

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 41 - 45

Chapter 41 Humans Are Incomparable

I did not even dare to imagine it. After all, it was Nicholas Scott!

Nevertheless, my guess was proven right in the next second.

A man, who was wearing a cap and holding onto a camera in his hand, walked over and asked, "Nic, should we include this part into the show for broadcast? I bet it'll trigger a nationwide discussion."

"That won't be necessary. It's just a whim of mine. But those people..." Nicholas lifted his fingers and pointed toward Hayley, who was looking ghastly pale. "Don't let people like her with questionable morals appear before the public anymore."

The man with a cap nodded and acknowledged the instructions given without hesitation. Shannon and I exchanged glances with each other, both of us looking shocked. Nicholas has such capabilities to decide on the fate of someone's acting career just like that?

Nonetheless, I was overjoyed inside. Someone like Hayley did not deserve such immense popularity and love from the public.

Knowing that her career was on the brink of destruction, Hayley grabbed onto the man's arm as she cried and admitted her wrongdoings. The attitude she had now was a hundred times more sincere than the attitude she had used to treat Nicholas when he had been disguised earlier.

Sadly, Nicholas pulled her hand off him without sparing her a single glance. He then turned to me and said, "What's your name? Are you an artiste from Flash too? I don't think I've seen you before."

The man's amiableness put me at a loss. I finally understood why those fans would be so agitated and out of control when they saw their idol.

I had never been a fan of any celebrity. But when Nicholas grew incredibly famous, so my attention got drawn to him inadvertently.

However, at that moment, I was unable to say anything further.

Perhaps my nervousness was extremely evident, but Nicholas put on a bright and warm smile, and in a sweet voice, he said, "Relax. It's fine. You can take your time to tell me. I'm Nicholas Scott. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Oh my gosh! I'm losing my mind! Nicholas is not only talking to me, but he also says he's happy to meet me!

"I-I... Nice to meet you. I'm Liana Zanetti. C-Can I ask you for an autograph?" I stumbled on my words, too captivated to see a superstar right in front of me.

"Me too! Me too! Nicholas, I'm such a huge fan!"

Shannon squeezed herself over with a face full of excitement. I could not hold back my laughter upon seeing her that way as I never knew she was a fangirl of Nicholas.

The man was extremely patient with us. In addition to giving us his autograph, he even agreed to Shannon's request as well and took a photo with us each.

As we continued with our interaction, I sensed someone staring at us, though I was unsure if I was reading too much into things. It was a strangely cold and odd feeling.

Only afterward did I realize it was Hayley. The hatred in her eyes was so intense that I could sense it through her gaze.

But it did not matter to me. There was nothing she could do to me since I was not from the showbiz industry.

Seeing that it was almost time, I hurriedly reminded Shannon, who was deep in the mesmerizing abyss of Nicholas' charisma.

"You're here for work?" Nicholas turned to ask me after hearing what I said to Shannon.

In acknowledgment, I explained that I was a comic artist who would subsequently be drawing the movie posters for Flash. I was at the company to collect the resources they had prepared.

While Nicholas and I were conversing, Hayley moved close to us, seemingly trying to plea for leniency.

This round, Nicholas did not hold back and immediately called the security over to drag her out.

Meanwhile, Shannon was still in a lovestruck mode. I was so embarrassed by that look of hers that I forcefully pulled her away after explaining things to Nicholas.

He was understanding and even told me he was looking forward to meeting me again before we left.

I was over the moon upon hearing his remark. However, I knew deep down that it would not be easy to meet him again. He was, after all, a superstar.

At least it's a win for me today.

On the other hand, Shannon was reluctant to leave. She kept turning behind to look as I dragged her away.

She only stopped her antics when the man was no longer in her line of sight.

Yet within minutes, she started her nonsense again and exploded into a scream so loud that it sent my eardrums shattering.

I quickly covered her mouth to stop her because we would get thrown out of the building for making a racket.

Luckily, she calmed down very quickly, leaving only a smitten smile on her face, which went on and did not disappear from her face when we collected the resources to when we left Flash.

Being so done with that lovestruck fool, I bid goodbye to her after reminding her to join Benjamin and me for dinner on Saturday.

Since we would be going for a barbecue, I reckoned it would be livelier with more people joining. Besides, that meal would be on me, so I did not think there would be a problem with inviting her along.

Before returning to Dominic's mansion, I specially made my way to the supermarket and bought two days' worth of ingredients.

I was all prepared to lock myself down at home since I had to finish the drafts within two days.

Back at the mansion, I got ready the ingredients required for dinner that night before heading back to my room to look through those resources I had collected.

Whenever I got too engrossed in drawing, I would forget the time and become unresponsive to my surroundings, so when Dominic returned, I didn't realize his presence. Neither did I know the moment he entered my room.

If he had not suddenly whispered something into my ears, I would not have sensed anything at all.

As his words rang in my ears, I got a shock and flinched my hand that was holding onto the computer mouse, resulting in a warped line on my otherwise perfect drawing.

More importantly, his words were particularly unpleasant.

"It's been a few years, but I've realized that not only did your skills not improve, it kinda went downhill instead. There's no difference between your work and that of an elementary school kid."

I was instantly irked that this guy was looking for trouble the moment he returned. If not for protecting my precious computer mouse, I definitely would have thrown it in his face.

Then, I was reminded of Nicholas again. In comparison to Dominic, I realized how nice and sweet the former was.

I had wanted to work on my drafts alone in my room but decided to get started on dinner preparation since Dominic had returned. I did not want to be blamed by that man for starving him.

“Mr. Hartnell, let me push you out to watch the television as I prepare dinner.” Though I was cursing him so badly on the inside, I still put on a smile on my face as I talked to him.

This time, Dominic did not go against me, so I took his silence as an act of consent.

After dinner and a round of cleaning up, I thought there was a need for me to preempt Dominic about my plans for the following two days. I did not want his nags or pranks to stop me from finishing my drafts.

I came before his room and knocked twice on the door before it got pulled open from inside.

Seeing that Dominic was half-naked while in the wheelchair, I felt my face blushing and my gaze shifting to one side without any reason.

What the heck. It's not like I'm a virgin or I haven't seen his naked body before. So why am I shy?

I complained, “Why did you open the door without wearing clothes?”

“That's funny. I'm inside my room, so why do you have to care whether I'm wearing clothes or not? But you...” Dominic pushed himself toward me and stared at me in amusement.

“Why are you knocking on my door at this late timing? Are you lusting after my bed and thinking of getting in it?”

Upon hearing his dirty words, I was ready to launch a vicious kick into his face.

He can't even take care of himself, yet he's still harboring such a dirty mind? But then again, does he think I'm desperately trying to cling to him?

Chapter 42 The Twitter Account That Was No Longer Updated

I inhaled a deep breath and tried to suppress my urge to whack him with all my might.

“Don’t let your mind wander. We’ve already made it clear; I’m only your caregiver and nothing else.”

I had to make things clear as it was an important matter. I did not want to appear as though I had hoped for something to happen between us other than being friends.

But then again, Dominic and I were never really friends either. The only thing I hoped for was for him to stop pranking me.

Hearing my reply, he smiled indifferently and stated, “You’re the one who’s looking for me now, but you look so nervous. Are you playing hard to get?”

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At that, Dominic raised his brows and sized me up, looking full of curiosity. “Is it that piece of work you were working on earlier? With that kind of drawing, I advise you to give up now. No one will accept even if you submitted it. It’ll be better for you to spend those time serving me instead. Don’t you agree?”

I-I... Like hell, I’ll agree! Liliana, you must endure it! But it’s so tough to do that!

“Dominic Hartnell, that’s enough. Can’t you say something nice to accumulate some good karma?”

Asshole! Why is he so sure it won’t be a good artwork when I’m still nowhere done with it? It’s not for him anyway, so is there a need for him to spout such nonsense and purposely emphasize my duty to serve him well?

“I’ll accumulate bad karma if I tell lies. Look at my state; all I want now is to live longer.”

Even though I was furious, I felt bad when my gaze unconsciously shifted to look at his legs.

What exactly happened in these five years? How did he hurt his leg? He must be feeling very upset... After all, he was once so proud of himself...

At that thought, I suddenly lost the urge to continue arguing with him. I decided to let him say what he liked if he would feel better that way. I would not be at any loss even if he did so anyway.

“Mr. Hartnell, do have a good rest. I’ll head back to my room. Call me if there’s anything.”

Finishing my words, I left his room with my head lowered.

When I arrived back at my room, I unwittingly logged into my old Twitter account.

Although I had not logged in for a long time, I still vividly remembered the password and the account ID. It was the initials of Dominic and my name.

In the account were the comics I had drawn, as well as my recounts of the trivialities of life. They were all about the incidents that had happened between Dominic and I.

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Whenever I looked at the contents inside that account, I was always full of affection and happiness. But five years later, I only felt my eyelids getting heavy and sore right now as I looked at it.

It was all in the past. I was no longer the Liliana that only had Dominic in my eyes. Similarly, Dominic would never be the man who would adore me deeply again.

I forced myself to close the page with my hand trembling and shut my eyes tight to withdraw myself from falling into the past.

I knew I could not continue thinking about it anymore. It was a mistake for Dominic and I to have met again. Some day, things would be restored to how they should be.

I soon opened my eyes, clicked open my draft, and started drawing again.

Focusing on work was a good attention diverter. Gradually, I stopped thinking about those unnecessary things.

That night, I managed to make some pretty good progress.

As for Dominic, he, too, had seemed to become extremely busy all of a sudden. Calvin had been coming to fetch him early in the morning every day, so he had not been eating breakfast at home. And he would only return after nine at night, so naturally, I did not have to prepare dinner either.

Of course, I was happy that his schedule was so packed. That way, I had more time to focus on drawing my drafts.

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The man also asked me if he could bring along an additional business partner along, to which I agreed readily.

I still held on to the same opinion — the more, the merrier. Not only would it be livelier, but we could also order more dishes.

And just like before, Dominic called me in the afternoon to say that he would not be back for dinner.

Shannon and I met in the afternoon to go shopping. We had been longing to go shopping since there had been so many good things that happened recently.

We agreed to arrive at the barbecue joint earlier than the set time as we did not want to let our guests wait for us.

As for Benjamin and his friend, they arrived just on time. When he had mentioned that he would bring a business partner along earlier on the phone, I had figured that it should be another lawyer from his law firm. After a round of introduction, it turned out that I was right.

By their looks, Mitch was slightly tanner than Benjamin. He looked like someone who loved sports.

As lawyers, the two were indeed eloquent. Apart from that, they were not like those dull blockheads with low emotional intelligence. Thus, we were having a whale of a time chatting.

Soon enough, we got comfortable with each other and called each other by our names.

However, the originally good dining atmosphere was spoiled when James and Dominic appeared uninvitingly.

To be honest, I did not have any strong feelings toward James when I saw him. After all, I was thankful that he had introduced Benjamin to help me.

However, I was flabbergasted to see Dominic. I did not tell him I would be treating dinner. Furthermore, I had thought he was busy doing his own things.

When Benjamin saw the two of them, he was pretty calm; he did not hold himself back from enjoying the food and drinks.

Mitch, instead, turned out to be the one with a weird reaction. With his eyes wide, he stared at Dominic's thigh for a long time.

"What are you looking at? Haven't you seen someone on a wheelchair before?" The man's tone sounded a little hostile.

It was more than understandable for him to act like that; no one would like being stared at, especially on their weakness, perpetually.

"N-No, I mean... Dominic, what do you have up your sleeve?" Mitch was still as dumbfounded as before. From his tone, it seemed like they knew each other.

Not wanting others to get too focused on Dominic's shortcoming, I tried to change the topic.

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Not only was Mitch confounded by their outburst, but the rest of us were also all swamped with puzzlement too. Shannon even knocked onto the saucer in shock, sending it flying to the ground.

Chapter 43 Care

"What the f*ck is wrong with you two? I was only asking how he became disabled, that's all! Why are you all freaking out like this?" Mitch yelled after a brief pause.

Benjamin, who was sitting next to him, pulled him back onto his chair and topped up his plate with a chunk of meat. "Eat your food and shut up!"

"Yeah, your brain could use a little more nourishment!" James chimed in as well.

Dominic's threat was a lot more intimidating. "One more word out of you, and you'll end up like this meat right here!"

Shannon and I couldn't help but chuckle in amusement when we saw Mitch's expression after being shut down by three people at once.

James then called for the waiter to bring him a menu before ordering more dishes.

When you see guys dressed in classy business suits like these, you'd automatically associate them with fine dining in fancy restaurants... Still, for some reason, I find the sight of them sitting here at a barbecue joint rather heartwarming...

I was lost in thought as I looked at the four of them.

Shannon jabbed at my arm under the table and asked, "Where did you find these four handsome men? You've been getting really lucky with guys after breaking up with Julius!"

I simply rolled my eyes at her in response. Shannon had been obsessed with men ever since her close encounter with Nicholas the other day, and that obsession seemed to have worsened to the point of no return.

Regardless, I had to admit that having a meal with such handsome men was quite a pleasant experience. It would be perfect if the jerk Dominic wasn't present.

The four of them were waiting in a row behind me at the checkout, and the boss was so charmed by their looks that she gave me a 20% discount on our total bill.

Wow, having handsome men around does have its perks!

Benjamin suggested we go for some karaoke after dinner.

I instinctively turned toward Dominic as I knew he hated how noisy karaoke bars were.

To my surprise, he didn't object to the suggestion, so I assumed he was okay with it.

Personally, I had no issues with singing. When I was going to book us a session at a nearby karaoke bar, James brought us to Royal Entertainment which was located north of the city instead.

The sight of the bright lights castle-like structure left me dumbfounded, and I subconsciously clutched my bag.

Oh, god... This is definitely going to burn a huge hole in my pocket... A place like this will easily cost thousands per entry! Hmm... Screw it! I'm here to have fun, so I might as well just roll with it! My luck has been great during the past two days, so I'm in a good mood tonight. Besides, I can just make more money after spending it anyway!

A middle-aged man dressed in a suit and tie with slicked-back hair greeted us the moment we set foot in Royal Entertainment.

He walked up to James and addressed him especially politely, "Mr. Dalton."

A pretty woman nearby offered to escort us to our private room, but the man declined her offer and escorted us himself instead.

As expected of Royal Entertainment... Even the private rooms have a fancy and majestic feel to them! I guess it lives up to the price...

I chose to walk at the end of the line so I could ask staff about the price. I decided to pretend as if I didn't mind it at all after finding out.

Shannon and the guys were quick to get themselves in the mood; they had selected about thirty songs in just a matter of minutes.

Whoa... I didn't know they were this good at singing...

Dominic sat down in a corner, looking somewhat lonely as he sipped on a glass of whiskey in silence.

I didn't know why I did it, but I walked up to him and swapped his drink for a glass of fruit juice instead.

"Lay off the booze, or you'll upset your stomach."

He glanced at the glass of fruit juice in his hand before flashing me a sarcastic grin as he said, "Since you're so eager to lick my boots, I'll graciously accept your act of kindness."

A myriad of emotions surged in my heart when I heard him say that.

Damn it! Can't he interpret my actions normally? I'm trying to care for him. Why did he have to put it that way? What the hell is he playing at?

I reached out to snatch his fruit juice, but Dominic was faster and quickly moved out of the way.

"Why are you trying to take it back now?" he asked with a mischievous smirk.

"I'm not trying to lick your boots, so I don't want you getting the wrong idea! Now give it back," I snapped back at him angrily.

Stop laughing, you jerk!

Not wanting to let him bother me any further, I returned to my seat next to Shannon.

“Hey, you seem to be awfully close with that Dominic guy. What were you two talking about just now?” Shannon whispered nosily in my ear.

“What do you mean we’re close? I don’t even know him!” That’s right... Meeting him was the worst thing to happen in my life!

“Tsk, tsksk... So quick to deny it, huh? Looks like someone’s feeling a little flustered!”

Her response instantly left me speechless, and I couldn’t help but wonder if there was someone I could talk to normally.

At that moment, James yanked me to the front of the room and handed me the microphone while Benjamin pushed Dominic toward me.

Oh, god... What are they trying to do now?

“Don’t think for a second that you two can sit out on the singing! We’ve picked a love song for you so it won’t feel awkward!” James teased with a chuckle, much to my dismay.

These guys are doing it on purpose, aren’t they? I would rather die than do a duet with Dominic, especially when it’s a love song! I have to get out of here!

With that in mind, I hurled the microphone at Benjamin and ran toward the door of the private room.

“I’m having a stomachache. I need to use the bathroom! You guys have fun, okay?” I quickly left the private room after saying that.

I ended up taking a tour around the place to appreciate the decor and avoid singing at the same time.

For a split second, I thought I saw Dominic looking rather upset as I left the private room.

Is he angry at me?

However, I was quick to dismiss that thought — his feelings were no longer my concern.

I felt like a bumpkin visiting a city for the first time as I walked along the corridor. I quickly found myself captivated by the beautiful decor.

However, I had overestimated my sense of direction and soon found myself completely lost.

To make matters worse, I hadn't brought my phone with me after leaving in such a hurry. When I was about to sink into despair, I heard Nicholas' voice sounding from behind me.

I quickly turned around and was relieved to see him standing in the distance.

Without wasting another second, I ran up to him and asked, "Hey, Nicholas! What are you doing here? Are you here to unwind as well?"

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Shannon and the guys were quick to get themselves in the mood; they had selected about thirty songs in just a matter of minutes.

Whoa... I didn't know they were this good at singing...

Dominic sat down in a corner, looking somewhat lonely as he sipped on a glass of whiskey in silence.

I didn't know why I did it, but I walked up to him and swapped his drink for a glass of fruit juice instead.

"Lay off the booze, or you'll upset your stomach."

He glanced at the glass of fruit juice in his hand before flashing me a sarcastic grin as he said, "Since you're so eager to lick my boots, I'll graciously accept your act of kindness."

A myriad of emotions surged in my heart when I heard him say that.

Damn it! Can't he interpret my actions normally? I'm trying to care for him. Why did he have to put it that way? What the hell is he playing at?

I reached out to snatch his fruit juice, but Dominic was faster and quickly moved out of the way.

"Why are you trying to take it back now?" he asked with a mischievous smirk.

"I'm not trying to lick your boots, so I don't want you getting the wrong idea! Now give it back," I snapped back at him angrily.

Stop laughing, you jerk!

Not wanting to let him bother me any further, I returned to my seat next to Shannon.

"Hey, you seem to be awfully close with that Dominic guy. What were you two talking about just now?" Shannon whispered nosily in my ear.

"What do you mean we're close? I don't even know him!" That's right... Meeting him was the worst thing to happen in my life!

"Tsk, tsks... So quick to deny it, huh? Looks like someone's feeling a little flustered!"

Her response instantly left me speechless, and I couldn't help but wonder if there was someone I could talk to normally.

At that moment, James yanked me to the front of the room and handed me the microphone while Benjamin pushed Dominic toward me.

Oh, god... What are they trying to do now?

"Don't think for a second that you two can sit out on the singing! We've picked a love song for you so it won't feel awkward!" James teased with a chuckle, much to my dismay.

These guys are doing it on purpose, aren't they? I would rather die than do a duet with Dominic, especially when it's a love song! I have to get out of here!

With that in mind, I hurled the microphone at Benjamin and ran toward the door of the private room.

"I'm having a stomachache. I need to use the bathroom! You guys have fun, okay?" I quickly left the private room after saying that.

I ended up taking a tour around the place to appreciate the decor and avoid singing at the same time.

For a split second, I thought I saw Dominic looking rather upset as I left the private room.

Is he angry at me?

However, I was quick to dismiss that thought — his feelings were no longer my concern.

I felt like a bumpkin visiting a city for the first time as I walked along the corridor. I quickly found myself captivated by the beautiful decor.

However, I had overestimated my sense of direction and soon found myself completely lost.

To make matters worse, I hadn't brought my phone with me after leaving in such a hurry. When I was about to sink into despair, I heard Nicholas' voice sounding from behind me.

I quickly turned around and was relieved to see him standing in the distance.

Without wasting another second, I ran up to him and asked, "Hey, Nicholas! What are you doing here? Are you here to unwind as well?"

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Care

"What the f*ck is wrong with you two? I was only asking how he became disabled, that's all! Why are you all freaking out like this?" Mitch yelled after a brief pause.

Benjamin, who was sitting next to him, pulled him back onto his chair and topped up his plate with a chunk of meat. "Eat your food and shut up!"

"Yeah, your brain could use a little more nourishment!" James chimed in as well.

Dominic's threat was a lot more intimidating. "One more word out of you, and you'll end up like this meat right here!"

Shannon and I couldn't help but chuckle in amusement when we saw Mitch's expression after being shut down by three people at once.

James then called for the waiter to bring him a menu before ordering more dishes.

When you see guys dressed in classy business suits like these, you'd automatically associate them with fine dining in fancy restaurants... Still, for some reason, I find the sight of them sitting here at a barbecue joint rather heartwarming...

I was lost in thought as I looked at the four of them.

Shannon jabbed at my arm under the table and asked, "Where did you find these four handsome men? You've been getting really lucky with guys after breaking up with Julius!"

I simply rolled my eyes at her in response. Shannon had been obsessed with men ever since her close encounter with Nicholas the other day, and that obsession seemed to have worsened to the point of no return.

Regardless, I had to admit that having a meal with such handsome men was quite a pleasant experience. It would be perfect if the jerk Dominic wasn't present.

The four of them were waiting in a row behind me at the checkout, and the boss was so charmed by their looks that she gave me a 20% discount on our total bill.

Wow, having handsome men around does have its perks!

Benjamin suggested we go for some karaoke after dinner.

I instinctively turned toward Dominic as I knew he hated how noisy karaoke bars were.

To my surprise, he didn't object to the suggestion, so I assumed he was okay with it.

Personally, I had no issues with singing. When I was going to book us a session at a nearby karaoke bar, James brought us to Royal Entertainment which was located north of the city instead.

The sight of the bright lights castle-like structure left me dumbfounded, and I subconsciously clutched my bag.

Oh, god... This is definitely going to burn a huge hole in my pocket... A place like this will easily cost thousands per entry! Hmm... Screw it! I'm here to have fun, so I might as well just roll with it! My luck has been great during the past two days, so I'm in a good mood tonight. Besides, I can just make more money after spending it anyway!

A middle-aged man dressed in a suit and tie with slicked-back hair greeted us the moment we set foot in Royal Entertainment.

He walked up to James and addressed him especially politely, "Mr. Dalton."

A pretty woman nearby offered to escort us to our private room, but the man declined her offer and escorted us himself instead.

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Love the Second Time Around Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Let Us Sing Together

“I suppose you could say that. We’ve just completed the shooting for the show, so I brought everyone over to relax for a bit,” the man replied in his usual gentle, soothing voice.

On top of that, his current outfit looked a lot better than the one he had on at Flash the other day.

He looked so handsome that I found myself captivated in a matter of seconds.

“Did you come here with your friends?” Nicholas asked.

“Yeah, but I wandered a little too far away, and now I can’t find my way back...” I explained awkwardly. This is so embarrassing! I mean, losing my way in a karaoke bar? Come on, I’m an adult for goodness’ sake!

Had I bumped into Dominic instead, he would’ve teased me so much — I would’ve never heard the end of it. While Nicholas did none of that, what he said next surprised me greatly.

“In that case, how about you come to join me for a bit? We’ll go look for your private room later.”

Me? Join Nicholas? He said he came over after filming the show, so... Does that mean I will get to meet a few other stars too? Oh my god! This sounds so exciting... But wouldn’t it be awkward for a random stranger like me to just show up?

“Um... Are you sure it’s appropriate to have me over like this?” I asked nervously.

At my timid question, Nicholas broke into a hearty chuckle. “Why wouldn’t it be? It’s just a hangout session between colleagues, after all. Come on, let’s go!”

With that being said, I decided to join him.

There were a lot more people inside his private room than I had expected.

There were over twenty people, and they were also surprised to see Nicholas return with a random stranger.

The awkward tension left me so dumbfounded that I forgot to greet them; I simply stood next to Nicholas in silence.

Fortunately for me, the man was quick to react to the situation. He introduced me to the others, giving me a cue to greet them all.

He then sat me down on the couch and handed me a glass of fruit juice.

I had noticed a few familiar faces in the group earlier. They were the ones with the cameras at Flash the other day, including the guy wearing a hat.

“That show you mentioned... Does it have anything to do with you pretending to be an old man?” I asked out of curiosity without giving it much thought.

“Yeah, we should be releasing the promotional video in a few days. You can check it out then.”

I nodded profusely. “With you in it? Of course I will!”

Given how nice Nicholas is, it was only natural that I support his shows in whatever way I could. Besides, all the movies and TV shows he had been involved in throughout the past few years were amazing.

When I saw a few of his colleagues calling out to Nicholes, I excused myself; I didn’t want to take up any more of his time.

I then borrowed his phone and gave Shannon a call to inquire about the name of our private room.

“You guys have fun, okay? I’m going to join my friends now,” I said goodbye to Nicholas while returning his phone.

“Maybe I should walk you to your private room instead. There are a lot of them here, and navigating the corridors can be a little tricky. You might not bump into me again if you get lost a second time.”

Hearing those words coming from him made me feel a lot worse about myself. He must think I’m really stupid...

“It’s fine! Now that I know the name of the private room, I can just ask any of the staff here for directions if I can’t find it. Besides, you’ve got a lot of people waiting for you here. You shouldn’t leave.”

I knew I had a terrible sense of direction, but I wasn’t dumb enough to not ask for directions. I didn’t want to trouble Nicholas any further, but he insisted and dragged me out of the room after excusing himself.

He let go of my hand after walking for a bit, and that was when I realized I had held hands with him.

Oh my god! I can’t believe I held hands with Nicholas! How embarrassing! I bet his fans would try to cut my hand off, bid for it, and have it mounted on their wall at home if they

found out! Heck, even I feel tempted to not wash my hand for a week... Should I worship it like a sacred relic?

With Nicholas leading the way, the two of us were able to arrive at my private room fairly quickly. I thanked him profusely as we stood outside the room door.

“Don’t mention it. Besides, we’re friends, aren’t we? There’s no need to be so formal with me!” Nicholas said with a warm smile on his face.

Hearing him call me a friend got me feeling so excited that I blurted out the following words, “Would you like to come in for a bit?”

Damn it! Am I behaving a little out of place here? What if he’s only saying that out of courtesy? I mean... It isn’t very appropriate for a nobody like me to hang out with a superstar like him...

Nicholas surprised me once again by accepting my invitation.

Since Shannon was in the room, I decided to give her a surprise and asked him to wait outside for a bit, a request which he gladly obliged to.

I then entered the room and took the microphone over from James before clearing my throat with the volume at its maximum.

That instantly drew the attention of everyone inside the room, and they all looked at me eagerly with the exception of Dominic, who had a hostile frown on his face.

“Allow me to introduce a mystery guest! Please, put your hands together! Keep your eyes peeled, Shannon!”

Before any of them could react, I quickly opened the door and led Nicholas into the room.

While the guys didn’t show much of a response, Shannon screamed in excitement and ran up to the man. Her eyes seemed to be glistening.

“We meet again, Nicholas! Do you remember me? I’m Shannon Harper! We met back at Flash the other day!”

I could only facepalm myself helplessly from the sidelines as I watched the awkward situation unfold before me.

“Yes, I remember you. You’re Liliana’s editor, aren’t you? It’s nice to see you again.”

He was greeting her normally, but that sent Shannon into another fit of excited giggles.

I hurriedly dragged Nicholas over toward the guys and got them all introduced. I figured they had gotten used to being around big shots like him as they were rather calm in comparison and greeted him politely.

Dominic, however, maintained his cold attitude and rudely ignored Nicholas' greeting and handshake.

Annoyed by Dominic's behavior, I dragged Nicholas toward the chair across the room and took a seat next to him.

I had left the private room earlier because I didn't want to do a duet with Dominic, but James brought it up again the moment I sat down.

For goodness' sake, James! Why won't you let it rest already? I shot him a fierce glare, mentally cursing him.

At that moment, the music began playing in the background, and I realized it was the song called Perfect.

Since it was impossible to avoid singing this time, I figured I would do it with Nicholas instead.

"Shall we sing this one together?" I asked, shoving the other microphone into the man's hand.

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Contrast

Nicholas stared at the microphone in surprise for a moment before saying with a smile, "Sure! I'm pretty good at this song!"

Oh, that's right! Nicholas is very good at both acting and singing! Crap, am I overestimating myself by inviting him to a duet with me? I don't want to end up embarrassing myself in front of him!

James didn't expect me to invite Nicholas to a duet; he was evidently stunned for a brief moment. He then tried to snatch the microphone from me, but I stepped out of the way before he could reach it.

"What? You wanted me to sing, didn't you? Why are you trying to stop me from singing now?"

"I'm trying to save your dumb ass right now, Liliana!" James muttered with a solemn look on his face.

I instinctively turned toward Dominic when I heard that, and he looked like he was about to explode from anger.

What the hell is his problem? Is he that angry at me for not singing with him? I mean... He didn't say he wanted to sing, so...

"Hey, Liliana! I'll restart the song, okay? We missed the first part," Nicholas spoke up all of a sudden.

"Okay!" I replied without any hesitation, only to feel a chill travel down my spine.

James let out a helpless sigh as he watched from the side, much to my annoyance.

What? I'm singing a song like he asked me to! Why can't I sing it with someone other than Dominic?

The music began playing once again, and Nicholas shot me a glance to remind me of it starting.

I nodded at him in acknowledgment. Despite it being a fun session, I simply couldn't shake the pressure of singing with someone like him.

Suddenly, I felt a warm sensation on my left hand that was trembling from nervousness. Nicholas had gripped my hand with his own.

"Relax, I'm your friend, remember? An ordinary guy, just like everyone else."

I broke into a smile when I heard his words of comfort.

Nicholas is right! Silly me! Putting his amazing charm aside, he's just another fellow human being like me!

That thought seemed to help me a lot. Although I didn't do very well in the intro part, I was able to pick up the pace shortly after and finish the song with relative ease.

It was my first time doing a duet with a superstar, and the fact that it was a difficult song made me feel even better about myself.

"I got it all on video! Man, this stuff is golden! Let me know if any of you guys want a copy of it!" Shannon shouted excitedly after the two of us were done with the song.

That last sentence was meant for James and the others, but none of them responded to her whatsoever.

I cast another glance at Dominic, and the look in his eyes was so cold that it felt like he could freeze everything within a hundred feet.

James and the others had odd looks on their faces as well, but I chose to ignore them.

“That was some amazing singing, Nicholas! Have you ever considered releasing an album or something? I’m sure it’d sell like hotcakes!”

With his existing popularity, I was certain that his talent in singing would elevate him to a whole new level within the industry.

“I prefer acting. That’s why it’s my main career. Singing is just a little something I do as a hobby every once in a while.”

“Oh…” I lowered my gaze in disappointment. What a shame…

“Liliana.” I looked back up at him when I heard him call my name.

“If I were to produce an album, would you buy it?”

His question caught me completely off guard, but I instinctively responded, “Yes! I’ll definitely buy it!”

Shannon chimed in and said she would buy it as well, prompting the three of us to burst into laughter.

“Are you done, Liliana? Have you forgotten what you’re supposed to do? How dare you get all chummy with some random stranger like this?” Dominic shouted furiously all of a sudden, scaring everyone at the scene with his booming voice.

Him calling me out like that made me feel extremely humiliated, and I snapped back at him angrily in response, “I have the right and freedom to talk to anyone about anything!”

I then grabbed hold of Nicholas’ arm as I continued, “Besides, Nicholas is not a random stranger! He’s the dream guy every woman in this country wishes they could be with! I can’t believe how rude you are!”

Dominic had a terrifyingly vicious gaze in his eyes as he spat the words out, “Come here and say that to my face one more time! I dare you!”

Right as I found myself frozen in fear, Nicholas took a step forward and stood between us.

“You should be gentle toward women,” he stated firmly.

I nodded profusely in response from the safety of his back.

Dominic looked as savage as a bandit as he yelled, “How I treat her is none of your f*cking business!”

Um... Did Dominic just swear? From what I remember, he hates swearing! He'd lecture me all day just for saying "sh*t" in front of him!

"I couldn't care less about how you treat others, but Liliana is off-limits."

Oh, my god! This is like those scenes in romance movies where the male lead steps up and defends the female lead from the bad guys! Nicholas being the male lead, me being the female lead, and Dominic being the bad guy, of course! Man, this feels so good for some reason!

Unfortunately, that dreamy moment was quickly shattered by Dominic's furious voice.

"Liliana! You have three seconds to get your ass over here!"

Naturally, I refused to do so; I would be practically marching to my own death.

"Liliana!" Dominic shouted at me again, but I refused to budge.

"Come on, Liliana. I'll send you home," Nicholas stated, his gentle tone contrasting with Dominic's menacing attitude.

As tempting as it was to let him send me home, I knew my limits. In the end, I chose to refuse his offer. Pissing Dominic off was one thing, but letting Nicholas actually send me home would be me going overboard.

Besides, I didn't want to put him through trouble either.

"That won't be necessary. These guys drove here, so they can send me home. You should head on back to your private room, Nicholas. I'm sure your friends are waiting."

"It's fine, I can just call them and let them know about the change of plans. I'll be worried about your safety if I don't send you home myself."

Man, Nicholas sure is a great guy...

"You don't have to." I figured he was probably worried that Dominic would hurt me and said after giving it some thought, "Actually, he and I have known each other for a very long time. He may have a bad temper and say some really mean stuff, but he won't actually hurt me or anything, so don't you worry!"

Eventually, Nicholas reluctantly gave in to my coaxing and nodded in acknowledgment.

He followed me outside the private room. Upon exiting, he handed me his phone number so I could call him if I needed any help.

I returned to the private room after saying goodbye, only to have James pat me on the shoulder as he whispered, "Liliana, I've tried my best to save you, but you stubbornly chose to refuse my help. Don't blame me for whatever happens next, okay?"

What does he mean by that?