying for y'all for nothing." Zane twitched the corner of his lips in resignation.

Sonia checked the time on her watch and said, "Please don't say that. I appreciate your concern toward us. You helped me to find a compatible gene this time, so I owe you a favor. I'll do whatever you ask me to, but of course, illegal affairs are an exception."

"Don't worry." Zane waved his hands about. "I'm an officer to begin with, so I won't possibly consciously break the law. Besides, I won't ask you to do something that puts you in a difficult position, but I can't think of what I need yet. I'll let you know after I've decided."

"Whatever, but please don't forget about it because if you do, I might take it as I'm unaware of it," Sonia quipped. Thereafter, she stood up and took her purse. "It's almost lunch time. Let me buy you lunch to thank you for accompanying me to the trial just now and for helping me to look for the gene."

Zane leaned backward vigilantly and blurted, "Don't tell me you're thinking of using this meal to fulfill the promise earlier."

She was amused. "Of course..."

Hearing that, he became even more alert.

Sonia rolled an eye at him and said, "Of course not. I'll be belittling myself if I actually intended to return your huge favor just by buying you a meal. Alright, let's go. Time for lunch."

"Coming." A giggling Zane followed Sonia and went out of the cafe.

After lunch, Zane and Sonia went their separate ways.

Zane did not head back to Coleman Villa but drove to the Fuller Group as he wanted to clarify some matters with Toby.

Upon arriving at the Fuller Group, Zane walked straight to the elevator without anyone stopping him. After all, he came so frequently in the past that even the receptionists knew him, so they naturally wouldn't stop him.

However, the truth was Zane never came ever since he told Toby that he was in love with Sonia. And in fact, the friendship between the two men was not as deep as before with even cracks in their relationship.

Nevertheless, the outsiders were unaware of all these and they actually thought Toby and Zane were still as close as before.