

Happiness 247-257

The Promise of Happiness

Chapter 247

Justin leaned forward, waiting to admire the beauty of Samuel's future wife.

As Natalie finished eating the spaghetti, she slowly lifted her head.

When their eyes met, she smiled faintly and maintained her calm demeanor.

The moment Justin saw Natalie clearly, he realized the woman looked ordinary, and there were even noticeable freckles on her cheeks.

She shouldn't be the woman that Samuel likes, right? Yeah, that should be unlikely. Is there some misunderstanding?

"Samuel, where did you hide your woman?" Justin laughed dryly. "Not only are we best friends, but we're also distant relatives. There's no need to be so secretive."

"Justin." Samuel's brows drew close to a frown. "I don't have another woman. She's the only one."

Hearing that, Justin was stunned, unable to believe what he had just heard.

Besides him, Natalie was taken aback by Samuel's word as well.

Only one. These two words are exceptionally significant, but Samuel said them so easily.

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It took a lot of effort for Justin to accept the news. He covered it by coughing a few times before a playful smile returned on his face again.

"... This is the first time I met your woman. As expected, she's exceptional."

Naturally, he would not dare to say anything unsatisfactory about Natalie. Otherwise, Samuel might skin him alive.

Therefore, he spared no effort to flatter Natalie.

"Samuel's taste has always been unique. Sure enough, the woman he has taken a liking to is indeed extraordinary."

Looking at Natalie, he continued, "Hi, I'm Justin Yelverton, and I'm Samuel's best friend. If someone dares to bully you in the future, I can't help much. Since Samuel's here, there's no chance for me to do anything."

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The woman was rendered speechless.

No matter how she looked at it, though Justin was the heir from a wealthy family, he was extremely talkative, especially when he glorified the hyper-realistic mask that she was wearing.

Not even a pair of deeply in love couples would say that!

Just then, Samuel caressed her hair and asked, "What fruit do you want to eat? I'll wash some."

"Strawberry," Natalie blurted out.

"Okay, sit here for a while. I'll head to the kitchen and wash some strawberries for you."

"All right."

Natalie flashed a charming smile at him, and he was mesmerized in an instant.

After Samuel left, Justin could not hold back his curiosity any longer. "How did you make Samuel fall in love with you?"

After pondering it for a long time, the woman replied, "I don't think I've done anything special."

"What? That's impossible." Justin gasped. "You mean Samuel is the one pursuing you?"

"Yes." She nodded matter-of-factly. "Moreover, I haven't agreed to be his girlfriend officially, so you don't need to flatter me. It's too early for that."

Her words caught Justin by surprise.

What? Samuel took the initiative to pursue a woman, but he isn't successful yet?

Initially, Natalie thought that what she said would definitely leave a bad impression on Justin. Unexpectedly, when she turned to look at him again, his eyes were full of admiration.

"Can I be your disciple?"

"What?"

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"I've liked Jane for a long time, but she always ignores me," Justin informed, holding her hands.

He had only held Natalie's hand for a few seconds when he heard a deep voice from the entrance of the kitchen.

"Justin Yelverton, let go of her!"

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"I'll come with."

His voice was low and hoarse, yet attractive at the same time.

In response, Natalie nodded.

Just when she thought that he would let her go, he scooped her up in his arms.

“Samuel, I don’t need you to carry me.”

“I want to.”

Carrying her in his arms, he walked out of the kitchen and went up the stairs to the second floor.

When the butler, Dalton Zachrich, and two other maids saw that, they gaped in surprise. It was already outrageous for Samuel to bring an unknown woman to the mansion, and it was even beyond their imagination that he would dote on her like that. They exchanged glances, certain that the woman had to be the future lady of the Bowers family.

Naturally, Natalie caught a glimpse of their gazes and frowned subconsciously.

“Samuel, you’ll make everyone think that I’m a vixen.”

Moments later, Samuel placed her on the soft bed and propped himself on top of her.

Hearing her words, he could not help but burst out laughing.

“What are you laughing at?”

“You? Vixen? You’re a far cry from a vixen.” Tapping her nose affectionately, he added, “Let’s talk about it when you really dare to do it with me.”

Natalie wanted to deny it, but kept her mouth shut.

Yes, I don’t dare. I admit that my heart has fluttered because of him, but I still can’t make my decision. How much does he like me? Will he stop cherishing me after I agree to be with him?

She had a lot in her mind simply because she did not want to get hurt.

“Didn’t you say you want to sleep? Go to sleep now,” said Samuel as he tucked her in.

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“Okay.”

Soon, she drifted into dreamland.

When she woke up, Samuel had prepared a set of clothes for her and took her to a cemetery on the outskirts of the city.

As soon as she arrived, she saw Liliana’s hands tied up, struggling and screaming in front of a grave.

“Josiah isn’t dead! He’s just sick! Dr. Nichols has a way to save him. Why did you bury him? No! Give him back to me!”

Seeing her struggling and screaming like a shrew, Natalie stepped forward and walked in front of her.

“Josiah is dead.” Natalie squatted down and looked into Liliana’s eyes. “Liliana, stop lying to yourself. You should know that he’s dead. He died in your arms. You should know that better than anyone else. You know that Milton is lying to you and playing along with the act. You’ve already seen through it, haven’t you?”

Upon hearing those words, Liliana laughed out loud.

“Yes, you’re right. I know it deep down in my heart. So what? I don’t need the truth! Sweet poison or agonizing antidote. How do you want me to choose? I avenged my family, but I’d lost him completely.”

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“I’ll choose the antidote,” answered Natalie without any hesitation as she stared into Liliana’s eyes.

“If the sweetness is fake, I would rather discard it. If it’s just a dream, you’ll eventually wake up from it. Even if it’s not me, someone else will destroy your dream. Do you think Milton will continue to play along with you when you’re no longer useful to him? Maybe you can’t even keep Josiah’s body intact. Josiah sacrificed his life for you. I’m sure he wants you to continue to be you, not the crazy woman who fell into paranoia because of him.”

Liliana was crying hysterically, digging the dirt of the cemetery with her fingers.

Josiah, you idiot! I once mocked you that you could do nothing for me, but you ended up using your life to prove your love for me. You’re an idiot!

“Liliana, those from the Todd family won’t let you off easily. You can’t stay in Livingsfill anymore,” Natalie continued. “You’re still young, and there are a lot of things that you can do. If you’ve thought it through, you can find me at Dream Corporation.”

With that said, she stood up and never looked at Liliana again.

I’ve said everything that needs to be said. If she still can’t figure it out on her own, it’ll be useless for me to say anything more.

After that, she left the cemetery with Samuel.

The cemetery was at the midpoint of the mountain. When one looked down from the mountain, they could see the graves standing solemnly, giving them a sense of desolation.

Samuel looked at Natalie’s profile and abruptly thought of the answer she had given to Liliana earlier.

Agonizing antidote. What kind of experience would make this woman blurt out such an answer?

“What on earth have you been through?”

Unwilling to answer the question, she turned her head away from him.

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Although she did have a bit of feeling for him, it did not mean that he could interfere with her past.

“Samuel, you said you aren’t a good person, right?”

“Yes.”

“Neither am I.” Natalie lifted her head, and a cold glint flashed across her eyes. “The me in front of you isn’t all of me. The real me is a petty and vengeful woman. Are you sure you want to stay by my side?”

When her mother had just passed away, she tried to treat Thomas and Yara nicely after she arrived in Dellmoor.

In the end, she realized that they had always thought of her as a country bumpkin. To them, she was just a tool to exchange benefits.

Over the years, she had learned to rely on herself.

She did not believe in fate or anyone else. She only trusted herself.

Even though she faltered because of the man in front of her, she would not change her principles.

Instead of him

finding out that she was not a good person later, she might as well be frank and clear to him now. *If he can’t accept it, I should leave as soon as possible.*

At some point, it started drizzling.

Immediately, Samuel took off his coat and draped it over Natalie’s head, shielding her from the wind and rain.

“I’ll stay by your side, no matter what.”

“Samuel, you,”

“Neither you nor I

am a good person.” After a pause, he added solemnly, “Worst comes to worst, we’ll go to hell together after death. Even then, I’ll still be by your

side.”

Natalie was taken aback, but soon, her eyes sparkled as a smile appeared on her face.

“I don’t know what you’re saying! Who’s going to hell with you?”

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“Fine. I don’t know what I’m talking about either.” Then, he said fondly, “Walk faster. Try not to get your wound wet.”

“Okay.”

With that, they increased their pace and entered the car.

Natalie was not particularly wet. On the other hand, Samuel was drenched.

The rain pitter–pattered on the car windows, and the mountain was veiled in mist.

His bangs were down, making him seem more like a “good boy.”

However, in the next second, he suddenly started to unbutton his shirt. “There are spare clothes in the car. I’ll change into them.”

Natalie remained silent, but her gaze still fell on his strong and firm abs.

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As Natalie was both a coroner and a doctor, she had seen a lot of bodies of the living and the dead.

However, it was the first time she had seen such a masculine body in front of her.

His muscle lines were defined. Every muscle was well–proportioned, making it hard for her to look away.

When Samuel was about to put on the clothes, he noticed that she was staring at his body and was engrossed in it.

All of a sudden, he felt like teasing her.

Deliberately slowing down his movement, he glanced at the woman, who was in a daze.

“Do you want to touch them?”

“Huh?”

“Do you want to touch them?” Samuel repeated, without a hint of annoyance.

Natalie hurriedly looked away, pretending that nothing had happened, but her flushed ears betrayed her.

Except for the night six years ago, she had never had any experience in that area. Furthermore, she was drugged, so she had close to no memory of that night, and she did not even see the man’s face clearly.

Her heart started to pound faster as if it was playing to an upbeat song.

I must’ve gone mad!

Subconsciously, she moved closer to the door, wanting to stay further away from him. She did not dare to even look at him again.

Seeing how flustered she was, Samuel grinned happily.

Moments ago, she said she was a petty and vengeful woman, but now, she looks like a pure and innocent little girl.

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The more she acted that way, the more he yearned to tease her, wanting to see her fluster because of him.

*. At that instant, he suddenly understood why boys liked to tease the girl they liked.

Hence, he leaned forward, sandwiching her between the car door and his body. "Nat, why are you running away?"

"W-Who's running away?" she instantly denied.

"Then why don't you dare to look at me?"

I don't dare? Who said so? I'll look at him to my heart's content! It's him who's being taken advantage of, anyway!

Taking a deep breath, she turned around to look at him but was met with a pair of eyes, like a beast staring at its prey.

And she was the prey.

The next moment, a sinister smile crept on Samuel's face, and he sealed her lips without any warning.

"Mmm,"

Obviously, Natalie was no match for him in terms of strength. Grabbing her wrist, she secured it above her head.

The rain was splattering outside, covering their soft pants and heavy breathing.

Of course, she had touched his abs to her heart's content.

When she returned to the mansion, she received a video call from Xavian.

As soon as she answered the call, four little kids appeared on the screen.

However, the screen was not big enough. All four of them wanted to see Natalie and wanted to be seen by her, so they fought to be at the front.

"This computer is mine. I should stand at the front," stated Franklin.

"This technology is mine, so I should stand at the front," argued Xavian.

"Nothing is mine, but Mommy is mine," retorted Clayton.

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Natalie missed them a lot but was amused by how they were fighting with each other.

“Can you guys stop fighting?” she probed.

The three little boys on the other side of the screen were pinching each other’s shoulders, forming a super funny triangle.

“Xavian, we should work together and get Clayton out of the screen first. Then, we can discuss it out.”

“I’m sorry, Clayton.”

With that said, Xavian and Franklin exerted force at the same time and pushed Clayton out of the screen. Subsequently, the two of them began to fight.

Clayton widened his eyes in disbelief. “Xavian, you betrayed your biological brother.”

“There’s no such thing as biological siblings when we’re fighting for Mommy.”

Natalie’s head throbbed as she looked at the phone screen. Just when she was thinking of a way to stop them, a soft voice sounded.

“Can I stand at the front?” asked Sophia.

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Sophia blinked her crystal clear eyes. Her face was cute and soft, making people feel the urge to pinch it.

The three boys exchanged glances and said in unison, “Yes.”

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Sophia knew that the boys liked Natalie a lot as well. They were willing to compromise because they depended on her. Hence, she expressed her gratitude to each of them before looking at the camera and talking with Natalie.

“Natalie, we miss you so much. When will you come back?”

Natalie did not mention her arm injury.

She was afraid that if she mentioned it, they would come to Livingfill in order to see her. Given Sophia’s soft personality, she would definitely cry.

“I’ll stay in Livingfill this week and go back in the next. I’ll bring you gifts as well.”

“I don’t want presents. I only want you,” uttered Sophia.

“Be a good girl, and you’ll have both me and the presents.”

Usually, she could not say such cringeworthy words to her sons. Weirdly enough, she had no problem saying them to Sophia, so naturally at that.

However, Samuel, who was reading documents at the side, was dissatisfied the moment he heard that.

Thus, he put down the document in his hand, strode toward Natalie, and pulled her into his arms.

Looking at the phone camera, he narrowed his eyes and remarked, "Sophia, Natalie is mine. I can't give her to you."

In an instant, Sophia's face fell.

Natalie was rendered speechless by his declaration and quickly comforted, "Sophia, your daddy is joking with you. He loves you the most and won't bear to see you unhappy."

Samuel remained silent, but his expression darkened.

After the video call ended, Natalie turned around and glared at him. "You did it on purpose, didn't you? How can you get jealous over your daughter?"

The man was wearing a pair of gold-rimmed glasses.

The glasses accentuated his good looks, bringing off a gentle and elegant temperament. Yet, his gaze was full of aggression, on the verge of losing control of his desire.

"I was just telling her the truth."

You are mine and only mine.

"How old are you, Samuel?" She knitted her brows. "You're acting like a child."

"You can't hide the truth from her just because she's young," he whispered into her ear, completely unaware of his problem.

"How could you bully a kid? Aren't you worried she might remove your oxygen tube when she's older?"

"Nat, do you believe I can make you run out of oxygen first?"

Who would believe that?

"No," Natalie responded in disapproval. "Not that I'm using an oxygen tube—"

Unfortunately, she had no chance of completing her sentence as he kissed her lips and plundered her breath.

He was dominating all her senses with a steamy kiss.

Though he was punishing her, she felt that there was more affection in the punishment. He had made her understand that kissing could also make people suffocate.

In the blink of an eye, it had been a few days since Natalie started recuperating in the mansion.

Even so, she had not been idle either. She had asked Yandel to send the raw materials of Yana's medicine to Livingfill.

Then, she asked Dalton for a room and turned it into a research laboratory to analyze the medicine for Yana.

Although Samuel felt distressed seeing her working hard for others, he respected her decision.

At night, Justin came to the mansion in extremely formal clothes.

"Natalie." As soon as he saw Natalie, he asked, "What do you think of my outfit tonight?"

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Hearing that, Samuel quirked his brows and pinched Natalie's chin.

"When did you get so familiar with him?" he questioned.

"How do I know?" Natalie could not help but rolled her eyes. "Isn't he your best friend?"

Samuel raised the corners of his lips slightly and uttered, "Huh, then I guess you're not familiar with him." Then, he gave her a big smooch before averting his gaze to Justin.

In actuality, Justin went there to ask if his outfit fit the aesthetics of a woman since he wanted to show it to Jane. Little did he know that he would have to see them display affection for each other before he could get an answer.

When Samuel wasn't in love, he was like an emotionless sculpture. Is he trying to make up for it by displaying his affection as often as possible now? This is too torturing. Why are they tormenting me?

After he finally calmed his emotions, he queried, "Samuel, shall we depart now? Or else we'll be late for the banquet."

Only then did Natalie know Samuel had a banquet to attend that night.

Since she was not interested in banquets, she would rather stay in the mansion to read some medical books or be in the research laboratory to experiment with the medicines.

"Nat, go with me," Samuel chimed.

"Can I stay at the mansion instead?" Frowning, she looked at him puzzledly. "You didn't tell me anything about it."

"If I told you beforehand, you would find a way to not attend it tonight," he refuted, pinching her cheek. "Many women dream of attending this kind of banquet. You're the only want who wants to avoid it."

Samuel was right. If he had told her a day earlier, she would have thought of a way to get out of it.

"Do I have to go?" she asked.

“You didn’t agree to be my woman, but at least be my plus one.”

Natalie could feel the love and affection that he gave her so far.

Hence, after giving it some thought, she nodded.

“Okay, then. I’ll go with you.”

When Natalie went upstairs to change clothes, Justin and Samuel were waiting downstairs.

Staring at the noble and graceful man in front of him, Justin asked, “Samuel, if you want to be with Natalie, what are you going to do with the woman in Dellmoor? Your grandfather has been telling everyone that she’s the future lady of the Bowers family. Everyone in your family already has a tacit understanding regarding your marriage. After all, Franklin will take over your position in the future. If that woman isn’t your wife, he’ll become an illegitimate child instead of the heir of the Bowers family. Even if you don’t care about yourself, at least spare a thought for Franklin and Sophia.”

Hearing that, Samuel whipped around and met Justin’s eyes.

“Franklin and Sophia like Nat more than their biological mother.”

“I know, but this doesn’t change what I said.” Justin sighed. “It’s not easy to be a lady of any family, especially the Bowers family. Her face alone may cause her to get attacked by others.”

Justin did not dislike Natalie. On the contrary, he felt that although she was not a beauty, she was able to make others take a liking to her.

However, as someone who grew up in a wealthy family, he knew how things worked.

Thus, Justin felt the need to remind Samuel of the problems he might face in the future.

He could still turn back before the dust settled.

“Justin, you don’t have to worry about this,” remarked Samuel. “What happened six years ago was a mistake. Since it’s a mistake, it must be corrected. I won’t let this mistake go on forever.”

“A mistake?”

“Yes.”

A hint of determination flickered across Samuel’s eyes.

It might be possible for him to recognize her face wrongly, but his feelings would not go wrong.

If it were not for her, his self-control would not be so bad to the point that he wanted to possess her so badly that he ignored her when she begged for mercy.

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Soon, Natalie walked down the stairs after changing into a black nightgown, which perfectly outlined her slender figure.

Even though she was still wearing the ugly mask, it did not affect the aura exuded from her body. She looked as sophisticated as a black swan.

Most people focused on improving their appearances instead of body figures because the latter was more difficult to change.

Despite not having a pretty face, Natalie had a perfect body figure.

Samuel bowed and stretched out his right hand to her. "It's my honor to have you as my plus one."

"Are you sure you want to go with me?" Natalie winked slyly. "Aren't you afraid that my appearance will humiliate you?"

"Do you know why I insist on bringing you to tonight's banquet?" Samuel asked.

Confused, she shook her head.

"Why?"

"Because I want to show everyone that I'm taken and that I'm yours." Tucking her hair behind her ear, she uttered, "I would need your help to chase away my admirers tonight."

"Um.

Not only did he not disfavor her appearance, but he also gave her a sense of security.

Looking at the handsome man in front of her, she suddenly felt that it would be good to be spoiled by him

.

It seems like enjoying my life under his protection isn't that bad after all.

The banquet at Pavilion was hosted by the Leister family of Livingsfill.

The Leister family was a descendant of the previous dynasty of Chanaea. After a hundred years, the family had gradually declined. Even so, it still had a deep history in Livingsfill and Chanaea. In the previous years, they were an illustrious family of

academics. However, they had managed to gain a foothold in the business industry in recent years and rise to the top once again.

The banquet that night was the coming-of-age ceremony of Susan Leister, the Leister family's daughter.

Not only was she the only daughter of the Leister family, but she had been smart and talented since she was a child. Hence, everyone in the family doted on her.

That was why the banquet had been the talk of the town.

Samuel happened to be in Livingsfill, and the Leister family had sent an invitation to his mansion, so he naturally had to give them some respect by attending the banquet.

Despite arriving at the same time, Justin had to enter the venue with his family, so he and Samuel went in separately.

Although the venue of the banquet was named Pavilion, it was by no means a gazebo.

It was a traditional yet luxurious courtyard, surrounded by rockeries and flowing water.

Not long after Natalie and Samuel entered the venue after showing their invitation card, a girl wearing a white dress with a diamond crown on her head ran over while holding her dress.

“Samuel.” Standing still, she held Samuel’s arm and smiled brightly. “You haven’t come to Livingsfill for a long time. My family told me you couldn’t attend my coming-of-age banquet, so I’ve been sad for a long time. I’m really happy that you’re here tonight!”

The girl who was speaking was Susan Leister.

Seeing how carefree she was, she was indeed spoiled by her family.

Of course, because she had never experienced any hardships, she wore her heart on her sleeve.

It was obvious that she liked Samuel.

Before Natalie could speak, Susan looked in her direction and inquired, “Samuel, is she your secretary? This is my first time seeing her.”

Even though Natalie looked like an average person, she was giving off a magnanimous aura, and she did look like a secretary.

Not knowing how to answer, Natalie stayed quiet and let the man beside her deal with it.

“She isn’t my secretary,” answered Samuel slowly.

“Really?” Susan blinked her eyes in surprise. “Then who is she?”

“She’s the woman I like.” Subsequently, Samuel wrapped his arm around Natalie’s waist and remarked, “I’m pursuing her, but she still hasn’t agreed to be my woman.”

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Natalie was shocked upon hearing it.

After all, as the head of the Bowers family, Samuel was a prominent figure and worth ten billion.

Hence, it was beyond expectation that Samuel willingly announced Nicole as his girlfriend.

Meanwhile, Susan was rooted to the ground as though she was struck by lightning.

After all, she found it hard to believe even a word said by Samuel.

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After a while, Susan forced a smile and said, "Samuel, are you kidding me? How can you possibly... like t his kind of woman?"

"Why not?" Squinting his eyes naughtily, Samuel said, "Nat is exactly the type of girl I want. I'm introduci ng her to you now and not kidding. Besides, I hope that I won't hear you talk behind her back again."

Samuel looked elegant but also exuded a sense of overbearingness with every gesture.

Meanwhile, Susan could tell that Samuel was very protective of the plain woman.

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Hence, Susan knew that she would offend Samuel right away if she were to say another word about her.

"Samuel, it's not what I meant-"

"Susan, I congratulate you for officially becoming an adult from today onward."

Susan had no choice but to maintain her grace even though she was hurt deep down.

"Samuel, thank you."

With that, Samuel and Natalie went into the banquet hall side by side.

As Susan's eyes turned red, tears almost streamed down her face. She tried very hard not to weep to avoid ruining her makeup.

Noticing that Susan was about to cry, Wyatt and Jocelyn came up to their beloved

daughter.

The next moment, Joycelyn hugged Susan's shoulder and asked gently, "My dear princess, why are you c rying all of a sudden? Who bullied you?"

Susan tried very hard to hold her tears, yet her voice trembled. "Mommy, Samuel already has a girlfrien d... What should I do?"

Wyatt and Joycelyn exchanged glances upon hearing it.

After a while, Samuel responded, "Doesn't Samuel have a son and a daughter? Although he hasn't marri ed the woman, I believe it's only a matter of time for that to happen. In that case, I'd advise you to let go of your hope to be with Samuel."

Joycelyn also chimed in, "Your dad is right. Although Samuel is one in a million, you won't get a chance as long as the woman exists."

Wyatt and Joycelyn didn't have high hopes for their daughter, not because of Samuel's children—Franklin and Sophia.

After all, it wasn't uncommon for someone from a prominent family to have children. On the contrary, they believed the Leister family would achieve greater heights if the Bowers and the Leister family were bonded by marriage.

However, the biggest obstacle was that the twin's biological mother existed. Therefore, Wyatt and Joycelyn couldn't let Susan marry Samuel only to be his second wife.

Given that Susan lived in a prominent family since she was young, she knew her parents' concerns. Hence, she hastily clarified it to them. "Daddy, Mommy, you've misunderstood it. The woman whom Samuel has brought along to the banquet isn't Yara but another woman. I've never seen that woman before. She's certainly not from any prominent family and not beautiful at all. How can she ever compare to me?"

Deep down, Susan thought Yara couldn't win over her in any aspect, except that she gave birth to the twins for Samuel.

However, Susan couldn't tolerate it anymore, for the woman who was indulged by Samuel now was even worse than Yara.

In the meantime, Wyatt and Joycelyn were shocked once Susan finished.

"Did you say she isn't the woman from Dellmoor?"

"She isn't! Daddy, Mommy, I'm not lying. You'll know it later."

While walking side by side into the banquet hall, Natalie ridiculed Samuel. "Samuel, it appears that you have a lot of admirers... That admirer is not only young but good looking as well. Besides, she seems to be obsessed with you. Are you sure you don't want to consider her?"

Natalie wasn't exaggerating, for Susan was beautiful and had a sweet voice. All the more so, she was considered a perfect woman to most men due to her prominent background.

As soon as Natalie finished, Samuel suddenly stopped walking.

"Huh?" Natalie was taken aback and stopped as well.

"Nat, are you jealous because I have many admirers." Samuel bent down slightly to ask her in a low voice.

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"Who is jealous?" Natalie pursed her lips defiantly.

“You.”

“Whatever.” Natalie replied petulantly, “Your admirers fancy you. What does it have to do with me?”

Although Natalie wouldn’t budge, Samuel couldn’t help but chuckle when he noticed that Natalie was shy and avoiding his gaze.

At that moment, Samuel felt overjoyed even though Natalie didn’t admit that she was jealous.

Even though Samuel wasn’t sure if Natalie was fond of or merely dependent on him, he knew that she cared about him.

Hence, he was confident that it was a matter of time for Natalie to love him.

Natalie didn’t know what was on Samuel’s mind. Recalling what she said just now, Natalie felt frustrated for being jealous.

Even though Natalie and Samuel had something bothering them, they held hands and walked into the banquet hall.

The moment they entered the hall, the guests were unconvinced that they were the perfect match.

Instead of dressing up nicely, Samuel only wore his usual white shirt. Nevertheless, he was strikingly handsome, exuding a sense of grace and overbearingness that impressed everyone.

While Samuel was elegant, Natalie looked rather plain and ordinary.

“It can’t be! Who is this lady? She looks so ordinary!”

“Does she know how she looks? Is she worthy of standing beside Samuel?”

“Ah? That man must be Samuel Bowers, the legendary head of the Bowers family! He is indeed astonishingly handsome! However, is there something wrong with his partner? I mean, isn’t she a bit too ugly even as his secretary?”

Natalie was rendered speechless as she listened to the mean comments about her look.

Even if I look like this, I have never spent their money nor harmed them? Who are they to criticize my look?

The night air was chilly.

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Shaking the glass of champagne, Natalie couldn’t help but feel that the world was a cruel place and that rumors could be deadly.

Initially, Samuel was a little worried that Natalie would be affected by the harsh comments. Once he saw the cold rage fill her eyes, he knew that he worried too much.

After all, Samuel was aware that the woman he loved was not a gentle rabbit but a wild cat with sharp claws.

Moreover, Samuel was confident that the woman he fancied was the best among the best in the world. Suddenly, a man in a servant uniform came up to Samuel, bowed, and gestured for Samuel to follow him.

“Mr. Bowers, Old Mr. Leister would like to invite you to the inner hall to meet him alone.”

Since it was an invitation by an elder from the prominent Leister family, Samuel thought he shouldn't reject it.

“Alright, I'm coming.”

After that, Samuel turned around, frowned and asked, “Can you handle it when I'm not around?”

“Of course.” Natalie flashed him a smile and blinked her crystal clear eyes repeatedly. “Old Mr. Leister has made it clear that he is inviting you alone. Just go. As for me, I won't pick on others, yet I'll never allow anyone to pick on me either.”

Knowing that Natalie could take care of herself, Samuel decided not to bring her along to the inner hall.

However, before leaving the banquet hall, Samuel whispered near Natalie's ear to **warn her**.

“Drink less when I'm not around. Otherwise, I'm going to teach you a lesson after I come back.”

After that, Samuel and the butler of the Leister family turned around and walked toward the inner hall.

Hey, I'm already 24 years old and not an underage girl! Why must I be restrained from drinking? No way! I'll drink as much as I want and see what Samuel can do to me!

As Natalie wanted to lift a glass of wine, she suddenly heard a familiar voice.

“Natalie, it's you.”

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Natalie turned around and realized that it was her best friend, Cecilia.

UN

It was the first time that Natalie met Cecilia since they parted ways in the Todd residence.

“Natalie, is your right arm okay?”

“It's only a minor injury.” Natalie smiled and said, “I can handle it on my own.”

LIIN

“Sure. I always know Dr. Nichols is the top female doctor in the universe.” Cecilia said, “When I wanted to visit you, I was told Samuel had picked you up. I didn't contact you right away, for I wasn't sure who he was to you.”

At that moment, Cecilia paused for a while and asked, "Well, what kind of relationship are you and Samuel in?"

"We're more than friends but not yet lovers." Natalie took a sip of her glass of wine and continued in a deep voice, "It's not his problem but mine. Since I'm still carrying a lot of burdens in my heart, I can hardly accept him without sorting them out."

Cecilia understood the pain that was buried in Natalie's heart.

If Cecilia and Natalie were to exchange their lives, Cecilia thought she probably couldn't stay alive like Natalie.

"What about you? Why are you at Susan's birthday party?"

"I designed the clothes for Ms. Leister. Since the Leister family invited me, I have to attend the party."

"Is that so?" Natalie scanned Cecilia from head to toe and said, "You design more than twenty sets of clothes every year. Besides, I rarely saw you attend parties before. I wonder if Andrew attends the party."

Initially, Cecilia was stubborn and refused to admit to it. After a while, she couldn't hold it and smiled bitterly.

"Natalie, I really can't hide any secrets from you."

"Andrew is here with Rosalie tonight." Cecilia said bitterly, "I know I'm spineless, for I was only a tool used by Andrew to provoke Rosalie."

"He was just toying me, yet I love him..."

Natalie wasn't with Cecilia when everything happened but only heard parts of the story from Yandel.

"Cecilia, do you want me to recommend some men, who are a hundred or even a thousand times better than Andrew, to you? If the first man isn't suitable, you can check out the next until you've finally found one."

As Natalie spoke, she followed Cecilia's gaze and saw a couple in the crowd.

The lady resembled Cecilia a fair bit, yet her eyes seemed to be gentler. Besides, she looked pitiful and obedient when standing beside the handsome man.

At that moment, a hint of sadness surrounded Cecilia's eyes. "Natalie, I don't need so many men to forget him. After the madwoman from the Todd family abducted me, I

think Andrew should have known it. However, he had never looked for me. Apparently, my life and death are not important to him."

Cecilia paused for a while and continued, "To him, Rosalie is his everything. On the contrary, I'm only Rosalie's elder and half-sister who has a carefree life."

"Cecilia—"

"Hence, after escaping from the Todd residence, I have lost all of my hope in him. I'll forget him and ensure that I'll never love him again." Cecilia blinked her eyes to get rid of her tears.

"Sure. Get rid of the man out of your mind entirely."

Natalie hugged Cecilia tightly and gently patted her shoulder many times.

Meanwhile, Andrew's gaze inadvertently fell upon Cecilia.

Natalie could tell that Andrew was concerned about Cecilia. Nonetheless, she immediately gave Andrew an angry sideways glance as she was protecting her friend. Andrew quickly moved his gaze away as though his thought was exposed. At that moment, Natalie knew that he felt guilty

.

Unfortunately...

Deep down, Natalie had decided to let Cecilia squash all hopes in Andrew.

All the more so, Natalie wanted Andrew to regret and bear the consequences of