

Happiness 268-277

The Promise of Happiness

Chapter 268

It was the first time Justin had heard Samuel had such high compliments for **someone**.

He stood frozen on the spot for a good while before he regained his senses and quickly took a gulp of wine from his glass to calm himself down.

What the hell!

Justin's curiosity toward Natalie had only increased after hearing Samuel's praises. Now, he wanted to see how special Natalie was.

Natalie followed closely behind Phoebe into a guest room on the second floor.

DOIN

Once they got into the room, Phoebe put on a warm smile on her face as she said, "Ms. Natalie, please wait here for a moment. There's some juice over at that corner; do help yourself to it. I'll bring you a clean gown that suits you soon."

Finishing that, she stood up and left.

Left alone in the guest room, Natalie sauntered around while surveying the surroundings, only to realize that the room was way warmer than the ballroom. In no time, she felt her throat go dry.

Her gazes landed on the glass of fresh orange juice on the coffee table.

She walked over and picked up the glass, only to find it weird after taking a whiff of it.

Tsk! Tsk! Susan has such evil thoughts despite her young age, huh? How is this digging a hole and making me suffer? She's obviously trying to destroy my reputation and make me fall from grace!

Picking up the glass, she poured all the juice into a potted plant beside the coffee table.

Shortly after, Phoebe knocked and pushed open the door.

As soon as she walked into the room, she saw Natalie lying on the couch, her body slightly curled and her almond eyes tightly shut.

Assuming that Natalie had lost consciousness, a hint of smugness flashed across Phoebe's eyes. She walked nearer and gave the former a nudge. "Natalie, wake up. Do

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you hear me?"

Looking at Natalie's state and the empty glass on the coffee table, Phoebe was certain that Natalie was knocked unconscious after taking the drugged orange juice.

Phoebe reached her hand out and pinched Natalie's cheeks. Even her exquisite makeup could not disguise how malicious she was.

"Tsk! What gives you the right to be standing beside Samuel with this face of yours? If I can't, neither can you."

She then fished out her phone and sent a voice message to Susan.

"She has lost consciousness. The man I've arranged will arrive at the room in ten minutes."

At the mere thought of how disgusted Samuel would be if he saw the sight of Natalie tangled with a random man in bed, Phoebe could not hide her excitement. She pushed herself up from the couch and prepared to exit the room.

Just as she headed toward the door with her guards down, an arm swiftly landed around her neck.

"Mmph— Phoebe let out a muffled grunt before falling onto the ground.

Natalie dusted her hands and shot a cold, piercing glare at the collapsed Phoebe.

Even though she appeared exceptionally calm, her downcast gaze had a hint of daunting glint to it.

In truth, her skills might not be comparable to that of a skilled young man, but it was more than enough for her to deal with a defenseless wealthy lady like Phoebe.

Following that, Natalie carried Phoebe onto the couch, removed her hair accessories, and messed up her hair so that her long wavy locks would cover her face.

She then opened the wardrobe in the room, only to find two sets of clothing—a cream-colored silk nightgown and a servant uniform.

Without hesitation, Natalie chose the black and white striped servant uniform.

She hurriedly removed the gown on herself and changed into the servant uniform. Next, she took off the hyper-realistic mask on her face and proceeded to get out of the room.'

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At that point, she was completely different from the impression others had of Natalie completely.

Many had caught a glimpse of her looks as she made her way from the inner hall to the ballroom, yet no one could recognize who she was.

As she was about to walk into the ballroom, a familiar silhouette came before her, blocking her path.

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Natalie looked over, only to notice that it was Justin.

I've removed the hyper-realistic mask. Don't tell me he can still recognize me? Or perhaps he has taken me for Yara?

No matter what reason it was, it was not something Natalie would hope to happen.

"Is anything the matter?" Natalie purposely held her head low.

"I'd like a piece of strawberry cake," Justin uttered while loosening his tie.

WDC

Hearing that, she silently heaved a sigh of relief.

"Sure, mister," she politely replied. Of course, she could not be bothered by the strawberry cake. She continued with the act just so that she could escape from the tricky situation.

"Hurry. I'll wait for you here."

"Sure."

Just as Natalie was about to leave, Justin suddenly reached out his arm and grabbed hold of her wrist.

"You—" Natalie furrowed her brows.

"Wait, no... Have I seen you before? Your voice sounds very familiar. It seems like I've heard your voice recently..." Justin tightened his grip on her wrist. "I'm sure I know you. It's just that I can't recall right now."

Natalie felt a chill down her spine.

It had never crossed her mind that not only had Justin met Yara before, but he could even recognize her voice.

She knew that Samuel would learn about it had Justin smelled something fishy. It had always crossed her mind about coming clean with Samuel about the hyper-realistic mask, except that she had yet to find the best time to do it.

Despite the internal dilemma tearing her apart, her mind was in an unusually calm state.

10:04 Fico:

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I can't just confess this way.

"Mister, could it be that you got the wrong person?" Natalie pried his fingers off her wrist.

"That's impossible." Justin narrowed his eyes. "I'm sure I know you. You aren't a servant from the Leister family. I can't recall who you are now, but I will be able to do that after a short while."

"Y-You really made a mistake!"

Despite Natalie's constant denial, Justin was just as eloquent. There was simply no way she could win the debate.

This isn't going anywhere. We'll only attract more attention with more commotion. Perhaps someone in the crowd might recognize Yara. This wouldn't do any good for me. Oh dear, I'm done for!

Just when Natalie was in an anxious state, a woman's voice sounded from one side.

"Justin, you're becoming braver at flirting recently, huh?" A cool-looking lady strode toward them, with her eyes that were full of disappointment fixed on Justin. "Hah. So this is your so-called love for me?"

"I-1... Things aren't like what you imagined it to be!"

Justin's love for Jane was embedded deep within his bones. Seeing how she had misunderstood him as a two-timer, he was eager to explain his stand. Nevertheless, he still held onto Natalie's hand tightly as he was afraid that the suspicious woman would run away in the process.

"My feelings for you are true and honest! It's just that she looks like someone I know!" It seemed like Justin had become a young boy in front of Jane. "You have to believe me, Jane."

Having heard him call the lady Jane, Natalie immediately knew she was his beloved.

She saw her only chance to get away from her current situation.

"Mister, I've told you many times. I really don't know you." Natalie blinked at him as she put on an innocent expression. "Yet, you're still unwilling to let go of my hand and even claims that I look like your first love. My hand hurts a lot..."

"First love my foot!" Justin snapped. "Stop spouting nonsense! My first love is Jane!"

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"But that's not what you say just now..."

"What are you babbling about?"

"Why are you denying what you've told me earlier?"

"Listen carefully! Don't think that I wouldn't dare to beat a woman up!" Justin was on the verge of going berserk.

"That's enough! Stop pretending, Justin. I don't want to see you anymore."

Finishing her sentence, Jane looked grimly at the two who had differing statements before turning around and walking away.

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Watching Jane walk away without looking back, Justin shot daggers at Natalie and shrugged off her hand without any hesitation.

He then ran in the direction where Jane left and shouted, "Jane, stop right there."

Although Jane had heard him clearly, she completely ignored his commands and held her head low as she continued forward in large strides. It seemed like she was **determined** to get the man out of her life.

Staring intently at their silhouettes, Natalie rubbed her reddened wrist that Justin grabbed earlier.

Hmm... It seems like Jane's actions show that she still cares about him, unlike what she says. Perhaps, I might've even created a chance for him to confess his feelings to Jane. What a blessing in disguise!

While this little encounter threw Natalie into a little surprise, she was relieved that Justin did not expose her identity.

In the meantime, after receiving the voice message from Phoebe, Susan did not see or hear from her again.

"Where exactly did Phoebe go?"

In reality, Susan was not genuinely concerned about Phoebe's whereabouts. Her only anticipation was to see the miserable-looking Natalie, with barely any clothes on, getting criticized by everyone.

As such, she gathered a few ladies from wealthy families that she was close with and came up with an excuse so that they would accompany her to the guest room to get an accessory.

Standing before the guest room, Susan narrowed her eyes. A flash of cruelty flickered in her icy gazes.

Hmph! I'm the daughter of the Leister family! While that woman is an orphan with no background! How dare she snatch Samuel from me? I'll let that wretch meet her doom for doing that!

Pushing open the door, Susan walked into the room with her best friends.

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In the next second, they were dumbfounded by what they saw on the couch—two naked bodies intertwined together.

The man's breathing was as heavy and intense as a beast, while the woman's soft moans filled the air.

The two had their clothes disheveled.

The woman was on top of the man, and her long hair was all over her face.

"Ah! W—What are you guys doing?" Susan covered her mouth and gasped in astonishment.

The other ladies had looks of disgust on their faces as well.

“No way! How shameless!”

“Aren’t you too disgusting to be doing this here? Are you guys a little too impatient?”

“Don’t you know what kind of occasion this is? Whatever it is, there’s still a limit to having fun.”

Susan felt a slight sense of victory within her.

However, it would be a pity if they were the only ones who saw that sight. She wanted more people to join in to see Natalie’s pathetic look.

She believed that Samuel would lose all interest in Natalie if he saw her in such a predicament.

Since

it was quite a commotion there, some guests had followed the trail of sound and went over in no time to join the spectacle.

In truth, it was common for men and women of the upper-class society to have such clandestine affairs, some faring way worse than this. Even so, a majority of them still knew their limits, unlike the pair before the crowd’s eyes. Everyone was appalled at how the two were still reluctant to be separated even after getting exposed.

“Who is that? She won’t be able to get married anymore!”

“Exactly! I’m sure no family would allow their son to marry a woman like her!”

“There’s nothing that deserves our pity! Serves her right for doing such a disgraceful

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Susan was on cloud nine after hearing the crowd’s reactions, except that it was not enough to satisfy her

When she saw Samuel making his way over in her direction, she became incredibly thrilled.

She hurriedly padded to Samuel’s side and grabbed his arm as she said pitifully, “Samuel, it’s my coming of age ceremony and my birthday today. H-

How can they do something so disgraceful and shameless here?”

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Shifting his gaze on the pair of hands that were grabbing tightly onto his arm, Samuel discreetly shrugged off Susan’s hands.

Back then, he did not mind that she held his arm this way since he treated her as his sister, and more importantly, he did not have a beloved woman then.

But it was no longer the same now.

He was now taken.

He had to steer himself away from any ambiguous behaviors or situations.

In contrast, Susan was both shocked and upset by Samuel's action. But on second thought, she felt better after comforting herself that Samuel would soon see Natalie sleeping with another man.

And when that happened, she would stay by his side so that she could make the heartbroken man fall in love with her.

Shortly after, some people from the Leister family made their way over too.

There were Alfred, Wyatt, Joycelyn, and Phoebe's parents.

Contrary to the crowd, Alfred had humiliation written all over his face. He was furious to learn that such a disgraceful act had happened in the Leister family's territory.

"Hurry! Separate this scumbag and wench, Edwin!" Alfred was infuriated.

"Got it."

Edwin went up to the couch and pulled the man and woman, who were both still in a groggy state, apart.

At one glance, Edwin immediately recognized that the woman was Phoebe. Puzzlement swamped him so much he stood frozen at the spot for a long time. Having served the Leister family for so many years, he could not bear to see them in embarrassment. He wanted to do what he could to protect Phoebe from everyone's view.

"Edwin, why are you standing there?" Alfred yelled.

"I-I..." Edwin could not bring himself to say anything.

"Move aside. I want to see for myself who these two imbeciles are!" Edwin's silence only made Alfred blow his top off.

Despite so, Edwin clenched his teeth tight and did not budge.

Noticing Edwin's reaction, Susan frowned. *What on earth is he doing over there without moving?!*

A vortex of anger swirled inside Alfred as Edwin still stood motionless, refusing to move at all.

"Get lost!" Alfred shoved Edwin aside.

Following that, the crowd squeezed closer to get a better look at the faces of the pair.

The man was unattractive and had hideous facial features. What made it worst was how he had a raunchy and indecent vibe from head to toe.

However, everyone could recognize the woman with one glance.

“Oh my gosh! Isn't that Phoebe?”

“Yeah! Wow, I can't tell she's such a person! Why would she do such a shameless act?”

“She looks so innocent; yet, she engages in such a shameless thing behind everyone's back!”

“That guy looks so horrible, but Phoebe still sleeps with him. Wow. Is she just not picky? Or does she have a peculiar taste for men?”

Upon realizing that it was Phoebe, George and Winnie dashed over to the couch. George hurriedly took off his coat and put it on his daughter.

“Phoebe, why would you...”

“Phoebe, get a hold of yourself.”

Winnie

was pinching Phoebe so tightly the latter was eventually jolted back to realization and gradually opened her eyes.

The only thing she remembered was that she was preparing to leave after seeing Natalie lying unconscious on the couch. Anything after that was a hazy memory to

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her.

“Dad, Mom, why are you all.”

Before she could complete her sentence, Phoebe suddenly realized that she had George's coat draped over her body. She had nothing on below that. Beside her, the man was also undressed and trying to catch his breath.

She quickly swept her gaze across the crowd, where she spotted countless pairs of eyes filled with contempt and mockery fixated on her.

At once, Phoebe began shuddering in fear, seemingly recalling what had happened.

“N-No... Things aren't like what you think... I-I didn't do it!”

Tears were rolling down her face uncontrollably as she tried to defend herself. However, everyone present seemed to trust their eyes more than her words.

As a man who had married into the Leister family, George had spent years earning his respects from the others gradually. It was not an easy feat for him; unfortunately, his daughter had become his greatest shame now.

Unable to restrain his rage any longer, he served a merciless slap across Phoebe's face.

“Phoebe Leister, shut up!”

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Smack! Phoebe was left shocked by the hard slap on her cheek.

Even though Phoebe's status was nowhere comparable to that of Susan in the Leister family, Winnie and George still adored her a lot since she had good manners, excellent results, and to top it all off, she had outstandingly good looks. No one could believe that this usually obedient lady would do something so outrageous. Needless to say, George and Winnie were the most affected and furious.

"Phoebe, do you know how shameless you are? Do you still want to get married?"

"What exactly do you want?"

Phoebe broke into an uncontrollable sob.

I certainly saw Natalie lying unconscious on the couch. This man was supposed to be sleeping with that wretch. Why did it become me instead?

Since everything had happened so abruptly, Phoebe could not wrap her head around the situation. She knew there was no way she could convince the others with an explanation that even she could not believe.

Now, there's only one person who can help me. Only Susan knows the truth to this entire matter:

"Susan... Susan..." Phoebe's eyes were red and swollen as she choked on her words. "You know the truth to this whole incident... Only you can help me now. Please explain it to Dad, Mom, and Grandpa!"

At the mention of her name, Susan was instantly seized by shock and panic.

Even the fingers she clenched tightly in her palms have turned white.

No way! It shouldn't have turned out this way! Natalie should be the one who's sleeping with this lecherous man! She should've been the target of all these criticisms!

Despite her young age, Susan was very manipulative. She knew she could never admit everything had stemmed from her cunning plan against Natalie. And that naturally meant that there was nothing she could do to salvage Phoebe's plight.

Since things have come this way, Phoebe can only blame herself for not being meticulous enough and thus causing such a mess.

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With her mind made up, Susan knitted her brows and muttered, "Phoebe, I don't know what you're saying. How else can I defend you when you've done such a disgraceful act?"

Phoebe could not believe that the person, whom she placed utmost trust in, did not speak up for her and even called her disgraceful. After all, she would not be in such a predicament if Susan had not asked her to help set a trap for Natalie.

“Susan, we’re cousins after all. How can you do this to me?”

VC

George and Winnie knew their daughter had high standards. There was no way she would look for such an ugly-looking man even if she had wanted a one-night stand.

As such, their gazes instinctively landed on Susan after hearing Phoebe’s interrogation.

“Susan, do you know something?” Winnie swallowed her pride and earnestly asked since the matter was concerning her daughter’s reputation.

As Susan was targeted and dragged into the mess, discussions exploded among the crowd.

Winnie’s sudden question left Susan so shocked that her face went as white as sheet, while she quickly shifted her gaze to avoid any eye contact with anyone. It was as though she was caught red-handed in a crime.

“I have no idea what you’re saying. Why would I have anything to do with what Phoebe wants to do?”

Wyatt and Joycelyn too were overwhelmed with fury and immediately voiced out their opinions to support their daughter. “Phoebe only has herself to blame for doing such a thing. It’s none of Susan’s business! Don’t you dare throw false accusations at

Us!”

Phoebe’s eyes were full of resentment as she pinned her eyes on Susan.

She treats me so nicely when she wants to plot against Natalie, yet now she’s pushing me to one side and acting innocent? Fine. If that is so, then there’s nothing for me to hold back anymore.

Choking on her tears, Phoebe retorted, “It’s Susan. She wants me to frame Ms. Natalie. That’s why she instructed me to drug her and find a man to sleep with her. She’s doing all of that to make Mr. Bowers hate Ms. Natalie so that she will get his attention!”

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As soon as her words fell, the crowd was in exasperation of how wicked Susan was.

“Susan is still so young, yet she’s so vicious. Whoever marries her in the future will surely suffer her wrath!”

“Oh gosh. Roping Phoebe in to execute her evil plan and kicking her one side now that things have gone wrong? What a young lady with an evil heart!”

“That’s way too vicious. The Leisters would’ve ruined that lady’s life if this had happened to that lady instead of Phoebe.”

Samuel’s handsome face turned dark and grim at this point. His eyes were full of rage and hostility.

Sure enough, he felt reassured that Natalie was smart enough and did not fall for these kinds of lowly tricks.

That said, he could not sit still after learning about how Susan and Phoebe had plotted such an evil scheme against Natalie

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Susan stole a glimpse at the tall and intimidating man beside her, feeling the indifference exuding from every fiber of his body.

Samuel had an angular jawline, a straight nose, and a cold gaze that could send chills down people’s spines as though it was a long winter’s night.

In the past, she thought of him as an elegant yet reserved man, someone she could barely understand.

At that moment, however, it was the first time she feared him.

Susan shuddered and tugged at the hem of his shirt as she tried to explain, “Samuel, it’s not like that! She’s trying to frame me. I’ve never even thought about hurting Natalie. Please, you have to believe me!”

“Let go!” Samuel demanded.

“Samuel—”

“Get out of my sight!” he spat as he glared at her like she was some low-life scum.

With that, Susan turned pale and loosened her grip.

Meanwhile, Phoebe was still going on about Susan as Wyatt and his wife were in a brawl with Winnie and her husband. The whole banquet was in chaos.

Alfred knew that if his granddaughter tarnished her reputation, it would be hard for her to marry into a good family and she would become an outcast from then on.

He was a man who had been through a lot, so it was easy for him to figure out that Susan was definitely involved.

At that point, there was nothing much he could do but give up on Phoebe and try to defend Susan, no matter what.

“How shameless of you to even think of dragging Susan down with you! Stop with all your nonsense!” Alfred’s face was flushed with rage. “Is no one going to take this eyesore away? Are you all just going to make a fool of yourselves in front of outsiders?”

With that, it meant that things were coming to a close.

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Nevertheless, Susan was not in the clear even though it was Phoebe's reputation that got ruined.

When the two left, the way they looked at each other no longer showed any signs of their familiarity. Instead, there was deep resentment.

After their departure, the crowd slowly dispersed.

"Old Mr. Leister, the deal we made just now is off the table," Samuel said. Despite being expressionless, the rage in his voice was clear as day.

Alfred's expression immediately turned grim because he was at a loss for words.

The collaboration with the Bowers family involved vein mining.

On paper, it looked mutually beneficial. However, in reality, the profit distribution and the investment strategies involved favored the Leister family more in terms of benefits. Hence, the latter would be suffering a huge loss if the collaboration ceased.

"Can we talk this out, Samuel?" Alfred said in a hurry. "I know I didn't educate my granddaughters well. I sincerely apologize for what they did. Please don't let this affect the relationship between our two families."

Alfred was currently over eighty years old, but he was putting himself down in front of a man who was yet to be thirty, almost begging for Samuel to reconsider his decision.

WAS

"We can continue to work together. However, I would need to see a gesture of goodwill from you before anything else." Samuel's expression darkened.

Hearing that, Alfred thought what he meant was from a business perspective. So, the elderly quickly tried to display his sincerity.

"The Leister family can take a step back. We'll only take twenty percent--"

Before Alfred could finish, Samuel interrupted him.

"That's not what I had in mind, Mr. Leister" the latter said nonchalantly.

"Then?" Alfred asked with a puzzled expression.

"For the public, what you did just now was good enough, so I won't make a fuss about it," Samuel said before his tone suddenly changed, and he narrowed his gaze. "Personally, I want both Phoebe and Susan punished. Show me what you can do."

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“This...”

Alfred shuddered while looking at the young man before him.

“Are you refusing?” Samuel asked casually. “Never mind, then.”

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Alfred’s expression turned extremely grim after hearing that.

Nevertheless, there was nothing he could do except bow down to the man.

His granddaughters were important to him, but the family’s future would be handed over to his grandson.

Hence, to secure the deal with the Bowers family, he would do anything. Including sacrificing the two girls.

“I understand.”

Alfred was no longer in a dilemma after giving it some serious thought.

“In three days, I’ll show you what you want to see.” He looked like he had aged a few years as he spoke. His hoarse voice was a clear indication of the stress and fatigue from cleaning up the little ones’ mess.

“Okay.”

Samuel nodded curtly and looked a little happier.

Even though Natalie didn’t fall into Phoebe and Susan’s ploy, they had hurt her to a certain extent.

Natalie was his soft spot, and he would make anyone who dared to harm her pay with their blood.

Meanwhile, Natalie, who was in the corner, curled her lips after she saw the scuffle between Phoebe and Susan.

Serve them right! If their plans weren’t so cruel, they wouldn’t have fallen into my trap. If it weren’t for me seeing through their schemes before this, the criticism toward me would be even harsher since I don’t have the Leister family backing me up.

The Natalie Nicholas without the mask looked stunning.

With her smile and brilliant eyes, Natalie stole the hearts of anyone who had a glimpse of her beauty.

Gale, too, He was stunned by Natalie, who was in a maid uniform, when he passed by.

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“A—

Are you the Leister family’s maid?” he asked passionately as he stared at her face. “What’s your name?”

Natalie was at a loss for words.

What the heck is this? I thought I’d be safe if I took off my mask and changed into this uniform. Why am I being noticed?

“The butler is looking for me. I must go,” Natalie said softly and lowered her head.

As soon as she finished, she immediately turned around and left.

“Wait!” Gale had felt his heart racing the moment he laid eyes on Natalie, so there was no way he was going to let her go. Thus, he chased after her. “I have questions to ask. Why are you running? You haven’t told me your name!”

Hearing that, Natalie sped up.

However, Gale was persistent and followed suit.

She rolled her eyes. *Which wealthy family is this guy from? Why is he chasing after me?*

Right then, Samuel suddenly spoke.

“Gale!”

Gale halted, turned toward the voice, and was surprised to see Samuel.

“M—Mr. Bowers?”

He did not expect Samuel would suddenly call out to him like that, so he was a little stunned. That said, his gaze remained longingly on the silhouette that was leaving. There was dissatisfaction written all over his face.

Meanwhile, Samuel merely stood there and said nothing.

Since Gale dared not move, he could only watch as the woman he had just met disappeared from his sight.

He felt frustrated, but no amount of courage could make him express that to Samuel.

At the same time, the latter looked grim while he remained silent, making Gale feel increasingly embarrassed the longer he stared at him.

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“Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Bowers?”

Samuel approached Gale, brushed off the dust on his shoulders, and helped to straighten his collar.

At that moment, Gale felt an immense pressure weighing down on him from Samuel’s profound gaze.

What did I do to piss him off?

“I heard your family has arranged a marriage for you at the beginning of the year.”

Gale kept quiet.

“You should be a little more loyal to your fiancée,” Samuel warned in a low voice. “There are some people you should never even think of touching unless you’d want to die a mysterious death.”

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Samuel left as soon as he finished, and Gale could feel his knees buckling from the pressure.

The latter stood rooted on the spot for a long time and thought about it before he eventually realized that the girl he was chasing after might be Samuel’s prey.

On the other hand, Natalie no longer wanted to stay in her current outfit with her face exposed in the banquet hall.

She went to the washroom and dumped the maid outfit after changing into the gown she came in.

Then she put on her hyper-realistic mask and made sure everything was flawless before she headed out.

After circling around the hall, she went back to Samuel.

Their eyes met.

He looked at Natalie with a certain profoundness in his eyes as his lips curled into a smirk. The intensity of his gaze felt as though he could see through her thoughts.

On the other hand, Natalie was at a loss for words as she stared at Samuel’s ambiguous smile.

Does Samuel know something? That’s impossible, right? If he knows who I really am, why didn’t he confront me?

Natalie quietly reminded herself that Samuel was not an ordinary guy and that she needed to stay calm in front of him.

With that in mind, she clenched her fists a little.

“You were gone for a long time. Where did you go?” Samuel asked.

“Maybe it’s because I drank a little too much. I felt a little tipsy.” Natalie held her head to make it look like she was telling the truth. “Phoebe dirtied my dress, so she took me to the guest room to change. With how warm the room was and my dizziness, I decided to go out for some fresh air when she didn’t come back for me. I’m feeling a lot better after that.” Natalie deliberately made it a half-truth.

The truth part was things Samuel could definitely find out if he wanted to, while the other half were things that she did not want him to know.

She had been hiding her secret for five years.

Even her friends like Cecilia or aides like Yandel were not aware of what actually happened to her.

Natalie had already gotten used to safeguarding her secret and taking everything on by herself. Thus, even if she wanted to tell Samuel, she would not know how to do it.

Samuel studied Natalie's face earnestly.

She's still trying to keep the truth from me? So be it!

He knew the woman in front of him had too much on her shoulders, that her face was not the only thing she was hiding from him.

Nevertheless, Samuel told Natalie about what happened with Phoebe and Susan.

Naturally, she knew everything, but she acted as though she was astonished to hear it.

"Then, that means ..."

"That's right."

"Oh, thank goodness! If it's like you said, I really dodged a bullet there."

Natalie pressed her palm on her chest as though to calm herself down. However, those beautiful eyes of hers showed no signs of relief.

At that moment, Samuel took a sip of his wine and looked at her affectionately.

Right then, Justin appeared in front of them with an attention-grabbing palm print on his cheek.

"What happened to you?" Samuel asked.

Inwardly, Natalie was gloating so hard she wanted to laugh. *If I'm not wrong, this palm print should be Jane's.*

Thinking that he got that because of her, Natalie calmed herself down and hid the curl on her smile.

"Who could possibly do this besides Jane? Aren't you just asking the obvious, Samuel?"

Even though Justin had that mark on his face, he still smiled like some love-struck teenager.

"I wasn't sure about how

Jane felt about me back then. I thought my love was a one-sided affair. But she scolded me today. She said I was a scumbag and even cried in the end." Justin smiled. "Jane's really a stubborn yet soft-hearted person. I think she's the one for me. I'll do anything to make sure she doesn't shed any more tears."

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As Natalie had run away, she actually did not know what happened to Justin and Jane afterward.

Who would have thought? It seemed things got interesting after I left.

She thought the two were like fire and ice, two individuals with completely different personalities. It surprised her that the two actually got along very well.

Then, after Justin was done expressing the joy he felt, he brought up something odd.

“Samuel, I saw one of the Leister family’s maids today. At first, I could not recall who she was. Then it hit me. That woman looked exactly like Yara Nichols!”

Natalie’s heart skipped a beat when she heard that.

It was as she had thought. Justin had actually seen Yara before.

He must have remembered afterward even though he could not recognize me at first glance.

Natalie remained calm, but Samuel could still see the anxiety she was going through from her eyes.

Hence, he did not respond to what Justin had said.

Instead, he said, “That’s it for tonight. Let’s head back.”

Seeing Samuel’s darkened expression, Justin realized he had just made a grave mistake. He should not be talking about the twins’ biological mother in front of Natalie, so he became quiet.

“Is Susan’s birthday celebration over?” Natalie asked.

“From the front, it’s still going on. But it’s already over behind the scenes,” Samuel said casually with narrowed eyes.

Once they were back at the mansion, Natalie went back to her room to rest and prepare for their return trip to Dellmoor the next day.

However, Justin was reluctant to leave. He dragged Samuel into the study to continue the topic he could not talk about in front of Natalie.

“Samuel, I really saw Yara at the banquet just now. On top of that, it was because of her that Jane called me a scumbag.”

Justin was very honest about what he was saying to Samuel, but the lukewarm response he received from his audience was totally unexpected.

“You were just seeing things.”

“No, I was not! I swear to God!” Justin exclaimed.

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“That woman is currently in Dellmoor, and you’re telling me you saw her appear at the banquet? In a maid outfit, no less. Can’t you hear how outrageous you are right now?”

“I—I...” Justin was stumped and could not find anything to refute Samuel.

was

“You’ve drunk a lot tonight. Go get some sleep.” Samuel patted his shoulder. “Natalie and I will be leaving Livingfill and heading back to Dellmoor early in the morning. Help me look after the vein mining collaboration in the meantime and look out for the Collins family.”

The mining project was worth a lot, and everyone wanted a piece of it. Hence, it was natural for them to have enemies hiding in the dark.

“I understand.”

After that, Samuel asked Edwin to send Justin off while he slowly went upstairs.

Instead of going to his room, Samuel headed to Natalie’s. As soon as he opened the door, he noticed she had already fallen asleep fully dressed with the lights still on.

down her back, most probably to lessen the irritation of the fabric on the skin, exposing her fair and beautiful back.

Under the warm light of the bedroom, her skin shined as though it was porcelain.

Samuel walked to her side and whispered into her ear with his deep voice, “Are you asleep? You should get changed first.”

“Don’t talk, Sweetheart.” Natalie turned around and murmured. “Mommy’s very tired.”

Samuel frowned.

She thought I was Xavian.

Kissing her was not something unusual for Samuel, but with how delicate Natalie looked after drinking, his self-control that he prided himself on instantly crumbled as he impatiently pressed his lips onto hers.

Chapter 277

Natalie’s heart started pounding wildly from the sudden rush of passion.

However, she was still intoxicated by the alcohol, so her body was very weak. She could hardly move at that point, let alone push the man kissing her away.

And while that was going on, Natalie managed to squeeze a few words out of her mouth.

“You monster!”

Samuel was stunned for a moment before he grabbed hold of her chin to force her to look at him.

“Look at me. Who am I?”

Natalie said nothing. Even though she was drunk, she could still recognize the man in front of her. Samuel was the only man who would dare kiss her like that.

With the help of the alcohol, she got emboldened.

“Bastard!”

As soon as she said that, Samuel bit her lip with all his might.

Natalie hissed in pain as she stared at the domineering man.

“Say it nicely. Who am I?”

His hands started to roam around her entire body.

They were a little calloused, so his touch made Natalie tremble as the electrifying sensation coursed through her skin.

“You’re Samuel. Samuel Bowers!”

Natalie repeated his name a few times before she stared at him breathlessly.

“Are you happy now? I want to sleep, so can you please stop teasing me?”

Her last few words were spoken while still being a little tipsy. Still, it was hooking Samuel in, making him restless.

He was never one to enjoy bullying, but at that moment, all he could think of was

Regardless, he was afraid that taking Natalie now was taking advantage of her.

No matter how much he was dying to have her, Samuel did not continue his kiss.

Instead, he wrapped his arms around Natalie’s body and rested his chin on her shoulder. Taking in her faint scent, Samuel slowly calmed himself down.

At the thought that she would be uncomfortable, Samuel undressed Natalie and helped her change into a set of clean pajamas.

His movements were as light as a butterfly

It was definitely a test of willpower when he disrobed her.

By the time he was done changing Natalie, Samuel was drenched in sweat.

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At that moment, he was tempted to go even further by the lingering sense of touch on Natalie's smooth and silky skin.

That night, she had a great sleep.

Samuel, on the other hand, could barely calm down and needed to cool him off under the showerhead.

The next day morning, Natalie woke up in his arms once again.

Her head was still a little heavy from the hangover as she tried to push Samuel away, but he got hold of her hands and shifted them from his chest to his waist, pulling Natalie even closer to him.

"Samuel," Natalie said.

He kept quiet.

"Aren't we supposed to head back to Dellmoor today?"

"It's still early. Just sleep a little more."

Indeed, Natalie was still half asleep.

Samuel's embrace was warm and cozy, especially so with his sturdy abs and Apollo's

belt.

She did not refuse his suggestion. On the contrary, she got even sleepier and snuggled closer to him voluntarily.

Samuel welcomed her gesture and indulged in that sensation for as long as he could.

Just like that, the two fell back asleep, looking like they were conjoined twins.

When Natalie woke up again, it was already two in the afternoon. She realized she was no longer at the mansion. Instead, she was in the first-class cabin of a plane.

"What happened?"

"I tried to wake you, but you didn't want to," Samuel said in his low, endearing voice. "So, I carried you through the whole check-in process."

As soon as he finished, Natalie widened her eyes and blushed at the thought of being carried by him all around the airport.