

Her Billionaire Husband Chapter 416-420

Chapter 416 Marriage Certificate

“W-What does that mean?”

“Exactly what it sounds like,” Matthew said with a cold chuckle. “Get it yet?”

“You—For crying out loud, Matthew, you call yourself a human? You’re no better than an animal, f*ck you! Veronica must have been kicked in the head to fall in love with someone like you!” Xavier snapped incredulously. Then, he threw his head back and laughed maniacally. “But now that I think about it, I can see why you’re so obsessed with her. She has incredibly soft skin and there’s a certain part of her body that’s... Well, let’s just say it’s deliciously tight, shall we? I’m guessing you didn’t get that far with her yet, huh? She’s practically untouched!”

Men often lost all sense of reason when their rage was at its peak and Xavier was downright furious after seeing the humiliation his sister had been put through. He wanted to probe Matthew’s anger and see the man snap.

Unfortunately for him, Matthew had no plans to let him have the satisfaction. Granted, his fingers tightened on the cigarette he was smoking, but there was hardly a trace of emotion on his handsome face as he raised his free hand to signal the bodyguards. The bodyguards understood what he meant and within the next second, Xavier was dragged before the guards and had his clothes shredded on the spot.

He tried to struggle, but he was no match for the guards who eventually pacified him and reduced him into a defeated heap.

Grunting, he then spat out menacingly, “Kill me if you’ve got the guts, Matthew! Come on, do it!”

Presently, he was pinned in the most embarrassing position against the chair. One of the bodyguards held Xavier’s hands firmly on his back and held his head in place by grabbing a fistful of his hair. One of his legs was broken, so he could not retaliate even if he wanted to. He suffered in silence while the guards had their way.

Having never witnessed something like this before, Melissa started crying and whimpering as she lay on the ground like a pile of trash. Her legs were untied and now that the other guards had turned to target Xavier, she was left alone. She scooted into an upright position and used her knees to pull the rag out of her mouth. Now that she could speak again, she shrieked miserably, “Why are you doing this to him, Matthew? Let him go! Please, you can’t do this to him!”

She tried to crawl over to Xavier, but just as she was about to throw herself over him to shield him, one of the guards kicked her to the side.

“Ow!” she yelled as she fell backward. When she hit the ground, the impact seemed to have rattled her brains and her whole body ached.

“Your sibling bond is the stuff of fairytales,” Matthew drawled sarcastically with an insidious smirk, though there was hatred and contempt in his eyes.

He never considered himself a nice person and he had already let the Crawford siblings off the hook for Veronica’s sake. Since they had not appreciated his mercy then, they could only reap what they sowed now.

“It would be unkind of me to deprive these siblings the chance to show how much they care for one another,” Matthew added icily with a humorless smile. Then, he rose to his feet and gave Troy a pointed look.

“Yes, sir,” Troy said with a nod while a chill ran down his spine when he felt the air around Matthew grow cold. As harsh as the punishments were, he had to agree that Xavier, Melissa and Tiffany all got what they deserved.

The trio were admittedly birds of the same feather; they all resorted to underhanded and ruthless ways to get what they wanted and they were used to plotting against others as well as scheming. It was only too bad that they picked on the wrong person this time!

Matthew walked away and ignored the torrent of abuse and howls of agony which echoed after him. Xavier and Melissa should have known that things would not end well for them and no one could be blamed for their lack of better judgment.

Tiffany, on the other hand, could not die just yet. If she did, then no one would go to Africa with the Crawford siblings.

That afternoon, Centian Group officially went out of business. Hendric tried to look for Xavier and Melissa, but when he could not find them, he decided to rally the other family members and left Bloomstead.

The company might not have cash or capital, but Hendric had been in the business world long enough to know how important it was to save up for a rainy day. He knew that his life would be a mess if the company crumbled and the debt collectors started calling round the house to demand payment with interest, so he packed up and left the city with his savings.

Matthew did not say anything upon hearing this and decided that he would not go after Hendric anymore.

The next day, Matthew was with Veronica when he got a call from Troy, who cut to the chase and stated, “The Crawford siblings are on their way to Africa right now.”

The siblings had lasted torture from yesterday afternoon all the way until this morning, which to a certain extent was impressive, given the number of people who were there to dole out their punishments and the amount of time it would have taken for the deed to be done. It was tough, but Matthew knew Xavier and Melissa would not die; indeed, their deaths were never part of his plan to begin with.

“Got it,” Matthew answered.

...

Three months later, Veronica finally recovered from her broken arm, which had been grievously injured. During the time of her recovery, she stayed at Twilight Condominium where Matthew took gentle, loving care of her and they were clearly crazy about each other.

Yvonne had been staying with Veronica at first, but eventually she got sick of seeing Veronica and Matthew acting all lovesick and moved back to her own place out of frustration.

As for her baby, Yvonne had made up her mind to keep it and she was already six months into her pregnancy. Veronica thought she was being rather stupid to insist on giving birth to the child, but at the same time, she could not help admiring her for her strong sense of responsibility. It took a lot of courage to prioritize an innocent baby and bring them into the world, even if it would be at the expense of one’s long-term happiness.

Early one morning, rustling sounds and soft panting filled the bedroom. Veronica was starting to get used to Matthew’s certain morning activity.

When the deed was done, she lay in his arms and wrapped a slender arm around his waist, then closed her eyes as she caught her breath.

Matthew pinched her nose lovingly and said, “You know how the doctor said you’ve recovered completely when we went for the appointment yesterday? Does that mean we can get our marriage certificate tomorrow?”

“No!” Veronica turned him down flatly.

He looked grim as he gently pinched her cheek with his right hand and asked warningly, “What did you just say?”

She opened her eyes and smiled coyly. “I said, I don’t want to go and get the marriage certificate with you.”

“Why? Are you regretting your decision?”

“A little,” she said playfully as she moved to ease herself onto the bed, then drew circles on his chest lazily. “I just figured that there’s some good sense in not having a marriage certificate between us, you

know? If I was to put our marriage on record, then I wouldn't be able to seduce the other gorgeous men out there. I don't think I want to tie myself down to one guy for the rest of my life, not yet, anyway."

When he heard this, Matthew slid his arm around her waist and flipped her so that he was on top of her. He growled, "Say that again." He was sufficiently provoked.

Trying to keep herself from laughing, Veronica feigned seriousness and said, "I've been with you for three months now and I'm getting bored."

"Rosalie. Murphy!" Matthew bit out. "You're just asking for trouble." He gave her a hard slap on her bottom, then leaned down as though he was going to show her who was in charge.

However, when she saw that he was falling for her lies, she laughed and said, "I was only kidding, grumpy-pants." She reached under the pillow with one hand while wrapping her free arm around his neck. "Here you go!" she sang as she proffered a folder. "I've already got my official paperwork sorted out yesterday. Now, we're all set to get our marriage certificate today!"

Matthew narrowed his eyes at the plot twist, then said, "Too late."

Chapter 417 Matthew's Proposal

During the three months where Veronica was recovering from her broken arm, Matthew looked after her and took very good care of her round the clock. The only time he did not take care of her was when she was working at the company. That said, she had also fully experienced just how strong Matthew was—physically.

One simply had to acknowledge the differences in strength when things boiled down to it, which was why Veronica could only surrender to Matthew in the bedroom. It was the wisest strategy on her part and the best thing for the both of them.

Seeing that she was on the verge of surrendering, Matthew smiled and flicked the tip of her nose lovingly, then said indulgently, "I can carry you to the bath—"

"O-Oh, no, it's fine. I can bathe myself!" she answered and quickly pushed him aside, then dashed into the bathroom and locked the door behind her.

She had already witnessed his stamina first-hand and she was not about to take any chances by agreeing to bathe with him. If she did, they would never leave the house and get the marriage certificate.

They each put on a change of clothes after they showered, but at that moment, Veronica's stomach rumbled loudly. She turned to look up at Matthew in mute despair and said, "I'm hungry..."

He hummed in response. "Let's have a late lunch, then," he suggested while wrapping an arm around her waist and leading her into the waiting elevator.

"Maybe we should go to the Civil Affairs Bureau first. They might be getting off work by the time we're done eating," she pointed out worriedly as she took out her phone and checked the time on the screen. It was already 3.50PM.

“We can always grab a quick bite on the way. It won’t take up much time,” Matthew said as he ruffled her hair affectionately. He took her hand and led her out of the elevator when the doors opened. They were both using masks so that the ever-famous Matthew would not draw attention to himself or be noticed by anyone on the street.

He drove to One Piece Restaurant where they had a quick lunch before they made their way over to the Civil Affairs Bureau.

Along the way, Veronica was scrolling through her phone when she said, “Hey, it’s the twenty-seventh of April today. I think it’s a pretty good day for us to get our certificate, don’t you think?”

“I think every day with you is a pretty good day,” he replied softly as he cast her a meaningful sidelong glance.

She clicked her tongue. “Well, aren’t you just the sweetest?”

“No, I think you are. I mean, I know exactly how sweet you taste, after all,” he teased while raising a brow at her as a smile curled on his lips.

“You—” She was just about to say something about his devilish behavior when she noticed that the car was rolling to a stop. “Hey, why did you pull up here?”

He unfastened his seatbelt and opened the door on his side. “Wait for me in the car,” he said.

“Oh, okay.” She thought he needed to use the washroom or something.

She stayed seated in the car for about five minutes after which Matthew returned. “Where did you go?” she asked.

He closed the door and turned to look at her solemnly. “Close your eyes.”

“Huh?” Veronica frowned, not at all comprehending why he wanted her to close her eyes, but she did as she was told anyway.

At that moment, she felt him clasp her hand and before she knew it, something cold slid around her ring finger.

She opened her eyes at once and saw that there was a pink diamond ring on her finger. The diamond resembled some kind of a rose, but it was subtle and complemented the delicate and simple band. She admired it for a few seconds before she looked up at Matthew and asked curiously, “Why did you pick a rose?”

He shook his head as if he was surprised that she did not figure it out. "Your name has a 'rose' in it, remember? So, I had the designer come up with a briar rose-inspired diamond ring."

"But why did you choose pink?" She gazed at the ring and muttered, "It's pretty, but don't you think it's a little girly for me?"

"Silly thing," he mused good-naturedly as he reached out to prod her temple. "Don't you know what a briar rose stands for?"

"No," she said honestly with a pout as her curiosity piqued. "I didn't think you'd be an expert at things like these. It's usually women who read into the meaning behind certain flowers and gemstones."

It was only then that she realized why Matthew had chosen to go to One Piece Restaurant earlier. It was because they would be passing by the biggest jewelry atelier if they were to depart for the Civil Affairs Bureau from the restaurant, which meant he had already had the jewelry designer get ready the ring months ago!

It was no wonder that he had avoided talking about the marriage certificate whenever she brought the topic up during the last three months; he wanted to put a ring on her finger on the actual day they were going to get their marriage certificate!

"Do you like it?" he asked as he held her hand.

The ring made her slender fingers look even longer and her hand was the color of porcelain. She might as well be a hand model.

"I do," she said, nodding.

The diamond was sparkling under the sunlight that spilled through the windscreen. It looked too dazzling to be worn.

"I'm glad you like it," Matthew said. He gave her hand a squeeze as he gazed at her. "With that ring, I make you mine and only mine from this moment on."

She met his smoldering gaze and felt a smile tug on her lips. She had always envisioned being proposed to in a field of flowers; or perhaps in the presence of her closest friends; or during a romantic candlelight dinner. However, little did she know that a proposal could be as simple and perfect as this. She was happier than words could describe.

"No," she said as she shook her head. "With this ring, you make me your family. We're a family, Matthew."

Having said that, she held out her free hand to him, palm-up.

He gaped at her. "What?"

“Your ring! Where is it? You couldn’t possibly have just bought this one without a matching one for yourself.”

“Of course, I have a ring for myself,” he said while pulling out a black velvet box from his coat pocket and putting it in her palm.

She opened the box and saw that there was another ring in it. It was a men’s ring with a sturdy, simple band on which was a green leaf. The craftsmanship was intricate and breathtaking while the cut was perfect. It looked like it belonged in a museum.

“Why is your ring a leaf?” Veronica asked in confusion.

“Why do you think that is?” He did not answer her and merely smiled roguishly.

Her ring was pink briar rose whereas his was a green leaf; they were two halves of a perfect picture.

Thankfully, Matthew was tasteful enough to pick understated designs that set him apart from the favorite selections of the nouveau riche, which included giant diamonds the size of quail eggs and gaudy designs which would have rendered the rings impractical.

The rings he had chosen were flattering and unique without being over-the-top, not to mention refined.

At that moment, Veronica held his hand and slid his ring onto his finger, then looked up at him with a grin. “From now on, you will be my husband. I swear, if you ever cheat on me—”

“I would never,” he promised.

She scoffed. “Have you seen the gorgeous women who parade themselves around you all the time? Your promise means nothing!” She snorted and added, “The only thing I ask of you is your loyalty.”

As she said this, she lifted a finger as if she was in the midst of a stern lecture and she even had a grave look on her face as her grin faded.

Matthew clasped her right hand and stated, “I promise.” Then, he pulled her into his arms and patted her back gently. “Mrs. Kings, I promise to love and cherish you. May we grow and take on the world together until death do us part.”

“Yeah, okay. Maybe we might part because of some other women, right?” She shoved him aside and glared at him.

The romantic moment slipped away and Matthew was decidedly unhappy as he pointed out in frustration, “Has anyone ever told you that you could be a real buzzkill sometimes?”

She laughed. “I was kidding!” She raised her hands and cupped his cheeks. “Mr. Kings, will you love and cherish me even when I’m being unreasonable; or childish; or stubborn; or a complete klutz in the kitchen? Do you promise to love me in spite of all my flaws?”

Chapter 418 You Cannot Marry Him

"I'm making you my wife, not my maid or nanny. You don't need to be a pro in the kitchen or be reasonable and mature all the time. You only need to be yourself," Matthew said warmly. There were butterflies in her stomach when she heard this, and she felt like her heart could melt. Unable to help herself, she smiled and leaned forward. "You're wonderful, Matt." She pressed her lips to his and pulled him into her arms afterward. "It's my greatest honor to have come to know and love you."

"Silly girl," he said affectionately, chuckling as he tousled her hair. "Come on, we should get going before the Civil Affairs Bureau closes," he reminded her.

She gasped. "You're right! We have to leave now or we won't get our marriage certificate today!" With that, she pushed him aside and quickly settled back into the passenger seat. As she fastened her seatbelt, she prompted him to hurry and hit the gas pedal.

Matthew's handsome face lit up with a smile when he glanced at the ring on her finger, then at his own. The glimmer in his eyes was unmistakably that of a man in love. He did not pull away from the curb until after a second or two.

The fiance-to-be in the passenger seat had nothing to do while they were on the way to the Civil Affairs Bureau. When her eyes fell on her ring, she pulled out her phone and searched up the meaning behind a briar rose.

As it turned out, a pink briar rose symbolized a true, sweet love unmarred by time; like a promise of eternal happiness. Her fingers clutched her phone even tighter after she read this, and she could not help turning to look at the man behind the wheel.

He was dressed in a well-pressed suit today with his leather shoes and his hair was combed up to reveal a neat and precise side part. He looked immaculate under the afternoon sun and it warmed her to think that he was dressed up nicely so that they could take a good couple's photograph later at the registrar.

Matthew was oblivious to the lethal effect he had on women with his roguish air and his chiseled features. One could easily drown in his obsidian eyes or become mesmerized by his long eyelashes and he had a nose that looked like it was a work of the high heavens; his lips had a devilish curl to it too as though forewarning someone of his sharp wit and even a sharper tongue.

Whenever she looked at him, Veronica would feel as if she was looking at a young Johnny Depp. They both shared a cold, brooding sort of elegance that made them stand out in a crowd.

She thought about the first time she met him and how she had found him distant and reserved. She had believed that would be one of the few times she would ever encounter him, like two strangers who happened to walk past one another every once in a while, but never did she imagine she would marry him.

She also did not expect a man as stoic and unfeeling as Matthew would turn out to be the warmest and most loving person she had ever met. He was kind beyond imagination, and it was hard not to like him.

Granted, he was a man of few words, but he certainly got the job done. He was reliable like that and he had demonstrated how much thought he put into what he did just from picking out their wedding bands; she would be lying if she said she was not touched.

“Hey, Matt, has anyone ever told you how sweet and thoughtful you are?” Veronica asked curiously.

Matthew put one elbow on the edge of the car window so that he could prop his head up, then gazed at her sideways in amusement as he drawled, “Sweet and thoughtful?” He chuckled, sounding a little flustered.

“What’s so funny?” she asked.

“I’m so used to hearing others say I’m a cold-blooded devil who acts without mercy that I can’t believe someone would think otherwise,” he confessed.

“You are not cold-blooded!” Veronica said. “I don’t know where they got the idea from...” She was about to say something else when she remembered that she had called him something along the lines of a cold-blooded devil when they first met. Feeling sheepish, she added helpfully, “But I guess only those who truly know you will see how wonderful you are.”

Hearing this, Matthew beamed in satisfaction.

They pulled up outside the Civil Affairs Bureau ten minutes later. They had only just started to queue up when Veronica’s phone suddenly rang.

She glanced at the screen and turned to say to Matthew, “My mom’s calling. Take a seat, Matt. I’ll be back before you know it.”

She handed her queue number to him and headed out of the building. In truth, she knew how easy it was for a man of Matthew’s status to obtain a marriage certificate, but she had insisted on a secret marriage and he happened to want to experience what it was like for ordinary couples to wait in line at the registrar’s office, so he chose not to pull strings at the bureau.

Had he chosen to pull strings, then they would not be standing here in line patiently waiting for their turn.

Having gone out of the lobby, Veronica picked up the call and greeted, “Hey, Mom.”

“Roni, where are you?” Daniella asked immediately.

Veronica pursed her lips and started fidgeting uneasily. She had only just returned from Bloomstead the day before and she secretly took the family records with her. She had been worried that her parents would find out what she had done; being questioned by her mom right now had put her on the spot.

“Uh...” She was at a loss for words.

Before she could say anything, Daniella asked, “Let me guess, you took the family records with you. You’re planning to marry Young Master Matthew behind our backs, aren’t you?”

Veronica’s fears came true so quickly she barely registered it. She patted the back of her head as though to give her mind some encouragement to scramble for an answer, but she was entirely speechless. At last, she began to say, “Mom, Matthew and I—”

She was just about to confess and ask for her parents’ blessing when Daniella cut her off, “You cannot marry him.”

“Why?”

“Master Crayson, your father and I are on our way to Bloomstead right now. If you’ve already married him, then have the marriage nullified before we get there. If you have yet to marry him, then wait for us at home,” Daniella ordered gravely on the other line.

At that moment, Matthew walked over to her and came to a halt behind Veronica, then asked, “What is it?”

She stared at the blank screen of her phone. Her mother had just hung up on her and she frowned in distress as she said, “My mom, she... She and my dad know that I took the family records and they’re on their way here.”

She could not understand why her family and Master Crayson were so against their marriage.

“I’ve already told you that while a secret marriage is an appealing idea, we still need your family’s blessings before we can proceed with it,” Matthew said, pulling her out of her thoughts as he tossed the number ticket into the trash can. “Come on, let’s head home and wait for your parents to arrive.”

“Huh? But, we’re already here. We might as well just go in and get the certificate,” Veronica countered while tugging on his hand as she caressed her thumb over his ring. “I mean, we’ve already got our rings. We ought to make this official, right?”

“Good things come to those who wait,” he comforted. He took her hand and brushed the back of it gently with his thumb, then added gently, “Besides, we can’t avoid this forever. They must have their reasons for not wanting you to marry me and we have to persuade them otherwise before we can become husband and wife. You’re my woman now and your happiness means the world to me. We must have your parents’ blessings.”

He was so thoughtful that it was almost heartbreaking.

Pursing her lips, Veronica considered what he said and stared into his eyes for a long moment. At last, she threw her arms around him and said, "You're the best, Matt."

"Come on, let's go home," he said while taking her hand and leading her out of the Civil Affairs Bureau.

Veronica kept looking back at the building even as she walked down the front steps of the hall. "For some reason, I keep thinking that we won't be able to get our marriage certificate if we don't get it this time," she pointed out dejectedly.

Matthew tightened his grip on her hand. "I've already put a ring on you, so it's not as if I'd let you go now."

He regarded her with a warm smile, but deep down, he could not help feeling a little gloomy as well.

Three months ago, when she had just come out of surgery, Master Crayson caught a glimpse of her birthmark. He had been actively protesting her marriage to Matthew ever since and Matthew suspected it had something to do with Veronica's true identity.

Following that, Matthew took the time to head to the underground chamber and went into that particular room once more, whereupon he found the 'Secret Affair of the Hidden Clan'.

Chapter 419 There Is No Future for the Both of You

Having flipped through the 'Secret Affair of the Hidden Clan' and analyzed Veronica's situation, Matthew concluded that there was more to her than they thought. If he assumed correctly, she could very well be the leader of the hidden clan.

Veronica and Tiffany were twin sisters. If the former was the leader of the hidden clan, then Tiffany would naturally be one as well. Matthew had taken Randy's sample before to run a DNA test, only to find that he was not Floch and Rachel's biological son, but his DNA structure was similar to Veronica and Tiffany's.

This could only mean that all three of these siblings were not biologically related to Floch and Rachel at all, but that they were descendants of the hidden clan

If Floch and Rachel somehow managed to get their hands on and raised two of the three descendants, then it prompted the question of their true identities.

In fact, what was Master Crayson's true identity? Did Tony and Daniella know the truth of Veronica's background?

Countless questions flooded Matthew's mind and he investigated further into the history of the hidden clan, only to dig up baseless legends and nonsensical rumors. This led him to think that perhaps the hidden clan was nothing more than an extinct tribe, but he refused to give up on uncovering the truth.

After a long while, he finally came to terms with Veronica's identity. When he chose to be with her, he had already made up his mind to protect her for the rest of her life.

Presently, he and Veronica made their way back to Twilight Condominium.

They went into their apartment and Veronica immediately plopped down on the couch. She sighed wearily as she said, "My parents were totally fine with our plans to marry until Master Crayson decided to butt in and dissuade them. That old geezer's ruining things for me." She reached out to grab a throw pillow and lay down flat on it in frustration. "I just don't understand why he doesn't like you. You're the ideal husband material if you ask me!"

She did not think it was easy for her to finally meet someone she would like to spend the rest of her life with; the only reason why she wanted to secretly marry him was because of his status. She did not want to be in the center of public attention, and announcing their marriage to the rest of the world would mean sacrificing what little modicum of privacy they had.

She did not think that in successfully evading the public's white-hot microscope, she would have to put up with Master Crayson's unreasonable protest against her marriage to Matthew. Now, the old man was on his way to Bloomstead.

Matthew's heart went out to her and he poured her a glass of warm water. Handing it to her, he said, "Drink."

She did as she was told and he gently pulled her into his arms while his hand cupped the back of her neck tenderly. "Your master has watched you grow up and you're just like a daughter to him. It's only natural that he wants to have a say in who you get to marry. He's concerned for your happiness like a father should be."

After drinking the water, Veronica set the glass down on the coffee table. More accurately, she slammed it down on the coffee table, just hard enough to show how exasperated and belligerent she was. "I know that, but it doesn't mean he gets to stop me from living my life the way I want to. Don't I get a say in my own happiness, too? How can you expect me to just be cool about this?"

"Okay, you're getting worked up," Matthew said as he caressed her hair soothingly. Then, he murmured, "Good things come to those who wait."

At once, Veronica fell silent. She thought about how Matthew had been a great help around the house during New Year's previously. He had respected her family and did all the dishes, as well as went out in the snow just to chop up firewood for the stove. Maybe Master Crayson and my parents will change their minds about Matthew after they've come over and talked to him, she thought. Maybe good things really do come to those who wait.

Hence, she waited alongside Matthew for a few grueling hours. At long last, Master Crayson and Veronica's parents arrived at the Bloomstead train station.

She and Matthew drove to pick them up after which they headed toward One Piece Restaurant so they could have dinner in the private dining room.

The only time the stifling silence between the five of them was broken was when Matthew ordered the food, but as soon as the waiter left, Veronica went back to sulking as she sat next to him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, Master Crayson, I—"

Matthew was trying to alleviate the tension in the room by making small talk, but he broke off when he saw Master Crayson raise his hand to stop him mid-sentence. He obediently kept quiet out of respect for the old man.

"Young Master Matthew, I'd like to speak with my daughter... in private, that is. Could you..." Daniella began, eyeing Matthew meaningfully as if hoping he would catch on to what she was asking of him.

"Very well," he replied agreeably. "I was just about to go out for a smoke anyway."

He rose to leave, but Veronica's hand darted out to grab his arm. She turned and said with implication, "Sit down. Whatever she has to say to me, she can say it in front of you."

Matthew was admittedly shocked to see how protective she was of him. His heart warmed, but when he caught the looks on Daniella, Tony and Master Crayson's faces, he decided that it was better for him to give them some space. As such, he thought of an excuse that not even Veronica could counter and said, sounding forced, "I need to use the restroom. My stomach's feeling a little... funny."

"Your—oh, whatever, go ahead," Veronica said, sighing in exasperation as she let go of his arm. She watched as he walked out of the private room. When the door closed behind him, the room fell into a deafening silence once more.

Unhappily, Veronica turned to look at the three figures seated across from her and demanded, "What is it about my plans to marry Matthew that makes it so objectionable to the three of you? Do you guys not like him or something?"

"Well..." Daniella sighed. "It's not so much about how we don't like him as it is about how we think he's too good for you." She clenched and unclenched her fingers, then put her hands out like she was trying to present her reasons.

"We're basically bumpkins to big-city folks like him, so how are we ever going to match up to his family's standards? Roni, you don't know what these blue bloods can be like and I don't want to see you get hurt just because of your humble background."

Tony, who had been silent all this while, finally spoke up. "I second your mother's reason, Roni. I don't understand how you could possibly think you'd outdo the other more accomplished young ladies of high

society who circle around Matthew all the time. He's rich and capable, but what are you bringing to the table other than that pretty face of yours?

Your mom and I want you to be happy, but marriage isn't play-pretend, it's about how two families become one and ours is sorely lacking in wealth and status compared to his. Who's to say you won't be treated like a scullery maid if you marry into his family?"

Master Crayson merely sat and sipped his tea wordlessly. It was only when he sensed Veronica's burning gaze on him that he set his cup down and cleared his throat, then said, "There is no future for the both of you." He sounded solemn, his words leaving no room for negotiation.

Veronica looked at him for a long moment. She could not help feeling that there was more to what he said than on the surface. She might be able to let his words slide if he had simply said he did not like Matthew or if he thought Matthew was unreliable and the like. However, she found herself relating his words to his recent odd behavior and she became somewhat unsettled.

"I'm the one who gets to have a say in whether we have a future or not," she bit out while looking steely. "He's the man I love and I'll marry him no matter what. I just don't want to publicize the whole thing and get our paperwork sorted in private. Also, I know you all think I'm making the wrong choice here, but..."

She paused and squared her shoulders as she met their eyes, then continued, "But probability-wise, the good outcome is on equal standing with the bad outcome. If there's a fifty-fifty chance that I might end up happily married, why do you choose to believe otherwise?"

"Why must you be so stubborn?" Tony took a gulp of his warm water and breathed in, then exhaled in frustration.

"Mom, Dad, I've never gone against your will before, not even as a child. I've never made you worry about me or done anything that suggests I cannot take care of myself. I've put a lot of thought into this before deciding to settle down with Matthew.

I'll admit; there were moments when I nearly gave up because I believed we would never work out; but you don't know how much I have been through and every single time I was in danger, Matthew would risk everything, even his own life, just to save me," Veronica said frankly, hoping that she would be able to convince them by telling them just how much she and Matthew meant to each other.

Chapter 420 The Secret

"We get it. You're a big girl now and you think you know better," Master Crayson pointed out in resignation. He stood up and began to head out of the private dining room. "I need to use the restroom."

None of them had had a toilet break since arriving at the train station, so Veronica believed him and did not dwell too much on this.

Leaving the private room, he walked down the hallway and immediately spotted Matthew in the distance. The young man was leaning against the steel banisters while smoking, looking deep in thought.

When Matthew noticed Master Crayson approaching, he straightened up and snuffed out his cigarette. "Master Crayson, what are you doing out here?" His usual icy demeanor was nowhere to be seen whenever he was around Veronica's family; he more often than not showed them his utmost respect.

Master Crayson gave him a brief look. Then, leaning against the banister, he pulled out his cigarette holder, then produced a small pouch and pinched some rolling tobacco. With precision, he put the tobacco into the cigarette holder and reached for his lighter.

At once, Matthew quickly offered to light up the end of his cigarette holder for him.

The amount of respect he showed for the older man was proof of how much Veronica meant to him. Why else would a man of his stature offer to light up a cigarette for someone like Master Crayson, who came from neither power nor money?

Stunned, Master Crayson glanced at Matthew in mild interest, then puffed on his cigarette for a while. He blew smoke out of his nostrils as he sighed deeply. "You know, Veronica is a simple girl from an even simpler background. I just don't see how she's going to fit in with the rest of your family. Much as we'd like to think we're better than all the talk of status, it won't change the fact that Veronica will not be happy marrying someone out of her league."

Matthew lit up another cigarette for himself and took a drag of it. After a second of silence, he nodded and said, "You make a fine point, Master Crayson."

"If you truly think that way, then why don't you stay away from Veronica for her own good?"

"Well, we can't just assume that our relationship will fail because of our difference in status," Matthew countered with a smile. "What if I were to give up my money and status and be an average joe? Would that make you change your mind, Master Crayson?"

"Give up your status?" The old man frowned and tipped his head to the side to assess Matthew, looking deep in thought. However, there was no telling if he was thinking about how truthful or practical Matthew's suggestion was. A moment later, he snorted and said, "Bah! You're the successor to the Kingses' fortune. Why would you give that up? You youngsters are always so fickle and immature, it's hard to watch."

"You don't believe me, Master Crayson? You can always ask around and I guarantee everyone will tell you how I'm a man of my word," Matthew said playfully. He reckoned that the only person who could make him go back on his word was Veronica.

"I don't have time to play detective," Master Crayson snapped. "All in all, there's no getting me to trust men like you who were born with a silver spoon in their mouths."

“Is this really a matter of trust or does it have something to do with Roni’s identity?” Matthew looked up and fixed his sharp gaze on Master Crayson. There was a dark gleam in his eyes this time and some of the respect in his tone was noticeably replaced by an accusatory edge.

Master Crayson’s fingers tightened on the cigarette holder and he lowered his gaze as he searched his mind for an answer. Not wanting to give anything away, he looked Matthew square in the eye and asked, “What do you mean?”

“What do you think?” A smirk curled on Matthew’s lips as he added, “Look, I don’t know who you are and I don’t care about Veronica’s background. She’s the woman I want to marry and nothing will change that.”

This time, he did not sound like he was asking for permission; he was merely making a statement and it was a bold one that made his intentions of marrying Veronica loud and clear.

Master Crayson’s eyes narrowed slightly as he eyed Matthew inquisitively. “When did you find out?”

He should not be surprised that Matthew uncovered the secret behind Veronica’s identity. After all, Matthew was a rare talent and a business prodigy in Bloomstead. His razor-sharp wit and his ruthlessness were unmatched in the industry despite his young age.

Master Crayson had been worried that Matthew would discover the truth and now, his fears had come true. If his suspicions about Veronica’s identity were already aroused, then there was no stopping him from running further investigations on the matter.

One could only try so hard to keep a secret from bubbling up to the surface.

As such, Master Crayson did not try to cover it up anymore and he decided to be frank with Matthew. “If you know Veronica is not an ordinary girl, then you should know to stay away from her. There is no future for the both of you, I’ve told her as much. Surely you must realize that your relationship is doing more harm than good to her.”

Matthew was impassive toward most things in life; that was just the way he was programmed. However, when it came to things that concerned Veronica, his curiosity shot through the roof. He wanted to know everything about her background and uncover every secret. He wanted to see just what her fate as the leader of the hidden clan would be like.

“When will she leave Bloomstead?” At that moment, a sudden thought flashed across his mind, which was that Veronica was bound to leave Bloomstead soon.

He had neglected an important detail—Master Crayson and the Larsons never tried to stop him from getting engaged to Tiffany and marrying her, but for some reason, the resistance only applied when it involved Veronica.

Tiffany had grown up in Bloomstead and she had beauty and talent, outshining nearly all the other young ladies of nobility here. Conversely, Veronica was raised in the country where no one would know her. She was like a gem that everyone sought to protect or hide away on purpose.

If Tiffany and Veronica were twin sisters, there should be no reason for them to live such vastly different lives. And where does Randy stand in all these?

“You’re a clever fella, aren’t you? I’d like to think that you did not tell Veronica what you’ve learned about her so far because you still care for her—”

“Between Tiffany and Roni, I think the former would be more interested in being the leader,” Matthew said, cutting the old man off as he gazed at him meaningfully. Then, he added, “Roni has told me how she’s always wanted a normal and simple life right from the moment we met.”

“Tiffany doesn’t qualify,” Master Crayson said dismissively as though not at all concerned about Tiffany.

Not once did he ever mention Randy.

Matthew could not help thinking about the passage he read in the ‘Secret Affair of the Hidden Clan’. ‘For hundreds of years, only a man stands to become the rightful heir and leader of the hidden clan, a position no woman shall inherit.’

He had his suspicions about this at first, but from the looks of it, the hidden clan truly had no intention whatsoever to have a woman lead them; that would explain why Master Crayson was so protective of Veronica.

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In the private dining room, Veronica talked to her adoptive parents for what felt like a long time before Master Crayson and Matthew finally came in. The waiters immediately started serving dinner. As Matthew resumed his seat next to Veronica, he invited the three figures across from him to dig in. “Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, Master Crayson, you must be hungry after the long journey. Let’s have dinner and save the heavy talk for later.”

Tony and Daniella glanced at Master Crayson, then at Matthew, then at each other. Without another word, they started eating their dinner.

They finished the food in a stiff and suffocating silence. Following this, Matthew announced, “It’s getting late. We should all head home and catch up on some sleep.”

“Mom, Dad—” Veronica was about to say something when Matthew squeezed her hand and said, “Save it for tomorrow.”

“Did you—okay, fine,” she relented. It was really getting late and she did not want to wear her parents and Master Crayson out after their long journey here from the country. As such, she had Matthew put them up at a hotel.

After all was settled, she and Matthew turned to head downstairs.

On the way home, she finally could not suppress her frustration any longer and demanded, "Matthew, why didn't you let me talk to my parents? I know they look stubborn, but they'll let me marry you because they love me and they want me to be happy. You could have let me convince them."