

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 71 - 75

Chapter 71 Five Hundred Thousand

From what I could see, Dominic's profession as a fashion designer was simply irresistible for most women. As long as he was willing, he could effortlessly get any woman to fall head over heels for him.

After all, there's still Camille by his side. In other words, he's spoiled for choice when it comes to women. Why is he insisting on having me as his friend with benefits?

"Yeah, I love it. I just can't resist your gorgeous and sexy body." I was dumbfounded at his frankness.

After a moment of silence, I asked bluntly, "What about Camille? Both of you are getting married soon, aren't you? You are not keen on her?"

"You're different from her. There's nothing to compare."

I was momentarily stunned before realizing what he meant.

To him, Camille was the ideal candidate as his future wife. On the other hand, I was only a woman who could satisfy him in bed. Nevertheless, I was clueless about what was playing on Dominic's mind.

If he really loves Camille, why is he still thinking of maintaining a friends-with-benefits relationship with me? If Camille finds out about it, she will surely cry her heart out!

Even so, when Dominic asked if I had come to a decision, I spontaneously requested him to give me a little time to think it through. I could not explain why I did not reject him on the spot.

Ah! What's the matter with me? What more is there to consider? I must have lost my mind!

After we exited the restaurant, Dominic straight away sent me back to the hotel I was staying in with my parents. As such, I could only plan to buy the contraceptive pills after we checked out from the hotel later. Fortunately, the contraceptive pills were effective for up to seventy-two hours, so I was not really worried about that.

To my surprise, my parents were not the slightest bit suspicious of me for not going back the night before. They were even grateful to Dominic for keeping an eye on me and thanked him sincerely. Only Louis kept giving me meaningful looks.

While my parents were having small talk with Dominic, I pulled Louis aside and warned him not to say anything. He nodded and winked at me, emphasizing that he knew what to do. I was speechless at the sight of his subtle countenance.

When I was standing alongside my parents again, Mom told me that Dominic had offered to send us back to Dellmoor. At that very moment, I felt my temples start to throb. Damn it! This man should really become an actor!

On the way back, I leaned my head against the back of the car seat with my eyes closed and gradually drifted off to sleep. Even so, I was not sleeping soundly as the car was not moving consistently.

I finally woke up when I heard the faint sound of my mom calling me, telling me that we had reached home. The moment I opened my eyes, I realized that my throbbing headache had not disappeared. If I was not mistaken, I was actually starting to catch a cold.

It's because of that troublesome man again! If not because of how he tortured me last night, I would not have ended up getting sick!

"Dad, Mom, I will go up first." Since my parents were still chatting with Dominic, I did not feel like waiting for them anymore. The moment I turned and walked away, I could even hear my dad grumble that I had no manners.

Whatever. All I feel like doing now is to take a hot shower and fling myself on my bed at once.

By the time I woke up the next day, I found that my cold had worsened. Thinking about the contraceptive pills that I had not managed to buy the day before, I got out of bed.

"Mom, I'm going down to buy something,"

To prevent my parents from sensing something was awry, I walked further to the next street purposively to buy the flu medicine and contraceptive pills.

Initially, I only intended to buy the emergency type of contraceptive pills. However, for some reason, I took another box of the long-term ones at the payment counter.

Even though the medicine and pills were very light, I felt like a boulder was resting inside my pocket.

At this point, I could not overlook the indecipherable and mixed emotions in my heart anymore. What's the matter with me? Why did I buy the long-term contraceptive pills? Could it be that deep down, I'm willing to be Dominic's friend with benefits? I must be thinking irrationally because of the flu. Anyway, forget about it. After taking the medicine and having a good rest, I will surely be back to my old self and have different thoughts!

Once I reached home, I dashed into my bedroom like a bolt of lightning and put the box of long-term contraceptive pills into the inner compartment of my handbag.

Holding both the flu medicine and emergency contraceptive pill in my hands, I suddenly hesitated. Can I take both types of pills simultaneously?

To be safe, I ended up searching online for the answer. As it was advisable to take the different types of medicine with a time interval of at least two hours, I opted to take the contraceptive pills first. After putting the pills away, I flung myself on the bed and drifted off to sleep within minutes.

By the time Mom woke me up again, it was already noon. She nagged at me for a while after discovering that I was feeling under the weather. After that, she took the flu medicine hastily and urged me to swallow it at once.

A while later, Nicholas gave me a call and apologized to me. He even told me not to worry about the news report as my daily life would not be affected. In an instant, I felt pretty awkward. He didn't do anything wrong. Why is he apologizing to me?

After our phone conversation ended, I checked the news online. Surprisingly, the photos posted online were focused on our side profiles and not that clear. Apart from that, my name and the reporters' provocative questions were not mentioned at all. I heaved a sigh of relief after reading the news.

Two days later, I had gradually recovered from the flu.

To my surprise, Dominic did not look for me ever since I came back home after National Day. I was more than willing to sit idly at home without needing to entertain him. After sending Louis off at the airport, I left my parents' house as well.

Returning to my own rented house, I was back to my previous daily routine again and spent most of my time drawing. Other than that, I grabbed the opportunity to go through the novel "The Wind And Cloud" so I could be prepared for the production later.

A few days later, I received a message from the bank notifying me that a sum of five hundred thousand was transferred into my account.

After rubbing my eyes and reading the message twice carefully, I was finally assured that it was real. It was unbelievable that Julius would pay me so soon, and in a lump sum too.

After checking my latest account balance, I was on cloud nine when I noticed that there was almost one million in my account at the moment! Ah! I'm a millionaire out of the blue!

I planned to keep the money in my account for a few more days, imagining myself as a millionaire. After that, I would donate half of it for charity and the other half to my parents.

I did not forget to ask Shannon out for a meal, telling her that I would treat her this

round. After knowing that Julius had transferred me the money, she enjoyed a luxurious meal to her heart's content.

I was in high spirits till two police officers appeared at my doorstep on the third day. They requested me to follow them back to the police station for interrogation.

I was baffled and exasperated. In my twenty-seven years of life, I have never once stepped into a police station. Yet in the span of less than two months, I have been in there three times!

I could not help but mock myself inwardly, Am I making up for lost time or something?

As I had experienced something similar when I was requested to go to the police station twice previously, I was quite calm this round.

Fortunately, Benjamin and the others had shared with me earlier on the tip to call a lawyer first when I was in this sort of situation. Apart from that, I had the right to remain silent before the arrival of my lawyer. I took their advice and gave Benjamin a call immediately.

It did not take long before Benjamin reached the police station. Even so, he looked at me with a hint of speechlessness in his eyes.

I could only squeeze out a smile and blink at him innocently

Accompanied by Benjamin, I let the police officer take my statement. After asking me some basic questions, he proceeded with the main ones. He took out a copy of my bank statement and asked me, "Based on this copy of your bank statement, a sum of five hundred thousand was transferred into your account days ago. Are you aware of this?"

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 72

Chapter 72 A Pleasing Choice

I shot the police officer a perplexed look. My goodness! Who would have thought that they would question me about this? Could it be they suspect me of being involved in something illegal just because a large sum of money was transferred into my account out of a sudden?

I was about to explain that to him, yet Benjamin held me down abruptly to stop me. He then explained to the police officer the entire situation on my behalf.

After that, the police officer asked me some other questions. I was allowed to leave after a while.

Even so, the police officer mentioned that they might still need my co-operation on the investigation for the matter. Thus, I might receive calls from them to attend other rounds of interrogations. Other than that, they reminded me to keep them updated once I have any clue on Julius' whereabouts.

Furthermore, my bank card was frozen temporarily. It only struck me then that something must have happened to Julius. There must be something wrong with the money he transferred to me!

I checked with Benjamin helplessly, yet he sounded relaxed. He eased my anxiety by asking me to stay at home and wait for the latest update. As for my bank card, the bank would automatically unfreeze it once the truth was revealed.

I had no idea how long the investigation would take. At that moment, I only had about a few hundred in cash. To my relief, I paid my rental quarterly. Thus, I estimated that my current funds should be sufficient for my daily meals for quite some time.

Julius is indeed a self-centered and manipulative man! He has the heart to put me in a tight spot under such circumstances! Damn it!

Since I had a tight budget, I made up my mind to prepare my meals from now on. After all, it was a lot more cost-saving than ordering food delivery.

I only prepared a simple dish which was just enough for myself.

Unexpectedly, Dominic dropped by. I let out a deep silent sigh. What now? It seems there's no way to shrug him off but to entertain him today!

Making himself at home, he strode into my house, closed the door, and sat on my couch.

"Come over here." He waved at me and patted the seat next to him.

Pursing my lips, I was hesitant for quite a while before heading toward him. No matter what, I knew that the domineering man would not be bothered even if I rejected him.

The moment I sat on the couch, he pinned me on it and pressed his lips onto mine in a swift motion. He only ended the kiss when my chest was starting to hurt due to a lack of air.

Even so, I remained silent while he had his way with me. When everything finally came to an end, I tried to push the man who was still pressing himself on me away. "You're heavy," I grumbled.

"Hmph! Why didn't you grumble about that just now? So you're thinking of casting me aside right after you've gotten your pleasure?" he mocked.

I clamped my lips tightly together without refuting. After all, he is really good at twisting my words.

Regardless, he still stood up and carried me to the bathroom. Once we were in the cramped space, we could barely turn around.

In a split second, our bodies were drenched due to the gushing warmth from the showerhead.

In the meantime, he placed both his hands on my waist and pressed me hard against his body.

I gritted my teeth and tried to push him away. "Dominic! Not again!"

He leaned closer and lifted my chin. As his lips curved into a seductive smile, he asked, "Shouldn't you be excited when I'm treating you like this?"

Hmph! Excited? For what? This thick-skinned man doesn't seem to have any limits!

Nonetheless, I could not go against his will at all. After a while, I was out of breath again as he teased and ran his fingers all over me.

Smugness was written all over his face. "Since you have made a choice that pleases me, I have to put in more effort to please you more."

Damn it! If he puts in more effort, I bet my waist will break! What does he mean by a choice that pleases him? I didn't opt for anything, did I? I had no choice but to give in and tolerate him all this while., a decision that I'm starting to regret now!

As expected, I drifted into unconsciousness again halfway through the passionate moments.

When I came to myself again, it was already the following afternoon. Once more, my entire body was feeling sore with the familiar aches.

Damn it! Dominic Hartnell is such a pervert! I bet his mind is preoccupied with that all the time!

Wrapping myself with the blanket, I was reluctant to get up from the bed. After a while, I dozed off again.

Later, my phone rang abruptly and woke me up. To my dismay, it was a call from Dominic. I felt like ignoring it, yet I was worried that he would do anything to vent his anger. Thus, I could only answer his call reluctantly with a grimace.

Dominic told me that he would be on a business trip and was not sure when he would be back again. On top of that, he had assigned someone to deliver something to me and reminded me to receive it.

I was over the moon the moment I heard his words and had to stifle a cheer from escaping my lips. How nice it would be if he doesn't come back again forever!

Half an hour later, I heard someone knocking on the door. I opened the door curiously, and Calvin came into view. There was a suitcase next to him on the floor.

"Ms. Zanetti, Mr. Hartnell asked me to send this to you."

I moved aside to let him bring in the suitcase. At the same time, I asked casually, "Do you know what's inside?"

"These are all Mr. Hartnell's clothes. He said that it would be more convenient for him to get changed in the future like this," Calvin replied courteously.

After Calvin had left, I opened the suitcase right away. To my surprise, there were various types of Dominic's clothes.

What does he mean by sending me this? Does he expect me to tidy up for him? Hmph! I won't help him with that!

I pursed my lips and closed the suitcase.

Dominic had been on a business trip for more than one week, yet he had not contacted me at all. There were times when I thought of giving him a call, but I tended to hold myself back at the last moment.

It was rather awkward for me to call him and ask when he would be back since our current relationship was kind of ambiguous.

Just forget about it! After all, he will be back sooner or later.

In the meantime, I received a call from Flash, informing me to join the film crew on the last day of the month. The opening ceremony would be held on that day as well.

Since there was still one week left before I would have to join the film crew, I asked Shannon out for grocery shopping. While still pending for the bank to unfreeze my bank card, I could only rely on her for the time being.

It's all Julius' fault! I have landed myself in deep water because of him!

While I was preparing my meal at home after buying some groceries, my phone rang. At the sight of the unknown number blinking on the screen, I hung up instinctively.

After a while, it rang again, with the same number displayed on the screen. I knitted my brows and answered it doubtfully.

The man on the other end of the line claimed that he was a doctor from City Hospital and asked if I knew anyone by the name of Coraline Zelinsky.

It had been quite some time since I last heard this name. I was stunned and only regained my composure after a while. That's the name of Julius' mom, isn't it?

"Yeah, I know her. What's wrong with her?" Even though Coraline and I held a grudge against each other, I did not have the heart to pretend that I did not know her.

"Oh, well, she was involved in an accident and needs to undergo surgery. We need her family member to sign a consent form before that, yet we can't reach her son. Thus, she asked us to contact you instead. Is it convenient for you to come over now?"

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 73

Chapter 73 Tricks

"Coraline was admitted to the hospital after a car accident?" I asked suspiciously.

"That's right. She's at City Hospital right now; we are waiting for a family member of hers to sign an approval for the surgery. However, we can't contact anyone else right now..."

To tell the truth, I wanted to say that I had no connections with Coraline. Yet, I blurted out the exact opposite. "I'm heading over right now."

Well, I didn't visit her the last time I injured her. I should probably help her out this once.

I removed the apron around my waist and headed out after grabbing my purse.

After I arrived at the hospital, I visited Coraline in the emergency room. She looked extremely gaunt and haggard. At the same time, she kept mumbling something.

Coraline's face brightened when she caught sight of me. "Lili, Lili," she cried out and extended an arm toward me excitedly.

I would have turned around and left if she yelled or berated me. However, I couldn't bring myself to leave her this way.

I made my way over to the bed and observed her carefully. There seemed to be several gashes across her face, and her palms were covered in blood too. Even her pants were tattered. It looks like her injuries are quite severe.

"How are you feeling? Where is Julius? Can't you reach him?" I asked.

“Lili, he...” Coraline stuttered repeatedly, but she could not muster an answer to my question. In the end, her voice trailed off into silence as tears began to stream down her cheeks.

Julius had always been a very filial and obedient son. He would have rushed over if he found out that his Mom got involved in a car accident.

Even though Coraline was in such a state, there was no sign of Julius anywhere. Seems like he really has fled. After all, the police kept questioning me about his whereabouts. They even asked if he had tried to contact me. I can't help but feel bad for her.

“Wait here for a moment; I'll go look for the doctor. What about the person who ran into you?”

Secretly I prayed that it wasn't a hit-and-run. Otherwise, I would have to pay for the operation. I can't afford it! Thanks to Julius, I'm utterly broke.

The topic of Julius caused Coraline to sob even more to the point she could barely speak coherently.

I sighed and decided to go search for a doctor. Coincidentally, a doctor walked into the room.

The doctor's gaze darted between the two of us. “You are...?” he asked with hesitancy.

I had no wish to mention my relationship with Julius. Thus, I took the initiative to speak up. “Are you Dr. Morris?”

I began to explain after seeing his nod of affirmation.

Just as we were in the midst of our discussion, a middle-aged man burst into the room. He was drenched in sweat as he hurried toward Coraline and reassured her that he would be responsible for all her medical fees.

After asking him a few questions, I realized that he was the driver who ran into Coraline. Thankfully, he's a responsible driver and willing to own up to his mistakes.

Additionally, Dr. Morris informed me that Coraline had suffered from quite a few minor injuries. However, save for a broken arm, there were no other life-threatening wounds.

I turned around and was met with the sight of Coraline's sobbing face. Turning back to the doctor, I asked, “Doesn't she need surgery? Then you should hurry. What if she loses function of her arm in the future?”

Immediately, Dr. Morris ushered me aside to sign the papers. Midway through the signing, he asked me several questions about my relationship with Coraline. After all, these papers could only be signed by the patient's family members. After a brief thought, I told him that I was a close relative of hers.

Since Coraline was the one who instructed them to contact me, Dr. Morris did not ask any further questions.

As Coraline's surgery only involved her broken arm, it wouldn't take long. Alongside the driver, I decided to stay back and wait for her.

The driver had a very pleasant attitude as he apologized profusely for his actions. Finally, he asked if we could settle things privately without involving the police.

Not only did he pay and take responsibility for his actions, but he also did not try running away. Although I wanted to agree to his request, I could not make any decisions as I wasn't involved in the accident.

In the end, I told him to discuss it with Coraline after she was done with her surgery.

The surgery lasted around an hour. After it was done, Dr. Morris informed me that they would observe her wounds for another few days. She would be discharged if there were no signs of an infection.

Following the operation, Coraline was wheeled to a ward. Due to the anesthesia, she had yet to regain consciousness.

Seeing that she was in a stable condition, I informed the driver that he could take his leave first. He left his phone number before departing and promised to be back tomorrow.

I took a seat next to Coraline's bed, feeling caught between a rock and a hard place. It's already nine; I have no idea how long she is going to sleep. I can't stay here for the entire night. Yet, it feels wrong to abandon her. Ah, it's not a good thing to be so kind-hearted.

Finally, I decided to stay until Coraline came out of her unconsciousness.

To pass the time, I scrolled through Twitter aimlessly before I discovered that the official announcement for "The Wind And Cloud" happened today. Nicholas and Scarlett's official photos for the drama had been published too.

The two of them captured the hearts of their fans as they were nicknamed the "Nilet" couple. Their pairing together in the drama caused an immense uproar on Twitter.

I even visited their Twitter profiles and found them flooded with countless comments that stated: Niletta should get together.

Quickly, I exited Twitter and sent a screenshot of one of the comments to Nicholas via WhatsApp in an attempt to tease him.

I recalled seeing Scarlett from afar back then at Dominic's fashion show. She was even more breathtaking in real life. Scarlett and Nicholas would make a great couple.

I assumed that Nicholas would have been too busy to reply to my message because of his tight schedule. To my surprise, he replied to my message with a sweating emoji.

A giggle escaped my lips when I saw his reply. I texted a reply: Haha, when are you going to reveal the secret?

Nicholas replied to my text in the blink of an eye. We are just friends.

I texted him a mischievous message to tease him further: All romance starts with a friendship.

All of a sudden, I caught wind of Coraline's voice. I quickly put my phone down and found that she was indeed awake.

Upon her request, I poured her a glass of water. Once she regained her senses, I stated, "Your wounds will heal soon. Also, the driver who hit you has paid for all the medical fees. He said that he would be here again tomorrow. Now that you are awake, I'll be taking my leave."

The news of my departure caused a dramatic shift in Coraline's mood. Immediately, tears began to roll down her face. "Now that Julius is gone, I'll be all alone if you leave..." she rasped pitifully.

I frowned when she burst into tears. "Although Julius isn't here, you have other relatives. You should ask one of them to keep you company. Besides, the doctor said that you can be discharged in a few days if your wounds don't get infected."

Alas, my words went in one ear and out the other. Coraline sobbed even harder. "Lili, you can't abandon me! After all, you were once Julius' wife. How can you be so cruel to leave your mother-in-law all alone in the hospital to die?"

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 74

Chapter 74 Take Pity

Her words caused me to lash out in anger.

“Stop pushing the blame to me! Why would I be here if I wanted you dead? Don’t you feel any remorse for the way you and Julius treated me in the past? You should be grateful that I’m still here!”

My outburst caused Coraline to stiffen with shock. “I-I didn’t mean it that way. Lili, deep down, I know that you’re a good person. Can’t you take pity on me just once? I’m all alone here,” Coraline stuttered.

I massaged my temples to ease my pounding headache. I finally understand the meaning of shooting oneself in the foot.

“Coraline, let me cut to the chase. So far, I have been benevolent and understanding of your situation. Do you expect me to watch over you day and night? You can either ask one of your relatives to visit you or hire a caretaker to tend to your needs.” I frowned as I said this.

With that, I didn’t bother wasting my breath. I grabbed my purse and left the ward.

After exiting the hospital, I hailed a cab and made my way home.

I took a hot shower and sprawled across the bed before shooting a reply to Nicholas’ message. After chatting with him for a few moments, I fell into slumber.

The shrill ringtone of my phone roused me from my sleep early in the morning. I realized that the caller was none other than Dr. Morris.

He informed me that Coraline refused to cooperate when he tried to change her bandages and requested my presence at the hospital.

Just as I was about to decline his request, Coraline’s wails echoed through the phone. “Lili, I know that I’ve made mistakes in the past, but I’m all alone now! I have no one to rely upon. Can’t you please visit me?”

“Coraline, you are crossing the line!” I snapped irritably.

“Lili... please.” Coraline continued to sob before Dr. Morris raised his voice to speak over her cries.

“I think that it’d be best for you to visit her. She’s not young anymore. Elderly patients tend to get very miserable when they are left alone in the hospital. Your presence will help decrease the chances of an accident occurring.”

I heaved out a heavy sigh and agreed reluctantly. After all, Dr. Morris is speaking the truth.

“Lili, come here!” Coraline exclaimed with joy when she caught sight of me. “I knew that you wouldn’t disappoint me.”

“Please convince her to change her bandages,” Dr. Morris advised.

I heeded his words. “We’ll talk after you change your bandages,” I said to Coraline.

Immediately, Coraline ceased her fussing and agreed to my request.

Why on earth is she so insistent on asking me to keep her company? Even when Julius and I were still married, she never behaved in such a strange manner.

It didn’t take long for Dr. Morris to change her bandages. Before he left, he even advised me to talk things out with Coraline.

After his departure, I turned around to address Coraline. “What do you want? Didn’t I make myself clear yesterday?”

Tears began to well up in her eyes again. However, it didn’t look like she was going to burst into tears this time.

“Lili, I know that I don’t have the right to ask for your care. But I can’t stop panicking because Julius is in danger. I’m not trying to trouble you. However, I can’t be alone right now.” She paused for a moment before speaking again, “While I’m in the hospital, why don’t you keep me company in the daytime? I just need you to chat with me. Is that okay?”

Her words made me realize the reason behind her odd behavior.

In the past, Julius and his Mom relied on each other after the passing of his Dad.

He had relied heavily on his Mom when he was younger. Now that Julius was a grown man, it was natural for her to depend on him instead.

However, Coraline had lost Julius. She must be scared out of her wits. Even so, what am I supposed to do? I can’t be the person she relies on!

“Coraline, don’t you have any other relatives to keep you company? Julius and I are divorced. Don’t you think it is inappropriate to keep contacting me?” I sighed.

“Even if they are willing to visit me, I’d be wasting their time. I know that I’m in no position to make any demands, but can’t you keep me company for these few days? I promise to leave you alone once I’m discharged.”

After a few moments of turmoil, I found that I didn't have the heart to deny her request. "All right, I'll visit you when I'm free. However, you should stop going against the doctor's orders. Stop bursting into tears for no reason too."

Hearing my words, Coraline wiped her tears away and nodded in agreement.

I remained silent as I dragged a chair over to take a seat beside her bed.

Yet, we have always had a rocky relationship. Thus, an awkward silence filled the air between us.

After a while, the driver who ran into her arrived at the hospital. He carried an array of gifts and apologized profusely. Before Coraline could bring up the topic of compensation, he handed her a paper package.

With a single glance, I could decipher the contents of the package.

Initially, I thought that Coraline wouldn't let this matter slide so easily. To my astonishment, she agreed readily to the driver's request.

A look of relief painted the driver's face when he heard Coraline's promise as he thanked her repeatedly.

After all, this would be the best way to settle the incident smoothly.

After the driver left, I prepared to return home after staying for another ten more minutes.

Although Coraline looked reluctant to watch me leave, she did not cause a scene.

Just as I reached the exit, she called after me. A frown graced my forehead as I turned around. Did she change her mind?

Instead, she hesitantly asked if I could bring her something to eat tomorrow.

Since I already had plans to visit her tomorrow, it wouldn't be a big hassle for me to bring her some food. Consequently, I agreed to her request.

In the following days, I took some time out to visit Coraline. I even brought her some chicken broth. Over the course of two days, Coraline's mood and mental health improved immensely.

On the third day, Dr. Morris informed me that she could be discharged tomorrow.

The good news felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders as I hurried back to the ward in relief.

When I entered, I noticed Coraline on her phone.

After a few sentences, she hung up the call with a panicked look.

I took a seat on the chair and glanced at her suspiciously. It's just a phone call. Why is she so worked up?

Suddenly, a thought flashed across my mind. Did Julius call her?

Love the Second Time Around Chapter 75

Chapter 75 Kidnapped

As I was in the midst of pondering over the call, Coraline took the initiative and told me about it.

One of her relatives had called her. However, an accident had occurred, so they were occupied for the time being. Hence, they wouldn't be able to come over.

The news caused me to frown. They won't be able to come over? Isn't she supposed to be discharged tomorrow? Does this mean that she intends to ask me to continue helping her?

Following that, Coraline added that she had plans to return to her hometown and tend to herself. She claimed that there was beautiful scenery and people to keep her company. Finally, she asked if I could send her there. I let out a sigh of relief. It seems like she won't bother me anymore.

Although I've never visited Julius' childhood home, he once mentioned that it was not very far away. I can send her there and make it back on the same day. Besides, I've done countless things for her. I'll consider this as my last favor!

After Coraline was made aware that she would be discharged tomorrow, she decided to return home tomorrow morning.

As she wanted to leave earlier, I was more than happy to comply with her plans.

The next day, I arrived at the hospital at the break of dawn. After filling in the paperwork to discharge Coraline, I headed to the bus station.

Since it wasn't a special holiday, I managed to purchase the tickets with ease.

Our journey to Coraline's hometown went by smoothly.

There weren't many bus stops in the small county. Thus, we got off the bus at the side of the road.

After we got down from the bus, I noticed many motorcycles around the area that were there to fetch tourists. I prepared to hail one for Coraline and made plans to return home after she was sent off.

All of a sudden, Coraline announced that she wanted to use the restroom and asked me to follow her there. As we weren't in a rush, I trailed after her without any complaint.

Yet, even after walking for a while, I didn't see a restroom anywhere. In fact, there didn't seem to be many people around the vicinity as well.

Just as I opened my mouth to ask Coraline about our whereabouts, my phone began to ring with a call from Dominic. Despite vanishing without a trace for so many days, it seems like he's still alive.

"What?" I asked brusquely.

"Where are you?"

"Leave me alone. I didn't contact you when you disappeared, did I?" I replied.

"Fine, we'll have a good talk when you are back," Dominic uttered lowly after a brief moment of silence.

He put extra emphasis on the word good. Immediately, an array of provocative scenarios surfaced in my mind as my courage vanished into thin air.

"I'm at Ho-" Before I could finish my sentence, pain throbbed at the back of my head as my vision plunged into darkness. I promptly blacked out.

When I regained consciousness, I realized that my vision was still shrouded in darkness. My limbs were tied up, rendering me immobile in a curled-up position.

Pain flared at the back of my head. What on earth happened to me? I remember talking to Dominic on the phone. Then someone hit me from the back. Also, where is Coraline?

Although I was clueless about my whereabouts and what occurred, I could feel my surroundings rocking back and forth. The swaying motion left me extremely nauseous.

Additionally, my dizziness was amplified by the fact that my vision was covered. The darkness caused me to lose track of time.

After what felt like an eternity, the rocking motion came to a halt.

A rough grip latched around my arm and yanked me upward. Once again, I felt pain flare across my body. I must have fallen.

My perpetrator held no regard for the condition of my body. He continued to yank me forward as he forced me to stumble after him.

Along the way, I was thrown around. The rough handling caused pain to flare across my entire body.

After a few moments, the grip on my arm vanished as I was shoved into a pile of foreign material. The material felt dry and scratchy when it scraped across my skin.

Right at that moment, my blindfold was ripped away. Instantly, a bright light flooded my vision and I caught sight of a blurry shadow in front of me.

It took me a few moments before my eyes adjusted to the light, and I realized that the man standing before me was none other than Julius himself.

I felt my brain go blank. "J-Julius, did you kidnap me?" I stuttered.

A wide grin tugged the corners of his mouth upward as he smiled from ear to ear. "Darling, it's been such a long time since we last met. Didn't you miss me?" The words that spewed out of his mouth caused my skin to prickle with discomfort.

"Are you crazy? We are divorced!"

Julius tilted his head to the side like he was in deep thought. All of a sudden, he exclaimed in a surprised tone, "Divorced? Right, we are indeed divorced! Not only did you divorce me, you even demanded a huge sum of money!"

The sight of his crazed expression caused my heart to pound uneasily.

Without any warning, Julius brought his face closer to mine. He even reached out a hand to caress my cheek, asking slowly, "Were you happy with the five hundred thousand? Did you have fun spending it?"

"I-" Before I could reply, Julius slapped me viciously across the face.

An unhinged look filled his sharp gaze as he cupped my face in his hands. "Were you happy with the money? Did you have fun spending it?"

I ignored the throbbing pain across my cheek and questioned coldly, "I didn't touch the money. My card was frozen. Julius, where did you get the money from?"

Julius brushed my question aside. "You didn't touch it? Then return the money to me! Quick, give it back to me!" he demanded agitatedly.

Has he gone mad?

“My card has been frozen. How am I supposed to return it to you?”

“It’s frozen?” Julius seemed to stiffen with shock before he regained his composure.

“What about your lover? Or that lawyer? Aren’t they wealthy men? Ask them to give me the money!”

I know why he kidnapped me now. He must be after the five hundred thousand.

“Are you going to let me go if I give you the money?” I asked to test the waters.

Julius fixed me with a dark stare. “That’s right. I’ll let you go as soon as you get the money,” he said after a long moment.

Although it felt like something was amiss, I knew that Dominic would be able to find me as long as I contacted him. I have to seize this opportunity and get myself rescued!

“Give me the phone. I’ll call him right now,” I said after regaining my composure.

“Liliana, I know what’s going on in that head of yours. Do you think that someone will rescue you the moment you make a call?”

I began to panic when Julius unearthed my plans.

“N-no, didn’t you say that you’ll let me go after getting the money?” I stammered.

My words brought forth a smile on his face. With that, he rose to his feet and left.

Seeing his figure vanish in the distance left me stunned. What does he intend to do? Although he’s not letting me make a call, Julius didn’t mention anything else. Does he still want the money?

After he left me alone, Julius did not return. Thus, I was stuck in this pitch-black and quiet place. My eerie surroundings caused goosebumps to appear all over my skin.

All of a sudden, I heard the sound of rustling.