

HBH

Chapter 109

Right at that moment, the two other wolves pounced at her. While she was fighting the wolves for her life, the Wolf King stood up, and with its keen sense of smell, it, too, lunged toward the woman. As Veronica was defending herself from the wolf underlings, she had no time to parry the Wolf King's attack. Right when she thought her life was as good as over, she heard a thundering bang that even scared the little birds in the woods away. Then, the Wolf King weakly whined before falling to the ground

Veronica turned to the source of the gunshot and saw Matthew gracefully appear beside her. Holding a gun, he fired a couple of shots at the two wolves in front of her, immediately killing them. As the wolves fell to the ground, having escaped death, Veronica collapsed to the ground and feebly looked at Matthew who was jogging to her. That man was as stunning as ever, with his perfect figure and his face of the golden ratio, though he had a look of worry on that impeccable face of his right now.

Matthew hurried to her and condescendingly glanced at her before his eyes fell upon her right arm. As she was donning a short-sleeved shirt, her arm-drenched in blood

—was plainly presented before him. The part that was bitten by the wolves was dripping with blood, which led to her unhealed wound to bleed even more. The blood flowed straight down her pale arm and dripped on the green leaves.

Drained, Veronica went to lean against a tree trunk with her right leg staggering, her injured arm weakly resting on her knees and fingers trembling as she bled profusely. Despite being in grievous hurt, she simply revealed a reassured smile at Matthew's arrival. Her smile carried an unusual sense of security, as if the tension in her heart instantaneously vanished and she no longer had anything to be terrified of.

Still, she maintained her tough-woman facade. "A second more and you'll never get to see me again." She deeply believed that Matthew would come looking for her, and obviously, he didn't disappoint her!

Truth be told, back when Matthew saw the smoke arising in the woods, he swiftly charged toward it, only to be shocked by the scenario he faced—a skinny woman, surrounded by a number of wolves, could have had her life ended right then. In that instant, as if his heart had stopped beating, he was so agitated he almost suffocated.

All of a sudden, his cold, still face turned into a subtle smirk. "You won't die. You're as tough as a rock." Although it sounded like mockery, he was actually comforting her. He then squatted down and took a look at her gravely injured arm, claiming, "The wound's real bad. We gotta get you a tetanus shot ASAP." As he was saying that, he took off his white shirt and ripped it into strips of makeshift bandage before giving

her arm a simple wrap.

"How did you find me so quickly?" Given that she was hundreds of miles away, she couldn't figure out how Matthew found her.

"Grandma's gonna be upset if you die," Matthew replied as he bandaged her wound.

“It’s true that I’m tough, but…” She turned to him, pursing her lips, quizzing, “You got something to eat? I’m starving.” She was hungry—no, she was ravenous! Having voiced her question, she stared at Matthew, who was visibly baffled, and waved her hand. “Never mind, I guess. A man like you wouldn’t have food.”

“You want this?” After searching in his pocket, he reached out his hand before her and opened his palm, revealing a fistful of Hershey’s Kisses.

Her eyes shone at the sight of the sweets. “Where did you get them?” Although it wasn’t a proper meal, some sugar could definitely help replenish her energy.

“We didn’t just donate stationeries to the kids, but a lot of snacks as well. And this is what the kids gave me in return when I was helping out in their school.” As he was speaking, he grabbed a piece of Hershey’s Kisses and unwrapped it before putting it into her mouth.

The Hershey’s Kisses—milky and sweet—was chef’s kisses. It was the tastiest thing she had eaten for the past few days. With the sweetness melting on her tongue, the bitterness in her mouth scattered. With her mood alleviated, she stupidly peered at Matthew, showing him a beam.

Although there was underlying agony in her smile, the man, heartbroken, responded with a smile of his own. Subconsciously, he caressed her head. “You smile like an idiot.”

Veronica then laughed. With that, she turned away to hide the surge of soreness that suddenly gushed in her reddening, glistening eyes, not wanting the man to see it as she feared he would take the opportunity to tease her.

In spite of that, Matthew took in every little gesture of hers, and his heart followingly tingled. He looked at her painfully and asked, “Wanna get some meat?”

Hearing that, Veronica sniffled and confusedly frowned. “Meat? From where?”

The man slightly lifted his head and glimpsed at the wolves beside them.

He’s gonna cook those, now? She questioned, “Aren’t wolves a protected species? That’s illegal.”

The man leered at her. “You’re dying, and you’re still worried about that?”

Veronica stopped arguing. Having ventured long distances without eating for three days, she was exhausted and starving, so as long as there was food, she would be more than grateful to accept it.

“Stay still. I’ll make ‘em.” After looking for some firewood, Matthew started a campfire in front of her. He then dragged one of the wolves’ carcass away to clean it up before hanging it above the fire.

“You’re gonna draw the wolves’ attention, starting a fire here.” Veronica couldn’t help but feel concerned.

“I’m right here. Don’t worry,” Matthew briefly replied.

Those simple words left her feeling utterly safe, and she immediately felt relieved. She knew that she should be more defensive against him given that he was Tiffany's fiancé, but having spent so much time together, she subconsciously lowered her guard whenever she was around him.

Rustle, rustle

Out of nowhere, crispy, clear rustles were heard. The two of them looked at each other before turning to the source of the noise.

At that moment, a figure walked out of the shadows. And it was none other than the masked man!

Standing still, the masked man momentarily glanced at Matthew before wordlessly turning to Veronica, who was resting by the campfire.

However, Matthew had already drawn his gun, pointing its barrel accurately at the masked man. His expression was horrifyingly filled with hostility.

Seeing that, Veronica sprung up and grabbed Matthew's firearm with her wounded right hand.

Her action bewildered Matthew. As he peered at her in confusion, she had already gotten his gun. She then raised her hand and aimed the gun at the masked man.

As Veronica and the masked man were facing each other, the latter glowered underneath his mask. "You're killing me?"

"Not awaiting Christmas, are we?" Veronica had always been a zealous woman, and no loose ends ever escaped her. Skipping the jabbering, she grasped the gun in her hand. Having her crosshair fixated at the man's thigh, she pulled the trigger.

"Ugh..." The devastating pain from the shot slightly trembled him, and he almost fell kneeling on the ground. Nevertheless, he managed to endure the pain and remain standing without even a flinch.

Thereupon, Veronica returned the gun to Matthew before speaking to the masked man. "Well, that makes us even. Next time, it'll be up to luck."

Chapter 110

The misery she had gone through to this day was all thanks to the masked man, so bearing no disdain for him would only be a lie, and there she would do whatever to even the debt between them. Even though the masked man left her a dagger and a lighter, which later allowed her to be located by Matthew, he was the cause of her pathetic life today.

The masked man, with his leg injured, had no way to walk, so he could only rest, sitting on the ground under a nearby tree.

Matthew, on the other hand, spoke not a word and continued roasting the wolf.

Sitting beside him was Veronica. Looking at the smoky, tender meat while its scrumptious aroma stormed into her nose, she uncontrollably drooled. "Right, how were the kids at school?" Concerned, she inquired about the kids.

"Mr. Pearson was hurt. The old doctor is treating him as we speak. Residents of Goon Village were also evacuated. Some time after the evacuation, a mudslide occurred, but luckily, no one was harmed," Matthew recounted the happenings to Veronica.

Hearing that, Veronica finally felt relieved. "As long as everyone's safe, or... wait, what?" As if she had remembered something, she grabbed Matthew's arm. "What about my 40,000?" Back when they went up the mountain, she gave the teacher 40,000. And when she was informed about the mudslide, she was worried that the massive sum of donation would have been for nothing.

Seeing her

so restless, Matthew slowly closed his eyes. "We found the money. They're a little soiled, though." In fact, the building collapsed and her money was buried along with it, so it was quite an impossible task to scour for it. Regardless, he wouldn't reveal the truth to Veronica. If the woman so in love with wealth were to find out the money she went a long way to accumulate had been engulfed by a natural disaster, she would surely be devastated.

"Really? That's great news! Guess the 40,000 didn't go in vain." She chuckled delightfully.

Matthew, at her joyousness, too, felt relieved. When he was informed that she had gone missing, he expended tremendous manpower and resources to search for her. Eventually, he found himself separated from the searching team before seeing the wafting smoke and ending up finding her.

"The villagers have had a tough life living here.. Say, Matthew, since you're so rich,

Can't you help them out? If they have access to network signals, they'll be able to communicate with the outside world. With an established connection, such a disaster wouldn't have occurred," Veronica earnestly pleaded to Matthew, hoping he would provide some assistance to the residents of Goon Village. She was aware that even though Matthew was rich, asking him to help in such a manner was somehow guilt tripping. "I mean... I'm just saying, just saying..." Although her request seemed simple, fulfilling it would require immense resources.

Hearing that, Matthew stared at her deeply and slightly lifted his commissures before turning to her injured arm. "Does your arm still hurt?" He couldn't help but feel worried with how her face was getting paler.

Veronica turned to her injured right arm and scoffed. "No sh*t." She was undoubtedly in pain, excruciating pain.

After a while, Matthew's eyes darkened as he wordlessly gazed at the grilled meat in his hand.

Very soon, the meat was fully cooked. He passed a meat skewer to Veronica, to which she accepted it before giving it a blow. She eagerly took a bite and burned her lips. "Ouch, it's hot." Thanks to her hunger, she couldn't wait a single second more to savor the grilled meat.

“Take your time. It’s really hot.” Seeing her hasty expression, Matthew couldn’t bear to imagine how she survived for the past few days. All of a sudden, anger surged in his heart as he subtly turned around, glaring at the masked man who was resting not far from them.

Back when Matthew was notified that Veronica was lost, Melissa claimed that she departed with the masked man, and according to a random villager, the masked man was involved in her fainting in the mountains. As such, Matthew was highly suspicious of him. Consequently, he had ordered one of his underlings to request for a chopper, but when Quincy and the rest of the group came looking for Veronica, he, too, had gone missing. Though, fortunately, he had found Veronica, and that was enough.

At that moment, Veronica raised her head and caught Matthew staring at the masked man. She followingly turned to his line of sight, only to see the enfeebled masked man gazing at the meat in their hands, seemingly starving. The sight of that touched the softest spot in her heart. Hesitant, she looked at the skewer in her hand and suddenly stood up.

However, Matthew grabbed her wrist. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Just giving him something to eat,” Veronica replied frankly.

“Have you forgotten why you ended up here?”

“Can’t I have someone starve to death in the age of peace, can we?” With that, she removed Matthew’s hand. Since she was using her injured arm to do so, Matthew could only comply or he might aggravate her wound.

Holding the skewer of grilled meat, Veronica walked before the masked man, only to realize the man’s profusely bleeding leg and the surrounding dirt that was stained with his blood. Since he wasn’t carrying his dagger, there was no way to extract the bullet, so he could only give it a simple wrap with a piece of cloth.

“Here,” she coldly blurted as she handed the masked man the skewer.

The masked man was dazed by her action. He then raised his head and peered at her in disbelief before turning to the food without any reaction.

“Do you want it or not?” Veronica questioned in disaffection.

“Why are you... saving me?”

To be fair, the masked man only hurried over because of the smoke he saw in the woods. Smoke was known to be a signal for requesting help. He presumed Veronica was in danger, and although he tried to ignore it, something called for him to go to her, which led to what was happening now.

“Tell me, who’s the man behind your actions?” Even if it meant leaving him to die away, she was determined to find out the identity of the force commanding the masked man. Although the Larsons were a possibility, Veronica thought it was a stretch. After all, the timing she arrived at Almeida County and the appearance of the masked man were conflicting, so it wouldn’t make sense.

Underneath the bronze mask, the man’s eyes sank. “Sorry, but I have nothing to say.”

"I..." Infuriated, Veronica gripped the skewer and gritted her teeth as she leered at him before ferociously stomping his shoulder. "Sod off, piece of sh*t!" Vulgarities, out of her very mouth!

The masked man failed to defend himself from the sudden attack and collapsed to the ground.

"Serves you right!" She grabbed the meat skewer and walked away.

Lying flat on the ground, the masked man then helped himself to sit up against the tree trunk, all while remaining wordless.

However, before Veronica took more than a few steps, she tossed the skewer to him and it landed precisely beside him. "Doggie's treat." She was thoroughly vexed. Though, she was aware that during the little time she had spent with the masked man — whether it was on the mountain back then or her falling into the river this time he'd had countless opportunities to kill her off.

Chapter 111

Despite that, he never took it. Thus, the man still deserved his credit for his honor and kindness, which was why she couldn't leave him be. Frustrated, she walked back to Matthew's side. Due to her anger, her pale face visibly reddened, and because of that, she appeared rather charming.

Having witnessed what happened, Matthew softly quizzed, "Why help him if you're that mad?" Few moments ago when the masked man appeared, Matthew wanted to eliminate him right away, but Veronica's words and gestures reflected that she was an insightful woman. Besides, he shouldn't be meddling in any of her personal affairs, unless it was an issue she couldn't resolve, that was. That was the basic respect he had for her.

"Hmph. He... Forget it. I'm hungry, and I'll just be wasting my life away talking to him anyway." As she was venting, she snatched the meat skewer in Matthew's hand and impatiently took a bite, only for her lips to be burned by the scorching hot food. "Ah, it's still hot! Damn it all!" With problems stacking on top of each other, she couldn't help but feel irritated. For some reason, her annoyed look made her seem like the whiny little girl next door, and Matthew was entertained by it.

Thereupon, the man grabbed the meat skewer in her hand and cut it into bites with his dagger before picking a piece up with the tip of the dagger. He then blew the heat off and placed it before her mouth. "Here."

Famished, Veronica thoughtlessly nommed it down, and instantly, her face froze. She turned to Matthew with a frown. "It tastes... so bad..." Without salt, it was supposed to taste bland, but the meat was awful!

"Bad?" Baffled, Matthew had a taste for himself, to which he, too, revealed a glower. The meat was dry and carried a strong taste of burntness along with the bloody flesh underneath. The skin was burned but the flesh was thoroughly uncooked. In that instant, awkwardness surged on his handsome face.

"Do you perhaps only know how to cook porridge, Matthew?" She recalled the time when they shared a room,

including the second day spent uphill, where Matthew would only prepare porridge for meals and nothing else apart from that. Now that she thought about it, he seemed to have cooked nothing else.

With the truth laid out in the open, Matthew turned away with a sharp gaze. "It's up to you, then." His silence, to Veronica, was an implicit acknowledgment of the fact that he knew nothing of culinary except for preparing porridges.

"You know what... To be fair, it's already a merit for a busy man like you to know how to cook porridge. Mhm, a merit, indeed." After throwing out those highly perfunctory words, she noiselessly grabbed the meat in his hand and started chewing. Regardless of the rawness of the meat, she could only bear the burnt odor on top of the fleshy stink in order to fill her stomach. She proceeded to take a few more bites. No matter how hungry she was, she had to admit it. *It's so f*cking bad! I swear even poison doesn't taste this bad!*

"Blargh!" Her forceful attempt to take in the meat only ended up in belches.

With that, Matthew's face instantly stiffened, though he couldn't help but feel sorry for her. "Don't force yourself if it's that bad." He took the meat away from her hands and handed her his gun. "Take this. I'll go look for something." Having said that, he shot the masked man a warning leer before turning around and leaving.

"Hey, where are you going?" Seeing as Matthew was about to leave, Veronica suddenly felt her insecurities arise all over again, but she failed to notice how dependent she was toward Matthew.

However, the man departed without even turning back, to which she mumbled, "You're not abandoning me here alone, are you, Matthew?" *He's not leaving me behind because his pride was hurt after seeing me about to throw up because of the food he made, is he?*

Hearing that, Matthew stopped walking. Her words—"You're not abandoning me here alone, are you?"—echoed in his mind. Simple words that carried so much helplessness fondled the softest spot in the man's heart that immediately soured. His stunning face revealed a vague beam. "What are you talking about, silly?" Utmost warmth and adoration was evident in that smile. Sadly, a hard-headed woman like Veronica couldn't sense the tenderness underneath his words.

"That's better. No matter what, you're still my bro. If you dare to abandon me, I'll make sure to tell Grandma about it!" She voiced her threat and pouted her lips.

She must have been a boulder in her past life to be so ignorant and oblivious toward his subtle, loving hints. Upon her words, his smile turned into a frozen grin, and his eyes visibly darkened.

Realizing something was off, she nervously questioned, "Hey, Matthew, you're not actually abandoning me, are you? That's not cool at all! Not one bit!" God had just gifted her a path to survival, and now that the path seemed to be closing down, she would have nothing else to turn to. Bearing that in mind, she was utterly agitated. Swiftly, she stood up and hurriedly limped before Matthew. Gripping his arm, she piliably pursed her lips. "I was just joking. It's not that bad, really! It's just... a liule burned, but other than that, it's all good! Mhm, just like... just like how people like

their meat medium rare. It was splendid! But a country girl like me wouldn't know to appreciate it, right? Heh..." In order to please him, she racked her brains to think up such a speech and somehow managed to recover his pride.

Nonetheless, Matthew was used to her sly trickeries. His instinct was to shove her away, but seeing her so petty—her dirty cheeks and her unkempt shoulder-length hair as well as her soiled garment as if she was a kid that was just done playing in the dirt, he had mixed feelings. Topping that were her desperation to live and her pitiful, insecure expression, which eventually moved the man.

Idly, he stared at Veronica. His deep, stony eyes turned sympathetic and solicitous. Thousands of emotions flashed across his eyes, so fast that Veronica couldn't notice

1. it.

"Don't be mad, Matthew. I was joking!" To her, Matthew was her savior, and her intense desire to live on wouldn't allow her to upset him. There was so much to accomplish yet. She couldn't afford to die now. Hence, all she could do now was hold on to Matthew. That way, she would be able to live longer.

In the past days, the woman, too, donned innumerable faces in front of him—cold, rageous, gratifying, and so on. Although she wasn't exactly easy to grasp, he still managed to figure out her "game." Nonetheless, at that moment, she seemed so miserable, so alone, like a child fearing abandonment. After having gone through so much pain and trauma, she could no longer feel safe in the world, and even the sturdy "fortress" holding up her spirit was about to collapse. That ultimately "forced" her to put up a facade, making a fool out of herself around him.

Matthew frowned. There was nothing but pain on his appealing face. The next second, he uncontrollably pulled her into his arms, tightly holding her in his embrace. As he held her, he made sure to avoid the injury on her arm. And so, he hugged her, regardless of the filth on her.

Mysophobia? To hell with it!

Chapter 112

Veronica was stunned at the hug that came out of nowhere. She then began to wail as she pushed Matthew away. "Waa... Matthew, you motherless scum! Why are you doing this to me?! Don't you realize how miserable I've been lately? What did I do in my past life to bump into you? If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have come across so much sh*t! Waaa... B*stard, you knew how much trouble I'm in and you're still trying to scare me! I hate you! Waa..."

Ever since Veronica met Matthew, her peaceful life had slowly turned into chaos. Thinking about the bumpy roads and being at the brink of death, she could pass out from the pressure. She got even more terrified when she was being over-analytical toward Matthew's swiftly changing emotions. Thus, when the man suddenly embraced her, she thought he was only teasing her. As her frustrations imploded, she broke down like a lost child.

As her crying was too sudden, Matthew hastily peered at her and only went up to her after a while. He grasped her shoulder and caressed her cheek with his right hand, attempting to wipe the tears off her cheek with his thumb: "You look ugly when you cry." *She's so dumb, so dumb that it hurts...*

Veronica gazed at Matthew with her soaked, reddened eyes. As she whimpered, Matthew had no idea how to comfort her. "Who are you calling ugly?!" She was exasperated.

"Okay, okay. I'm the ugly one." He brushed the tears off her cheek and pushed her into his arms with his right hand. His left palm caressed the back of her head as it fondled her hair. "Shh... Don't cry anymore." This never-before-seen tenderness and indulgence he was displaying were seemingly etched into his very soul right now.

He was devastated by her sorrowfulness. Patting her back, he comforted, "I was simply going to look for some berries for you to eat."

Nevertheless, the woman in his arms continued to cry.

She snuggled against his chest and felt the warmth within. Feeling her sense of security recovering, she slowly shut her eyes. "Let me be here for a little more, okay?"

When she was washed away by the flood, she felt absolutely hopeless, as if she had a glimpse at death. She used all of her

energy to get out of the water, only to discover that her wounds were infected, and she could barely move with her high fever. After getting deserted by the masked man, she could only venture along the woods, barely walking as she dragged along her sick, hungry body. She even encountered a python that was ten feet long. If she was in her usual condition, she would have handled it in

seconds. Unfortunately, given her fragile body, she could only detour around it.

When she was finally far away from it, she took a rest on the tree in the middle of the night, only to, as luck would have it, be approached by a pack of wolves. As she was desperate, what were three days felt like a century to her, and every second was a trial of survival. After getting immensely tormented, she almost lost herself. Therefore, all she wanted now was to lie in Matthew's arm, seizing every trace of the comfort she could get.

"Mhm..." He softly uttered, "For as long as you want."

As

she rested in his embrace, her terrible mood was lifted. Then, she opened her reddened eyes. "Thank you... brother." Although she wanted to say his name instead of "brother," she was touched by how his attitude toward her changed recently. "I know you're only keeping me alive to make Grandma happy. But still, I'm grateful."

Followingly, she crawled out of his arms and blinked her eyes to shake off the teardrops hanging on her lengthy lashes, assuring, "Don't worry. As long as I'm alive, I'll give whatever I have to keep Grandma happy." She then heaved a sigh before profoundly stating, "Grandma's lucky to have a grandson like you. How nice!"

A grandson like you? For some reason, the supposed compliment sounded odd coming out from her mouth. Upon the "praise," Matthew's face that was overflowing with adoration instantaneously turned glo

omy, so gloomy that mushrooms could grow on his face. The man's limited warmth was gradually ground away by her words. He slightly parted his lips and replied, "Then you better fulfill your role as 'god granddaughter, or else...'"

"Or else what?" Veronica pursed her lips. "Or else I'll make you a walking dead, isn't it? Fine, fine, I get it. I'll treat Grandma in the best way I can. Now go get me some berries. I'm starving. Grandma's heart is gonna be crushed if I starve to death." She waved her hand and rubbed her rumbling tummy as she gazed at him. *As if I haven't seen through your mind, scum!*

Having resided in Bloomstead for months, she had garnered a certain amount of information regarding the city, especially information pertaining to the Kings Family. She was aware of Matthew's seventh uncle, who was currently overseas, and his power as well as influence. Before she departed to Almeida County, she had heard news about this uncle of his returning to Bloomstead. And his existence would be the greatest obstacle to Matthew to inherit the Kings Family's properties. That was the reason why Matthew would do anything to come and rescue her. To him, she was merely a pawn on the chessboard to please his grandmother, which would, in return, help him secure said "properties." In later days, he might even make her his "spy" to gather "intelligence" from his grandmother.

She wasn't a three-year-old, so she was determined how much of an opportunist Matthew was. To her, he would give anything to retain things or people that would benefit him. *Sibling love? F*ck that!*

Matthew, on the other hand, had no idea that in a span of seconds, the entire plot of a movie had played in her mind.

"Great that you know." He glanced at Veronica with his deep eyes before walking away to swing a forceful punch at a nearby tree. *Thump!* His fist hardly embedded into the tree trunk. Despite its sturdiness, the tree shook a few times, and its leaves swished off the branches and fell onto the woman's head.

In response, Veronica wiped the tears off her cheeks and let out a scoff, muttering, "I merely figured out his plans. Must he be that mad? Pfft, scum!" Having taken in some meat and cried her heart out, she managed to organize her feelings, and now she was back to her former self.

Then, she turned around and caught the masked man, who was sitting by the tree, taking glimpses at her from time to time. She walked beside the fire and glared at the masked man not far from her. "F*ck you looking at? You're lucky Mommy here hasn't killed you! Remember that the next time we meet, only one of us will be walking out alive!"

The masked man was stunned and hastily lowered his head, continuing to consume the meat wordlessly. The less he spoke, the less significant his presence was.

Shortly after, Matthew returned with a number of pears in his hands.

At the sight of the pears, Veronica's eyes glistened as she was astounded. "Where did you get them from? Why didn't I see any pears earlier?"

Chapter 112

Veronica was stunned at the hug that came out of nowhere. She then began to wail as she pushed Matthew away. "Waa... Matthew, you motherless scum! Why are you doing this to me?! Don't you realize ho

w miserable I've been lately? What did I do in my past life to bump into you? If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have come across so much sh*t! Waaa... B*stard, you knew how much trouble I'm in and you're still trying to scare me! I hate you! Waa..."

Ever since Veronica met Matthew, her peaceful life had slowly turned into chaos. Thinking about the bumpy roads and being at the brink of death, she could pass out from the pressure. She got even more terrified when she was being over-analytical toward Matthew's swiftly changing emotions. Thus, when the man suddenly embraced her, she thought he was only teasing her. As her frustrations imploded, she broke down like a lost child.

As her crying was too sudden, Matthew hastily peered at her and only went up to her after a while. He grasped her shoulder and caressed her cheek with his right hand, attempting to wipe the tears off her cheek with his thumb: "You look ugly when you cry." *She's so dumb, so dumb that it hurts...*

Veronica gazed at Matthew with her soaked, reddened eyes. As she whimpered, Matthew had no idea how to comfort her. "Who are you calling ugly?!" She was exasperated.

"Okay, okay. I'm the ugly one." He brushed the tears off her cheek and pushed her into his arms with his right hand. His left palm caressed the back of her head as it fondled her hair. "Shh... Don't cry anymore." This never-before-seen tenderness and indulgence he was displaying were seemingly etched into his very soul right now.

He was devastated by her sorrowfulness. Patting her back, he comforted, "I was simply going to look for some berries for you to eat."

Nevertheless, the woman in his arms continued to cry. She snuggled against his chest and felt the warmth within. Feeling her sense of security recovering, she slowly shut her eyes. "Let me be here for a little more, okay?"

When she was washed away by the flood, she felt absolutely hopeless, as if she had a glimpse at death. She used all of her energy to get out of the water, only to discover that her wounds were infected, and she could barely move with her high fever. After getting deserted by the masked man, she could only venture along the woods, barely walking as she dragged along her sick, hungry body. She even encountered a python that was ten feet long. If she was in her usual condition, she would have handled it in seconds. Unfortunately, given her fragile body, she could only detour around it.

When she was finally far away from it, she took a rest on the tree in the middle of the night, only to, as luck would have it, be approached by a pack of wolves. As she was desperate, what were three days felt like a century to her, and every second was a trial of survival. After getting immensely tormented, she almost lost herself. Therefore, all she wanted now was to lie in Matthew's arm, seizing every trace of the comfort she could get.

"Mhm..." He softly uttered, "For as long as you want."

As she rested in his embrace, her terrible mood was lifted. Then, she opened her reddened eyes. "Thank yo

u... brother." Although she wanted to say his name instead of "brother," she was touched by how his attitude toward her changed recently. "I know you're only keeping me alive to make Grandma happy. But still, I'm grateful."

Followingly, she crawled out of his arms and blinked her eyes to shake off the teardrops hanging on her lengthy lashes, assuring, "Don't worry. As long as I'm alive, I'll give whatever I have to keep Grandma happy." She then heaved a sigh before profoundly stating, "Grandma's lucky to have a grandson like you. How nice!"

A grandson like you? For some reason, the supposed compliment sounded odd coming out from her mouth. Upon the "praise," Matthew's face that was overflowing with adoration instantaneously turned gloomy, so gloomy that mushrooms could grow on his face. The man's limited warmth was gradually ground away by her words. He slightly parted his lips and replied, "Then you better fulfill your role as 'god granddaughter, or else...'"

"Or else what?" Veronica pursed her lips. "Or else I'll make you a walking dead, isn't it? Fine, fine, I get it. I'll treat Grandma in the best way I can. Now go get me some berries. I'm starving. Grandma's heart is gonna be crushed if I starve to death." She waved her hand and rubbed her rumbling tummy as she gazed at him. *As if I haven't seen through your mind, scum!*

Having resided in Bloomstead for months, she had garnered a certain amount of information regarding the city, especially information pertaining to the Kings Family. She was aware of Matthew's seventh uncle, who was currently overseas, and his power as well as influence. Before she departed to Almeida County, she had heard news about this uncle of his returning to Bloomstead. And his existence would be the greatest obstacle to Matthew to inherit the Kings Family's properties. That was the reason why Matthew would do anything to come and rescue her. To him, she was merely a pawn on the chessboard to please his grandmother, which would, in return, help him secure said "properties." In later days, he might even make her his "spy" to gather "intelligence" from his grandmother.

She wasn't a three-year-old, so she was determined how much of an opportunist Matthew was. To her, he would give anything to retain things or people that would benefit him. *Sibling love? F*ck that!*

Matthew, on the other hand, had no idea that in a span of seconds, the entire plot of a movie had played in her mind.

"Great that you know." He glanced at Veronica with his deep eyes before walking away to swing a forceful punch at a nearby tree. *Thump!* His fist hardly embedded into the tree trunk. Despite its sturdiness, the tree shook a few times, and its leaves swished off the branches and fell onto the woman's head.

In response, Veronica wiped the tears off her cheeks and let out a scoff, muttering, "I merely figured out his plans. Must he be that mad? Pfft, scum!" Having taken in some meat and cried her heart out, she managed to organize her feelings, and now she was back to her former self.

Then, she turned around and caught the masked man, who was sitting by the tree, taking glimpses at her from time to time. She walked beside the fire and glared at the masked man not far from her. "F*ck you looking at? You're lucky Mommy here hasn't killed you! Remember that the next time we meet, only one of us will be walking out alive!"

The masked man was stunned and hastily lowered his head, continuing to consume the meat wordlessly. The less he spoke, the less significant his presence was.

Shortly after, Matthew returned with a number of pears in his hands.

At the sight of the pears, Veronica's eyes glistened as she was astounded. "Where did you get them from? Why didn't I see any pears earlier?"

Chapter 114

Putting away the examination report, Matthew entered the ward and looked at Veronica, who was tethered to an IV pack, inquiring, "How are you feeling?"

"Much better. A hundred times better than being in the hills," Veronica replied as she lay on the bed. With the dirt washed away, her face was now as elegant as before, though it was much paler, and Matthew was devastated seeing that.

"How about you? You okay?" she countered.

"Mhm. Pretty good," Matthew blurted as he nodded. He then turned around and sat on the couch.

Xavier glanced at him before taking a peek at Veronica, his eyes glistening. He lowered his gaze for a while before touching his pocket. He then suddenly stood up. "Roni, I... have something to tell you." Xavier, sporting a suit and a pair of leather shoes, appeared quite dashing, and his aura was unusually daunting. He dropped his usual, prankish act and revealed his stern, mature side.

That side of his was rather unfamiliar to Veronica. She was definitely not used to it. "What is it?" She was visibly surprised by Xavier's behavior.

"Do you know why I let you go to Almeida?" With his hand tucked in the pocket of his slack pants, he grasped something tightly in his hand.

"Why? Isn't it for charity?"

"Yes, yes, charity. But the main reason was because Dad was there as well."

"Yup, I saw him. Why? Man, spit it out! Cut the suspense already. You're making me nervous here!" One thing Veronica hated the most was when others tortured her with suspense.

Xavier pursed and licked his lips, unable to conceal his nervousness. "When we were with my dad back then, I said you were my girlfriend, but it was simply a lie to get you out of the awkwardness. But this time, I wanted for Dad to get to know you and see you for the real you, so that he could fully accept you. And that was why I sent you to Almeida." Pausing his words, he pulled something out of his pocket. He then opened his palm, revealing a heart-shaped, sapphire velvet box, to which he opened the box and uncovered a dazzling diamond ring within it.

"I bought this ring before you went to Almeida, and awaited your return so I can...

propose to you."

Upon those words, Veronica's mind went blank. She was lost for words.

Similarly shocked was Matthew, who was sitting at the couch. He didn't expect Xavier to be this bold, but he remained quiet and proceeded to observe.

Thump! All of a sudden, Xavier knelt down and raised the ring as he stared deeply into Veronica's eyes. "Roni, will you marry me? I like you—no, I love you! And I wish to marry you!"

His bold, courageous proposal left Veronica panicking. She lay in the bed with her face frozen. Blinking her eyes, she peered at him in stupefaction, and only spoke after some time. "Stop fooling around, Xavier!" Back at Saint Hospital, she pretended to be dating Xavier to prevent her adoptive parents from worrying about her. Nevertheless, she was well aware that the man was completely out of her league.

Meanwhile, sitting at the side was Matthew glaring at them with his stony eyes, and his tensing brows plainly reflected his annoyance. *Xavier's actually proposing to Veronica? This damn woman was always pushing me away because she was in love with him?* Matthew subconsciously clenched his fist, though he continued pretending to toy with his phone. Although he feigned no interest in the matter, his ears were definitely attentive.

"I mean it." Xavier's eyes were filled with earnesty and resolution. He was in no means jesting.

But of course, Veronica knew he was being serious, but he knew nothing of her complications, and being in love with him would only drag him down.

"Uh, Matthew, I'm hungry. Can you go buy me some porridge?" She thought up a way to drive Matthew away.

In response, Matthew lifted his eyes and shot her a cold gaze before looking at Xavier who was kneeling on the ground. A while later, he got to his feet and walked out of the ward.

Slam! The ward door was slammed shut at once. Matthew slammed the door so hard that the entire ward shook, as if it was about to collapse.

Resting in bed, Veronica was stunned by Matthew's temper that came out of nowhere, mumbling, "Retard."

As a man, Xavier was much more attuned to Matthew's emotions than her. Even

though Mathew voiced not a word, he could still sense his feelings and thoughts. After all, only men could understand each other best.

"Get up quick, Xavier. I won't agree to this." Veronica bluntly rejected his proposal and added, "I don't like you!"

If she did not, in fact, like him, she shouldn't have made promises with him and toyed with his feelings.

Her rejection baffled Xavier, who hastily questioned, "Do you like Matthew?"

“Of course I...” *Do not like him!* However, she couldn’t bring herself to complete the sentence. All of a sudden, an idea popped in her mind, and she quickly continued, “...like him.”

*Man, f*ck that! Matthew’s the worst scum! The absolute worst!*

Nonetheless, Matthew was quite a reliable shield to reject Xavier.

Instantly, Xavier’s once—optimistic face darkened. He couldn’t hide his disappointment. He softly uttered, “But he already has a fiancée.”

“He has a fiancée, and that’s his problem. It has nothing to do with me admiring him.”

“You already know the result, yet why are you still so persistent?”

“Well, humans are only irrational because of their uncontrollable emotions. It isn’t a matter of persistence.”

“Although you look the same as Tiffany, you’re not her after all. In the end, you’ll only end up as the sacrifice.”

“Then we’ll wait for the end. I certainly don’t care about it now.” Given how persevering Xavier was, Veronica suddenly realized using Matthew as a shield was indeed a wise choice.

At her repeated rejections, Xavier acknowledged her determination and stubbornness. Despite his disaffection, he helped himself up and pulled a seat for himself before lowering his head, peering at the diamond ring. After wondering for some time, he suggested, “Since you don’t want to be my fiancée, let’s be brothers, then.” Rejection after a proposal would only cause two parties to grow distant. Not wanting that to happen, he came up with the excuse to be “sworn brothers.” He didn’t want Veronica to grow apart from him, and to end up being strangers with her again.

“Surn; } like the sound of that,” Veronica agreed. She couldn’t help but be impressed. Xavier was sincerely putting his feelings out there for her, but Veronica was wary of his womanizer personality. Once a womanizer like him had seen (yes on his “target,” maturity and loyalty would gain control of his behavior. And sadly, after getting a taste of his “target,” he would speedily lose all interest. Despite his playfulness, Xavier was still a reliable man, so having him as her brother would be an excellent choice.

After pondering for a while, Veronica stated, “Since Matthew is older, he shall be the elder bro, and you shall be my second bro. How’s that?”

Elder bro? Second bro? Xavier was thoroughly puzzled.

Chapter 115

However, if Xavier became “brothers” with Veronica, their relationship might improve, and she might come to realize his good points. Perhaps one day, it would not be impossible for her to be willing to date him.

He let out an awkward laugh. “Haha! Sure, why not? From now on, I’ve gained another sister.”

“Sister? Oh, by the way, do you know Melissa? I met her when I went to Almeida this time. Your sister has a really good personality and is quite likable.” Veronica subtly changed the topic to talk about Melissa.

Xavier nodded in agreement. “Well, yes. Melissa is very nice, and we have a good relationship.” As he said that, he used his foot to open the trash can on the side and tossed the ring in.

“Hey, what are you doing?” Seeing that, Veronica couldn’t help but be shocked. “Why are you throwing the ring away? It’s very expensive, you know.”

“It’s not that expensive actually. I have no use for it.”

“What do you mean? You can at least keep it and give it to other girls.”

A ring was a great tool for flirting with girls, so it was a pity to just throw it away. More importantly, it must’ve cost a pretty penny

“I can’t give it away.”

“Why not?”

“Your name is engraved on it.”

“My name?” Veronica wrinkled her eyebrows and looked sideways at the trash can next to the bed, feeling her heart ache.

After giving it some thought, she suggested, “How about you sell it to me for cheap?”

“Sell it to you for cheap? How?” Xavier was a little puzzled by her words.

“You’re going to throw it away anyway, so just sell it to me for cheap. How much did you buy it? I’ll give you an estimate.” Veronica blinked her bright eyes, her expression expectant.

instantly: Xavier understood what Veronica meant, and after thinking about it, he ad.

“I bought it for 99,000, but if you want it, I’ll sell it to you for 9,900.”

“9,900: That’s so expensive! Bro, how could you charge me that much for something you’re about to throw away? As siblings, the least you could do is give me a discount.”

“Then how much do you want it for?”

“Round it off,”

“9,000?”

“Ugh. Shouldn’t it be 5,000 if you round it off?”

9,900 rounded off is 5,000? Her way of thinking is... odd. Xavier would have never thought that he would be rejected after his first proposal to a woman in his life, and that he would sell the engagement ring he had prepared instead of giving it away.

“Fine, I’ll sell it for 5,000.”

Xavier picked up the ring from the trash can and handed it to her. "I'll give you the ring. You can give me the 5,000 once you're back in Bloomstead."

"Hehe, of course."

Ignoring the dangling needle on the back of her hand, Veronica took the ring and excitedly began to examine it. "It's so shiny."

Now that she had bought a ring that originally cost 99,000 for 5,000, she could earn a huge profit after pawnning it off. *Wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. What a steal.*

Veronica took the ring out of the box and squinted at it, only to see that her name was indeed engraved on the inside of the ring. Although the words were small and not that legible, she could barely recognize it as her name.

"Bro, you're the best!" Veronica was overjoyed.

"I'm glad you like it."

"Of course I like it. I'm in love with it." *As long as it can be sold for money, anything's good.* Veronica did not try on the ring, but carefully stuffed it into the ring box and placed it on the table instead, before she continued chatting with Xavier.

Not long after that, Matthew walked in carrying a thermos. His harsh gaze swept over

Veronica and Xavier, only to see them chatting happily as Veronica clutched a heart-shaped ring box in her hands with an unconcealable expression of joy on her face. At that sight, his face twisted in displeasure.

With a thud, Matthew placed the thermos on the table and ordered, "Eat."

"Hehe, thank you, Matthew." Veronica smiled at Matthew. As she was in a good mood, she subconsciously ignored Matthew's unhappy expression. She got up and leaned on the bed, reaching for the thermos.

However, Xavier intervened. "Let me feed you."

"No, I'll do it myself. I'm not used to people feeding me." The moment Veronica unscrewed the lid of the thermos, she was met with a delicious aroma. Using a spoon, she scooped up a spoonful of porridge and briefly blew on it before stuffing it into her mouth. "It's so delicious."

Compared to the miserable past few days, it was a gift from heaven to be able to eat delicious food again.

"Phew... it's a little hot." She laughed and continued to eat with her head down.

On the sofa, Matthew stared at Veronica with his cold eyes before he finally took his phone and typed a message to Thomas. "Give Young Master Xavier something to do:

Ten minutes later, Xavier's cell phone suddenly rang. The moment he answered the phone, his face immediately changed. "All right, I know. I'll be back immediately."

"What's wrong?" Noticing that Xavier did not look well, Veronica immediately became concerned.

"Something came up at the company, so I have to go back to Bloomstead early. I'll wait for you there."

"Okay, okay, you can go back first. I still have Matthew here, so don't worry. I'll be fine." Veronica assured with a wave of her hand. "Hurry and get back to work."

Xavier stood up and gave a meaningful glance at Matthew. "I'll be taking my leave first. Take care of Veronica. When I'm back in Bloomstead, I'll let your fiancée know that you're safe and sound."

Though his words seemed harmless on the surface, they held a deeper meaning if one read between the lines.

"You don't need to trouble yourself. Young Master Xavier," Matthew said as he leaned on the sofa with his legs crossed and slightly raised his forehead, his handsome yet domineering face showing a superior and satisfied smile.

Xavier looked back at Veronica uneasily. "Although you're Old Mrs. Kings' god granddaughter and Matthew's sister in name, you're still a girl. You have to be careful sometimes so that people won't start rumors."

"Gosh, I know, I know. I'll be fine." Veronica nodded profusely, her tone turning impatient.

Of course, she knew

Xavier was warning her that Matthew was the one with a fiancée, and she should avoid arousing gossip by staying with Matthew. Even if she "liked" Matthew, she still had to take her status into account.

With one sentence, each of them fell into their own thoughts. However, Matthew thought that Veronica had agreed to Xavier's proposal and was now being told to avoid starting rumors.

Without waiting for Matthew to reply, Xavier left. Once he was gone, Veronica and Matthew were the only ones left in the ward. Matthew remained silent while Veronica concentrated on eating, enjoying the joys of life in high spirits.

When she finished eating, she burped and put the lunch box on the table. Then, she picked up the ring and continuously played with it with an expression of unconcealed delight.

At that moment, Matthew, who was never easily swayed, finally could not hold back his anger. He got up and walked over to her, snatching the ring from her hand as he demanded, "How can a single ring make you this happy?"

"Matthew, give me my ring back." Veronica sat up, but because she had moved too suddenly, she accidentally tugged at the needle on the back of her hand and hissed in pain. "Hiss..."

The large movement caused the wound on Veronica's arm to start hurting as well.

Seeing her wrinkled face and pained screams, Matthew's cold heart melted and he did not reprimand her anymore. Instead, he allowed her to snatch the ring from his hand, clutching it in her hand as if she was protecting a rare treasure.

"Do you... like him a lot?" Matthew hesitated before asking.

Veronica looked up at Matthew, not understanding where this scum got the confidence to dislike Xavier so much.

However, in the end, she currently needed to rely on the power of the Kings Family and had no choice but to spend time with Matthew. Still, she was afraid that Matthew had covetous thoughts about her, so she said, "Yes, I do. Is there a problem?"

"Since when were you a social climber? Are you really desperate enough to like someone like Xavier?" Matthew asked, his brows wrinkling in anger.

Everyone in Bloomstead knew that Xavier was a playboy who had seen countless women and spent his days flirting. This woman had no idea what she was talking about.

"Matthew, you're just my god-brother, not my real brother. What does it matter to you who I like? Don't think that just because you saved me, you can flaunt your authority over me, say whatever you want, or tell me what to do!" Veronica mocked him with a glare.

She felt dissatisfied. In any case, Xavier was her brother. Even if he was not perfect, he was not as bad as Matthew was making him out to be.

There was a chilly expression on Matthew's chiseled and handsome face. He lifted her chin with his long fingers as he leaned down slightly and warned, "As long as you're related to Grandma, you are a member of my family. I will never allow you to be with Xavier and bring shame to the Kings Family's name."

"That's on you if you don't allow it. I'll just talk to Grandma later. Hmph." Veronica brushed away Matthew's hand before she lay down on the bed in anger, giving him the cold shoulder.

Not long later, once her IV drip had run dry, Veronica tossed and turned in bed. She couldn't sleep, but as she didn't have her phone or anything else with her, she was

bored out of her mind. She took a glance at Matthew. Seeing that he had gotten a laptop somewhere and was playing with it, she said, "Hey, Ma... Ugh... Bro, since you have a laptop already, can you let me play with your phone for a while?"

She always called him Matthew, and only called him bro when she wanted something!

Matthew had long since become familiar with Veronica's antics. He swept a glance at Veronica with his deep eyes, and then looked at the time in the lower right corner of his laptop. It was already two o'clock at night.

She was still not sleepy..

Matthew had just been irritated, but now his cold heart softened a little. Carrying the computer, he got up and walked to her side. "Scooch over."

"What are you doing?"

"A new movie just released recently. Since we have nothing to do, let's watch it together," he explained.

"Sure. I couldn't fall asleep anyway." Veronica nodded profusely and moved to the left. She stretched out her hand and patted the left side of her bed, saying, "You can lie here. The hospital beds here are big, so it won't be crowded even if two people lie down together."

Matthew changed back into a suit that made him look extremely capable and handsome. He retrieved a pillow from the sofa and placed it behind him as he sat next to Veronica. Then, he chose a sci-fi blockbuster on a streaming site and began watching after paying a fee.

However, not long after the movie started, Veronica shook her head and said, "I don't want to watch this."

"Then what do you want to watch?"

"I really like watching movies like Jurassic Park, The Rise of the Apes, Transformers 5, or Avatar."

Veronica liked these movies as they were nostalgic, but the one she remembered the most was Transformers 5, as it was the first time she had gone to the cinema to watch

a 3D movie. Besides, she had watched it with her first love. Hence, it was worth remembering and she had never forgotten about it. However, because her first love was not adapted to 3D movies, he felt dizzy throughout the movie and couldn't get

used to it for a long time even after leaving the cinema.

Matthew didn't think much about it. He casually searched for a movie to watch with Veronica.

The two leaned on the head of the bed, shoulder to shoulder. It was rare for them to sit calmly and watch a movie together without any dispute, noise, or shunning the other.

"Look, Caesar is so talented. He knows how to talk now."

They were watching The Rise of the Apes 1, and the most exciting part was that Caesar learned to speak and started a revolution.

"Mm." Matthew responded: As he glanced at Veronica beside him, he felt a strange emotion surging in his chest. He rarely watched movies. Because of his busy schedule, he didn't have enough time for himself, much less enough to watch a movie. All of a sudden, he thought that it was not bad to watch a movie in his free time. However, he didn't realize that watching movies with someone one liked was the best.

As they neared the end of the two-hour long movie, he felt his shoulders sink and turned his head to look, only to find Veronica asleep on his shoulder. Currently, it was already half past four in the morning.

He closed the computer and raised his hand to hold her cheek, trying to make her lie down. However, her skin felt hot to the touch. Matthew put his hand over Veronica's forehead, and sure enough, she had a fever. He held her head and carefully helped her lie down, but Veronica still woke up in the end.

"Hm... When did I fall asleep?" Looking at Matthew beside her, Veronica muttered in a daze.

"Just sleep. It's late." Matthew didn't say anything about her fever and only covered her with a thin blanket. He patted her on the shoulder, letting her sleep.

After Veronica had fallen asleep, Matthew went to the doctor on duty, who prescribed Veronica with some medicine to lower her fever.

Matthew took the medicine and patted Veronica who had awakened from her sleep. "Veronica, can you wake up?"

He patted her on the shoulder a few times, but Veronica didn't respond. Growing a little anxious, Matthew placed the medicine on the table and sat beside her to

support her shoulders, letting her lean on his arms. "You silly brat, wake up. Have you taken your medicine?"

He patted her cheek gently with his hand, but Veronica, who was muddled from the fever, only closed her eyes and mumbled blearily. As her voice was soft, Matthew could not hear a word of what she was saying.

"Come on, open your mouth and drink your medicine." He took the medicine and held it to her mouth, feeding her a sip.

As a result, Veronica frowned. "It's so bitter. I won't... I won't drink it."

With a few incomprehensible mutters, she weakly leaned her head on Matthew's shoulder, delirious from the fever. Matthew attempted to feed her again, but she closed her mouth and refused to drink.

Helpless, Matthew looked at the dark medicine in the cup and hesitated for a long time. Finally, he took a sip and put down the cup before stretching out his hand to pinch Veronica's cheek, forcing her to open her mouth. Then, he leaned over and covered her lips, directly transferring the medicine into her mouth.

"Mmph.." The bitter medicine caused her to struggle subconsciously, but Matthew blocked her mouth and forced her to drink the medicine.

One, two, three sips...

Finally, four sips later, she finished drinking the medicine.

Worried that the medicine would be too bitter for Veronica, Matthew took a sip of warm water and put it in her mouth in the same way. It was only after she had drunk a little that he let her lie down, relieved.

Chapter 117

However, Veronica wasn't a peaceful sleeper; she kept rolling on the bed as she slept, and she ended up squashing her injured arm.

"Ow... that hurts..." she mumbled, before rolling over again.

Matthew couldn't exactly stomach this anymore. Worried that she would roll onto her injured arm again, he got up and lay next to her, pulling her into his arms. He carefully took care of her to prevent her from hurting herself again.

The familiar smell put Veronica at ease as she lay in his arms, and she rubbed herself against his chest. Her injured arm wrapped itself around Matthew's waist, one of her legs coming to rest on his own legs as well. She fell asleep peacefully then.

Veronica's sleep might be peaceful now, but Matthew wasn't in a comfortable position. In order to prevent himself from pressing down on her injured arm, he kept his left arm behind himself as he lay motionlessly next to her. It

wasn't until her fever broke at six in the wee hours of the morning that Matthew finally got up, his body already numb from being stuck in one position.

He worked the stiffness out of his body so that he wouldn't feel as numb as before.

to

A few minutes later, Veronica woke up. "Why are you up so early?" She sat up weakly in bed, her eyes locked on Matthew as he paced the room, "Don't you need to sleep too?"

"Did I wake you?" Matthew's voice was soft. The harshness from yesterday was absent.

Veronica shook her head. "No. I pretty much wake up at half past six every day."

"How do you feel now? Feeling any better?" Matthew walked over to her and pressed a hand to her forehead. His heart only slipped back down his throat when he realized that her fever had abated.

"I had a fever last night?"

"Just a low one."

"Oh," Veronica replied. She looked at him with a complicated gaze. "Matthew?"

"Yes?" Matthew gently answered her as he sat on the chair next to her bed. His typically frigid expression was like the arrival of spring, soft and warm after the snow had melted.

Even though you're being nice to me because of Grandma, I still want to thank you."

It didn't matter whether Matthew was using her or if his concern was fake; he did save her, and he did take care of her. Veronica was thankful for that, and she naturally didn't dislike

him as much as she did before. At the very least, she considered the debt incurred from this f*ckboy sleeping with her cleared. As long as he didn't touch her again, she could forget about this part of the past.

It would have been better if she hadn't said that, for her words sounded extremely harsh to Matthew. But in the end, he didn't have the heart to quibble with her on that. "What do you want to eat?"

"After lying in bed for an entire night, I want to go downstairs for a walk with you."

"No. The doctors already said that you have to rest."

"Okay. Then, buy me some porridge. The one from yesterday."

"You're fond of porridge."

"You got that right. Porridge is my favorite. I'm not exactly fond of noodles, like in chicken noodle soup." Veronica smiled, but she ended up looking frail due to the paleness of her face, like a wind would blow her over at any moment. It made Matthew's heart ache.

"I'll make some for you when we get back."

"Hahaha, that's great. The only thing you know how to make is porridge, and I love porridge. It's absolutely perfect," Veronica murmured. Suddenly, she shook her head. "Never mind, the porridge you make is too expensive. It's like, three hundred for a serving. Just forget about it."

For Pete's sake, running around the whole day delivering food would net me only three hundred bucks. And a breakfast

from Matthew will run me three hundred bucks. I sure as hell don't have the money for that!

"If you behave well, I can consider waiving the fee."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Then, in the future, you can make breakfast for me and I'll clean for you. How's that?"

"All right."

"That's great. I can save on rent and utilities and even breakfast expenses." Veronica mentally calculated everything. In one month, she would save at least two thousand bucks. That would be 24,000 a year. *Woohoo, a whopping 24,000. Leaving it in the bank will net me a couple hundred in interest too. Nice!*

Subsequently, Matthew left Veronica's ward to buy her breakfast.

A few days later, Veronica was discharged from hospital at last. She flew back to Bloomstead with Matthew. She stood outside of the airport after they had arrived and slowly closed her eyes, breathing in the fresh air. "I'm back at last. The air in Bloomstead always smells so clean and fresh," she exclaimed.

"Get in the car." Matthew walked past her and led her into the car with a hand pressed to the back of her head. The door closed, and Thomas slowly drove them away from the airport

Veronica leaned back in her seat and turned to glance at Matthew. "Where are we going?" she asked.

“The Kings Residence.”

“Oh, okay,” Veronica said, but she didn’t look all that overjoyed. Just as she thought, Matthew’s niceness toward her was only because he was cultivating a useful piece for his chessboard; he wanted to use her to improve his relationship with his grandmother.

“Miss Murphy, this is the cell phone that Young Master Matthew asked me to buy for you. The SIM card’s all been handled.” Thomas handed a cell phone to Veronica as he drove.

She took the phone and thanked him. After she switched on the phone, it buzzed for some time; they were all unimportant messages and phone calls.

Before she went to Almeida, Veronica had called her adoptive parents, telling them that she was representing her company for a philanthropic event. She even deliberately told them that she would not have phone reception when in Almeida because she didn’t want them to worry about her too much.

When they passed a grocery store, Veronica asked for some money from Matthew and went inside to buy some supplements.

They arrived at the Kings Residence half an hour later. Veronica had just gotten out

of the car when Matthew’s phone rang. He pulled it out and answered the call. “What is it?”

Veronica couldn’t hear what the other speaker said, but she sensed Matthew’s expression darkened a little. “All right, I’ll be right over.” He then hung up and walked over to her. “Something just came up, and I have to go deal with it. Go on ahead. I won’t be going inside with you.”

For some reason, Veronica felt that Matthew was currently being fake, but she didn’t say anything. She had agreed to become Elizabeth’s god-granddaughter because she wanted to use the Kingses’ power and influence; Matthew was having her to get on his grandmother’s good side, all so that she would become a useful chess piece in the future.

They were both getting something out of this. This was a mere transaction.

Thus, Veronica dipped her head. “Okay.”

Thomas brought their belongings down from the car. With a glance from Matthew, Thomas handed the car keys to him. Matthew then drove away, leaving Thomas to accompany Veronica into the house.

Veronica found Elizabeth inside the living room. “Grandma?” she called.

At the sound of Veronica’s voice, Elizabeth looked up to see Veronica. A smile instantly bloomed on her face. “My, have you returned at last, Veronica?” She got up and walked over to stand in front of Veronica, the kind smile from earlier still hanging on her face. “Come, come, let me take a look at you. It’s been a month since we last met. You’ve gotten skinnier.”

“I’m fine. I’ll put the weight back on after returning to my usual diet.” Veronica laughed and stepped forward to hug Elizabeth. “I missed you so much, Grandma.”

Although she did intend to use the Kingses’ influence for herself, Veronica truly liked Elizabeth

“Haha, I missed you too.” Elizabeth returned Veronica’s hug. However, she didn’t know that Veronica was injured and accidentally jostled Veronica’s wound. It made Veronica suck in a breath.

Chapter 118

Veronica let out a hiss.

“Oh dear, what is it?” Elizabeth asked in concern.

In order not to worry Elizabeth, Veronica lied and said that she had slipped earlier and her arm was sliced open on a sharp rock.

Elizabeth’s heart ached terribly for her. She pulled Veronica over to the couch to sit down and chat with her.

“As a lady, you should be more mindful. You won’t be as pretty if it leaves a scar,” Elizabeth said solemnly as she patted Veronica’s hand.

“Don’t worry, Grandma. I’m fine.” Veronica smiled.

..

Elizabeth and Veronica chatted as usual about their daily happenings easily.

“In a few more days, I’ll be taking you to see someone,” Elizabeth said. ”

“Who is it?”

“Matthew’s Uncle Conrad. He’ll be returning from overseas in a few days’ time. You’ll be able to acquaint yourselves with each other. After all, he is your uncle as well.” Having brought him up, Elizabeth elaborated, “Conrad is only a few years older than Matthew, but he has a mind for business. I’m considering letting you learn from him.”

“Huh? Learn... Learn from... Uncle Conrad?” Veronica couldn’t understand. Thirsty, she picked up the glass of water from the table and took a sip.

Elizabeth’s voice rang out again by her ear. “Conrad is a reliable man with dashing good looks. He’s a bachelor too. You might not be able to be with Matthew, but I want to introduce you to Conrad.”

“*Cough... Cough...*” Startled by Elizabeth’s words, Veronica ended up spitting out the water she had been drinking and choked.

Elizabeth promptly pulled a few wads of tissue paper and muttered, “How old are you to still be choking while drinking some water?”

“*Cough... .. urk...* I’m okay, really.” Veronica wiped her mouth with the tissue while repeatedly waving her hand, “I’m fine. Grandma, what did you just say?”

“I just told you that I’ll be introducing you to a good prospect. Conrad is coming home, so it’ll be a good time to introduce you both,” Elizabeth repeated herself.

This time, Veronica understood Elizabeth at last. From the looks of things, Elizabeth liked her better than Matthew. While she couldn't marry Matthew when he already had a fiancée, that didn't mean that Elizabeth couldn't "introduce" her to Conrad Kings!

If the matchmaking went through, would Veronica end up being... Matthew's aunt? By marriage?

Oh gosh, isn't this just hasty though?

"Grandma, no way. How am I worthy of him? Forget about it." Veronica declined the offer.

"What do you mean, forget it? If I say that you can meet him, then you will. That's settled for now." Elizabeth did not give Veronica any room to refuse and straightaway sealed the meeting.

Veronica was a little exasperated, but she didn't say anything else after that. She kept Elizabeth company the entire day. However, Matthew never once showed up. It wasn't until after dinner that Veronica was returned to the Twilight Club by Thomas. After getting out of the car, Veronica called her adoptive parents from where she was in the parking basement to ask after them. She relaxed once she was sure they were fine and safe.

Matthew wasn't in the apartment either when she returned. He didn't come home that night.

Veronica went to bed late again. The next day, she woke up early. After brushing her teeth and washing up, she changed her clothes and went downstairs to eat. Later that morning at ten, she went to a pawn shop.

"Hello there, I'd like to pawn this off." Veronica handed a ring over to the staff member there.

The man took the ring and inspected it. "Do you have the receipt for this?" he asked as he checked the ring.

"Nope"

"It looks pretty new. Why do you want to pawn the ring off?"

"Of course it's because I... am broke." Veronica thought that the pawn shop worker was spouting garbage. She looked at the man. "How much can this ring go for?" she asked.

"How did you get this?"

"A friend gave it to me."

"How much did it cost?" the man asked again.

Veronica knew their tricks. She knew that they would immediately haggle down once she named a price, so she thought of an excuse. "The ring was a gift, so how would I know? But look at it closely-my name is engraved on it."

The man held up a magnifying glass to the ring. Veronica saw him frown. "Hold on a sec. I'll get my boss to take a look at this." He then went into the back of the shop.

Shortly after, the owner of the pawn shop emerged for another round of questions for her. "You sure this ring is yours, miss

“Aren’t you just wasting your breath?” She smacked her ID card down on the counter and pointed at the name printed there. “You see this? Veronica Murphy, as stated on my ID! You gonna take it or not? If you won’t, then fine.”

“Hehehe, I’ll take it, all right.” The man checked the ring again. Having confirmed that it was hers, the owner grinned as he raised his right hand and splayed his fingers. “I’ll give you this much.”

Five thousand?

“Just that paltry sum? You trying to fleece me, mister? Don’t take me for a fool!”

“Well... hehe, how much do you want then?” the owner asked.

Veronica gave it some thought. “At least a nice, large number.”

“Well, that’s... haha, all right then. A nice number, it is. You’re quite straightforward there, lady. Hey Murray, bring a hundred thousand bucks here.”

“What? A hundred thou—“*A hundred thousand?* Veronica froze on the spot. When she said a nice, large number, she was thinking ten thousand. Yet, the owner of the pawn shop offered her a hundred thousand.

Veronica suddenly felt that something was not right. Could the ring be an expensive one? Both of these men had seen plenty of rings before in the pawn shop business; there couldn’t possibly be anything wrong with their assessment.

In the end, Veronica said, “Never mind. I’m not selling this anymore. Return it to me.”

After getting her ring back, Veronica brought it with her to Xavier’s company, Konig. She caught sight of Xavier, buried in work, the moment she opened the door to the CEO’s office. “Hey bro, I’m back,” she shouted as she rapped on the door.

Xavier lifted his head and stood up when he noticed her. “Roni, when did you get back?”

“Uh... today. Yeah, I just got back here today.” Veronica was worried that Xavier would ask her why she hadn’t given him a phone call if she said that she returned yesterday.

“And here I was thinking of picking you up from the hospital after I was done with this one last task. Didn’t think that you would come back before then.” Xavier walked over to her and held her right arm up. “How does it feel?” he asked.

“I’m good. It just hurts a little.” Veronica smiled before she pulled out the ring from her pocket. “Here, I’m giving this back.”

Seeing the ring in her hand, Xavier’s brows furrowed. “I thought you said that you were going to sell it? Why are you giving it back to me?”

Veronica lowered her head to look at the gleaming ring. A moment of hesitation later, she threw out an excuse. “Because it’s unsellable? My name is engraved on it. I went to a pawn shop earlier and they didn’t want it.”

Veronica didn’t want to accept an expensive gift, so she shoved the ring into Xavier’s hand.

Xavier looked down at the ring. A moment of thought later, he closed his hand around it. "Since the pawn shop didn't want it, I'll just hold onto it then." He pulled open a drawer and casually tossed the ring inside, all while pretending to be nonchalant about it.