

Master Odells 641

Chapter 641

Sylvia ruffled his hair and asked, "Liam, why are you standing here?"

"No reason." Liam looked at her and said, "Mommy, Uncle is here."

"Alright, let's go downstairs," she said while taking Liam's hand.

Liam peered at her face and noticed the dark, heavy circles under her eyes, sharp evidence of her lack of sleep.

He reflected that he should have never let Isabel go downstairs. It must have been her shouts that woke up their mother.

He made a subtle, silent frown and restored the cool, stoic expression on his face shortly after.

They arrived in the living room.

Thomas was seated on the couch in the living room while the enamored Isabel was sitting on his lap and seemed very delighted to see him. "Uncle, drink some tea and have some snacks. Don't be shy."

Thomas smiled faintly.

Aunt Tonya, who was busy pouring him tea, was similarly amused by Isabel playing host and chuckled heartily.

Sylvia took Liam to them and greeted Thomas with a smile, "Thomas, why are you here at this hour?"

"I brought Aunt Tonya here." He looked at her tenderly and added, "And I've come to see you."

Sylvia could feel her face burning with embarrassment.

Aunt Tonya snickered upon witnessing this scene, then she turned to Isabel and Liam. "Isabel, Liam, I brought you two something tasty to eat. It's outside. Could you kids come with me to get it?"

The moment she heard that there were tasty treats, Isabel sprung to action. "Alright!"

She immediately hopped out of Thomas' arms and strutted to Aunt Tonya.

Liam remained quiet the entire time. He gaped at Thomas with his large eyes, then at Sylvia before silently strutting over to Isabel. After that, the pair went off with Aunt Tonya and exited the living room.

It was just Sylvia and Thomas left in the living room.

Thomas got up and approached her. He gently brushed the corner of her eyes, the warmth of his fingers seemed to seep through. "You have bags under your eyes. Did you get any sleep last night?"

Sylvia blinked several times and replied, "I slept well. Maybe I just dreamt too much."

Since she had broken things off with Odell, she saw no need to mention the sapphire ring.

Thomas did not press the issue and switched the topic. "I bought your favorite breakfast while I was on the way here. Let's eat."

Sylvia answered pleasantly, "Okay." Shortly after, Aunt Tonya returned with the children. They were carrying large bags of food.

The containers did very little to contain the delicious aroma of the food within them.

Sylvia gulped hungrily. Then she made Thomas sit and eat breakfast with her.

While they were enjoying their merry breakfast, a phone suddenly rang and interrupted their moment.

Thomas took out his phone and glanced at it, then he turned to Sylvia. "I need to answer this. I'll be right back."

"Alright." With the phone in hand, he walked to the yard outside the living room. Sylvia paid no attention to this and continued enjoying her breakfast with Aunt Tonya and the children.

Meanwhile, Thomas' expression immediately transformed the moment he stepped past the threshold of the living room. A sharp, icy look seized his expression, giving him a completely different and even intimidating presence.

It was his assistant calling. His assistant reported dutifully, "Second Master, it's nothing but chaos inside the Carter Corporation now. It's the perfect storm for you to take over. Do you want to...?"

Thomas peered at Sylvia who was eating merrily in the living room and declared, "No. Follow the original plan. Destroy Carter Corporation."

The assistant tried to persuade him. "Second Master, Carter Corporation is a big deal. If you can take over now, not only will you fulfill your mother's wishes, but there's a lot you can gain from it too..."

Thomas frowned sternly. "Just do as I say."

The assistant recognized the sharpness in his voice that was not to be opposed. He took a deep breath and answered, "Alright, I understand."

Thomas hung up the phone immediately and looked at Sylvia in the living room again.

She was occupied with the meal at the table. She would also dart the occasional glance at Isabel and Liam, and every time she looked at them, a wonderful smile would grace the corner of her lips.

A soft, endearing look appeared in Thomas' eyes. He smiled and went back to the living room.

If he had seized Carter Corporation right now, she would easily make out the connections between him and the recent crisis that befell Carter Corporation. It took so much for him to get to this point with her, so he could not risk letting her discover his involvement with what was happening

Chapter 642

Lush Heaven.

The atmosphere inside the VIP box was a sharp contrast to the world outside. There was hardly any light inside and the air was filled with the pungent scent of alcohol.

A tall man was slumped against the black couch with a glass of liquor in his hand which he hung suspended in the air, fixed in a trance.

Knock knock

There was a sudden knock on the door.

He opened his eyes but did not answer the knock.

Cliff was standing on the other side of the door. After not receiving an answer for some time, he very cautiously opened the door.

He walked up to Odell and frowned when he saw the state Odell was in, but took caution to maintain the respectful tone in his voice. "Master Carter, I just got back from the police station."

Odell pried his eyelids open and revealed a sharp look underneath them. "Go on." "Your suspicions were correct. After the police interrogated Melanie and looked further into her relationship with Miss Tara, they found that she was not her aunt. The two of them were mother and daughter."

Bang! Odell flung the glass of liquor into a nearby wall, shattering it into numerous pieces in an instant.

Cliff was taken aback by this and promptly drew several steps backward.

Odell clenched his hands tightly. Even the veins on the back of his hand began to pop.

He should have known.

If their relationship was as simple as aunt and niece, why would Melanie go through all the effort of coming out here to help Tara? What would compel her to bear the responsibility for everything after the conclusion of the events that transpired?

This was because she was not Tara's aunt but her mother!

On that rainy night, Odell remembered how the young Sylvia had recounted the facts of her life to him. Tara then tried to pose herself as Sylvia, and the fact that she had a mother was a glaring inconsistency amid it all.

She had played him like a fool!

To think that he thought of her as his salvation at one point. To think that he had let her persuade him into mistreating Sylvia who was still pregnant at the time, and what about the sixty slaps?! What about how he had kicked her out of the house immediately after she gave birth to the children?!

As if this was not enough, he had unfairly accused Sylvia of what happened to Grandmother

and had her legs broken. What about her fall into Cloudy Heart Lake where she nearly died...? "Master Carter, is there anything else I can do for you?" Cliff looked at Odell's terrifying expression and asked in a low voice.

Odell shut his eyes, immediately putting away the murderous, menacing look burning in his eyes.

After he composed himself, he expressed weakly, "What else is there to do?" Something gleamed in Cliff's eyes and he suggested, "The company is in a chaotic state right now. Would you like to go back and have a look at the state of things?" The answer he got was a deep, primal roar, "Scramn! Afraid of having his head smashed by a bottle of liquor, Cliff quickly fled from the room.

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Sylvia's house.

Thomas left shortly after breakfast. Although the house was cleaned daily, there were still certain tasks that needed attending to after such a prolonged absence.

Sylvia and Aunt Tonya took the kids to a nearby shopping mall, then to a supermarket. They only returned home in the evening when the sky was darkening. Liam watched Isabel play in the living room. Meanwhile, Sylvia helped Aunt Tonya with dinner. Shortly after, large portions of hot, steaming food were served on the dining table.

It was around the time when Sylvia, Aunt Tonya, and the children finished eating when Sebastian appeared outside the living room. He seemed to be hovering about the threshold, anxiously pondering if he should enter. By the time Sylvia and Aunt Tonya noticed him, Liam and Isabel had seen him as well. Before Sylvia could speak, Isabel jumped out of her chair and ran to him. "Uncle Sebastian, what are you doing here? Come on in!"

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Sebastian answered her warmly, "I... No, it's nothing."

That was when Sylvia and Aunt Tonya stepped forward to see him.

Sylvia gently patted Isabel's head and urged, "Isabel, go inside and play with your brother." Isabel muted a quick "Okay" and ran back into the living room. Sylvia went up to Sebastian and addressed him, "Sebastian, are you here to say something to

me?"

Sebastian hesitated for several seconds and with an exasperated sigh, began relaying, "Missus, I just wanted to see if I can persuade you to speak to Master Carter. Jacob told me that he went to the bar today again. I know that circumstances are hard with what's happening" with the company, but he can't keep living like this. Sylvia frowned sternly. "I divorced him a long time ago. It's not in my place to talk to him."

"But there's no one more suitable for this task than you. You just need to go to him and say a few words. I'm sure he'll return to his usual form after that."

"No, it's just that the person he cares about most isn't..." Before she even implied the possibility of that person being her, she stuttered. Her thoughts went to the sapphire ring again. It all happened because she had given the sapphire ring to Tara. That was why Odell mistook Tara as his guardian angel and believed that she was the most important person in his life. If she had not given the ring to Tara at the time, he would have seen her as his guardian angel instead. Perhaps she should never have given the

ring to Tara, but he was just as guilty and foolish to think that Tara was the one who saved him that night! She felt something heavy and oppressing expanding inside her. Her mind was a muddled mess “Missus, I’m begging you at this point.” Sebastian’s voice became choked up as he said this, and tears swelled in his eyes.

Sylvia gnashed her teeth. “Let me think about it. Sebastian responded eagerly, “Alright, alright. She went back to the living room. Liam and Isabel were sitting together in the living room.

Isabel was watching cartoons on the tablet while Liam sat next to her reading a book.

Sylvia was feeling overwhelmed but did not want to sour their mood as well, so she sat on the other side.

Sebastian’s voice rang in her ears like a spell. She could not forget how Odell had chosen Tara over her when being threatened by Spencer previously.

She knitted her brows into a tight frown,

Even before Spencer kidnapped her and Tara, Odell had broken things off with Tara for some time. She vividly remembered how Odell had told her that he had severed all relations with Tara. In that case, it did not make sense that he still ended up saving Tara because of the sapphire ring

Deep down, he must still care a great deal about Tara, enough to choose to let Tara live even when threatened at gunpoint by Spencer.

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While she was zoning out, she suddenly felt a chubby hand touching her forehead. It was as if the thunderstorm inside her mind cleared instantly. She looked down and saw Isabel crawling into her arms and Liam standing in front of her. The two of them were looking at her innocently. Isabel asked with sweet concern in her voice, “Mommy, what’s wrong? Did something bad happen?” Sylvia smiled and assured her. “Mommy is fine.” “But I saw your eyebrows knitted together like a straight line.”

Sylvia had no choice but to confess, “It’s just something troublesome that Mommy has to deal with. It doesn’t matter. Mommy will feel better eventually.”

Isabel leaned into her chest and rubbed her chubby cheeks against Sylvia’s. “Don’t be sad, Mommy. I’ll always be with you.” Liam silently sat next to her as well Sylvia immediately took both of them into her arms. She felt a warm and fuzzy feeling gushing inside her. –

That was when she found the answer she had been seeking the entire time. She should talk to Odell, at least for the children’s sake. 1 Whether he would listen or not was an entirely separate matter.

Chapter 644

Midnight.

Sylvia waited until the children had dozed off into a deep sleep before leaving and driving to Lush Heaven

The night was when the city truly came alive, and Lush Heaven was no exception either. It was very lively inside but most of the activities were restricted to only the first floor. Some paparazzi were wandering around the corridor on the second floor. They were here for Odell.

Sylvia did not want to appear in the news, so she got in touch with Sherry.

Shortly after, Sherry had the security escort the group of paparazzi who snuck into the building Sylvia said something to Sherry, then she went to Odell's box all by herself. As usual, Ben and Jacob were posted by the entrance door. The two of them promptly opened the door for her the moment they saw her.

Just like that, Sylvia entered. The pungent smell of alcohol lingered in the air as usual. She frowned, then looked at the man lying on the couch. He was wearing a pair of black shirt and pants. The collar of his shirt was unbuttoned and he barely even tucked his shirt.

Sylvia could not tell if he had simply fallen asleep or if he was drunk. His eyes were closed and he was even starting to look like he was dead.

She stopped approaching him and simply called his name instead, "Odell." His hands that were dangling on the couch suddenly shook, followed by him snapping his eyes open. His dark eyes adjusted to his waking state. He stared at her for a while before asking, "Why are you here?"

She answered honestly, "Sebastian asked me to come. He wants me to talk to you."

He squinted. "And you came just because he asked you to?"

His voice was very raspy. Sylvia could tell that he was hinting at something else with that statement

It was as if he was implying that she came here because she cared about him, that Sebastian urging her was simply an excuse for her.

She could not be bothered to explain herself. "Believe whatever you want to."

Odell smirked coyly. "I believe you."

There was a soft, vulnerable look in his eyes and he wore a sweet smile that gave him a somewhat endearing charm.

Sylvia frowned and avoided his gaze. Then she began to lecture him. "Everyone faces setbacks at one point or another. It's nothing out of the ordinary for a corporation as large as Carter Corporation to face some crisis now and then. You don't have to blame yourself for not being able to salvage the situation. So what if you go bankrupt? You're still young and there's always a chance for you to start again. You still have many days ahead of you."

Odell sat up, reclined on the sofa, and rested his head on his palm.

He suddenly smiled upon hearing Sylvia's speech. There was a glowing warmth in his eyes. Sylvia went on. "You don't have to worry about the children for the time being. I have enough money saved up to take care of them until they grow up. I can also help you take care of Grandma, but I'm afraid I'll have to dismiss the service of all the housemaids and bodyguards except for Sebastian and the caretakers. I can't support all of them by myself."

After she finished, silence descended upon the room. There was no answer from Odell, which prompted Sylvia to turn to him. She saw him slumped lazily against the couch with a strangely affectionate smile on his face that almost bordered along the lines of psychopathy. She became irrationally upset when she saw him behaving this way. "Odell, I'm talking to you. Were you even listening?"

He smiled. "I was."

She pressured him. "And what about you? Are you going to keep sulking here and drinking?" After several seconds of silence, he asked, "What would you do if I choose to keep doing that?" She wanted to slap him. Then again, what right did she have to do that?

She was his ex-wife. She only came to speak to him for the sake of their two children, Isabel and Liam

Chapter 645

Sylvia supposed that there was not much else she could do if Odell would not listen.

She shot a glare at him, then promptly turned to leave. Just as she reached the door and raised her hand to turn the door knob, his raspy voice suddenly traveled across the room to her. "When Spencer kidnapped the two of you, I wanted to choose to spare you the entire time." Sylvia froze for a moment and hissed sharply. "Odell, do you think I'm blind and deaf?" Even now, she could remember how he had pointed at her first, then changed his choice to Tara after a mere two-second pause. She remembered how he had reaffirmed that his final choice was Tara!

"I tried to negotiate with him and offered him a lot of terms. I even told him that I'd sacrifice myself if he'd let you two walk free. He didn't agree to my terms and instead, required me to choose between you two. He only wanted to use your lives to exact revenge on me."

Sylvia pursed her lips and stayed quiet.

Odell's voice turned into a low, magnetic tremor. "When he told me to choose to let one of you live, I was convinced that he was laying a trap on me. I believed that he was deliberately allowing me to choose the one I cared about most to walk free, just so he could kill that person right in front of me. I was fully expecting him to resort to such dirty tactics."

Sylvia frowned. He was suggesting that Spencer was aware that she was the one Odell cared about the most. He was afraid that if he had chosen her, Spencer would execute her right then and there. Was this why he ended up changing his choice to Tara instead?

She suddenly became very confused by the current situation. Something told her that this was another trick of his. How could she be so foolish as to be convinced of the logic behind this ridiculous tale?! She stopped trying to figure out the consistency of the story he spun and announced, "I don't care about any of that anymore. You don't have to keep explaining." Odell smirked. "I'm already done explaining." Sylvia felt irrationally upset. She immediately swung open the door and stormed out. Odell looked at her stomping way, the door flung back the other way and she disappeared behind it. Still, he continued to wear the same cheery smile. His expression was contorted with joy.

That was when the door opened again and Cliff entered.

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He noticed the smile on Odell's face that seemed impossible to wipe away and commented cheerily, "Master Carter, looks like the missus still cares a lot about you."

With the news of the Carter Corporation's eventual downfall going around, all of Odell's relatives spun all kinds of excuses to avoid him. Even Tara who claimed to love him and could not survive without him only came to him to demand the rights to his property. Amid all this, it was only Sylvia who made the effort to come to see him not once, but twice. The first time was with the children to bring him comfort and the second time to speak some sense into him.

It was admirable how she never asked for a single penny from him and even offered to take care of his grandmother.

Especially considering how Odell had hurt her so much in the past.

Her affection for him seemed every bit genuine. It seemed extremely unlikely that she did not care for him.

Odell merely grunted in response. There was still a faint shadow of a smile on the corners of his lips.

Cliff smiled and remarked, "Even the missus has come to see you. Do you think you could go back to the company?"

Odell made a look and asked, "What day is it today?" "It's twenty-fourth."

Odell suddenly smiled again. Instead of the jubilant smile from earlier, it now took on a different appearance. There was a hungry, grim undertone in his smile. Even his eyes began to glower.

"Not yet." He lay back on the sofa and ordered, "Get me several bottles of good wine." Cliff grimaced. "Sir, don't you think you're getting addicted-" Before he could finish, he was seized by a murderous glare from Odell. He promptly zipped his lips and walked outside. +

After leaving Lush Heaven, Sylvia went straight back home. Sebastian was standing by the door and looking around anxiously. He hurriedly greeted Sylvia upon noticing her return and enquired nervously, "So, how's Master Carter doing?" 1) Sylvia gave him an honest answer, "I told him everything I believe I should tell him in such circumstances, but I can't tell you if he listened." Sebastian sighed. "If you can't persuade him, then no one else can." "It's getting late, you should go back to rest." Sylvia suggested. After a short silence, she added, "Sebastian, if Odell is done in by this, you should bring Grandma with you and come live with me and Aunt Tonya in the future."

Sylvia was aware that Sebastian had no financial burdens and no lack of job opportunities even if he lost his job after the Carter Corporation declared bankruptcy. Despite all that, she knew that he would have a hard time parting ways with the Carter household, especially with Madam Carter whom he had formed a familial bond after all these years.

Something shone in his glassy eyes and he said with great difficulty, trying to contain his weariness, "Alright...alright."

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Sylvia talked with Sebastian for a little while longer, then she watched silently as he went back to his room before returning to her room.

She took a quick shower and prepared to settle in for the night.

Then, her phone rang.

It was Thomas who texted her and asked, "Are you sleeping?" Sylvia picked up the phone and replied, "I'm going to bed soon." Thomas: "Why are you up so late?" Sylvia: "I had to go out to handle something." Thomas: "What happened?"

Sylvia was not expecting him to press the issue, so she considered for a moment and answered: "Sebastian was worried about Odell and asked me to talk to him, so I went to see him."

She did not want to lie to him.

He replied shortly after: "I see, get some rest."

Sylvia: "You too."

After she sent the text, she tossed the phone aside and lay down on the bed. Meanwhile, right outside the gates to her house was a tall, brooding figure standing in the darkness.

It was Thomas. He looked in the direction of Sylvia's bedroom, his phone still in hand.

He only turned to leave after Sylvia switched off the lights in her room.

Sylvia drifted in and out of sleep all night. As if possessed by a demon, the scene of Spencer kidnapping her and Tara flashed past her mind every time she closed her eyes. The explanation Odell gave to her last night kept replaying incessantly as well.

He claimed that he had chosen her from the very beginning. He kept explaining to her how he believed that Spencer was trying to set him up and lull him into choosing the woman she cared about most, which was why he ended up choosing Tara to mislead him.

After thinking about it carefully, she realized that what Spencer did was very abnormal.

If he wanted to get revenge so much, killing the person Odell cared about the most would be the best way to appease his wrath. Why did he let Tara go immediately after Odell chose Tara?

The more she thought about it, the more muddled her head became. When she opened her eyes again, she saw that the first light of dawn had glimpsed the sky outside.

She gave up on getting any sleep and headed downstairs after she made her bed.

Aunt Tonya was already awake. She was watching some time-piece drama on the television

while preparing breakfast. Sylvia greeted her briskly and walked out to the yard. Then, she looked at the neighboring house. Odell's car was nowhere to be seen. He was yet to come home. She frowned and took out her phone, troubled by a frustrating feeling inside her. Before she could type anything on the search bar, a trending headline immediately popped up on the top of the screen. It read, "Carter Corporation shareholders declare intention to vote to remove Odell Carter." She tapped into the article

instantly. The article was very descriptive and according to reports, Carter Corporation had been experiencing internal turmoil since two days ago. Since Odell refused to return to clean up the mess, the shareholders were getting more anxious by the minute. Initially, most of them still voiced support for Odell but over time, their confidence began to waver as Odell's absence continued. 12

Insider information revealed that most of the major shareholders had decided to hold a general meeting where they would aim to remove Odell from the board. After that, they would move on to find someone capable who could take over and curb the ongoing crisis.

All of these events described above transpired over the last two days, including the shareholder meetings.

There were countless online discussions revolving around the topic. Most people believed that it was very unlikely that Carter Corporation would survive. The corporation's only lifeline was if some ultra-wealthy plutocrat with an enormous amount of capital swooped in and addressed all the issues with the lack of funding inside the organization.

The consensus was that Odell Carter, the leader of the corporation, would have to be forcefully ejected. Whose fault was it that he chose the comfort of alcohol in these harrowing times?

Many people directed insults at him.

She closed the article after briefly glancing through the comments.

Chapter 647

Suddenly, a silver car swerved in from the side of the road and stopped in front of her.

Sylvia recognized that it was Thomas in the driver's seat.

She was taken aback. "Thomas?"

Thomas got out of the car and walked up to her, towering over her with his height. "I'm here to see Grandma."

She muttered a curt "Oh." in response.

Thomas put a hand forward and touched her head, then he stared at her hazel eyes. "Why are you up so early?"

She strained an unconvincing smile. "I just happened to wake up early." "You have bags under your eyes. Did you not sleep last night?" he asked. She avoided his gaze and brushed it off. "I slept okay."

He softly rubbed the corner of her eyes with his warm fingertips, his voice was gentle and comforting. "Is there something bothering you?" 1 Sylvia frowned. She was moved by the tenderness in his voice. So moved that she wanted to confide everything in him, but she figured that he would not be pleased to find out that it was about Odell.

Before she could find a way to answer the question, Thomas spoke in a low, mellow voice, "Is it because of my brother?"

She immediately cast him a look.

He wore the same understanding expression and said, "I saw the news. The corporation is a mess now and it seems like he's going to get pushed out."

Sylvia answered, "I just saw the news too."

Thomas gently patted her head again. "Don't worry, he's very resilient. I'm sure nothing bad will happen to him."

It was true. He was nearly killed by his stepmother before he even reached adolescence and survived all by himself. Surely he was still the same Odell, made of something greater than steel.

However, she could not be so confident when she remembered the way he was relying on alcohol to sustain himself now.

Thomas suddenly caressed her cheeks again with his slender, pointed fingers. A darker tone surfaced in his voice. "I'm going to get upset if you keep worrying about him."

Sylvia pursed her lips. "I'm sorry Thomas. I didn't want things to be this way either."

If only she had not seen the sapphire ring, then Odell would not have told her about all his internal monologue back when Spencer kidnapped her and Tara. She would not be put in this state of mind to begin with. 1

Thomas looked at her frail expression and fell silent for a few seconds. Then, he murmured, "You don't need to apologize to me. I'm not upset because you're concerned about him. I just don't want you to get yourself hurt by getting involved with him again."

Sylvia looked at him with a ruminative look, then she blurted out, "He explained everything to me."

"Explain what?"

Just as she was about to confess, she suddenly took her hand and suggested. "There's this place that serves really good breakfast. Let's talk while we eat." He smiled gently at her. She felt a weight drop off her chest and smiled pleasantly back at him. 1 After that, she got into the car with him. They arrived at the restaurant she talked about shortly after. Thomas requested a private room upstairs. The two of them sat face to face and Sylvia explained everything to him, including the rhetoric behind why Odell had chosen Tara instead of her. 1 After listening to her explanation, he commented, "His explanation sounds reasonable enough." She stayed silent. She doubted that Odell would lie to her as well. Besides, he was not the type to lie. Thomas poured her a drink and said, "But I think he has this strange obsession with that Tara girl. It does seem like he cares a lot about her as well." Sylvia sighed. "It's all because of the ring." Thomas' hand that was holding a glass suddenly stiffened. He paused for a moment before reverting to his natural state and asked with an inquiring look, "What ring?"

"There was this rainy night many years ago where I rescued him in an alley in the old district. Back then, we barely saw each other's faces and didn't know each other's names but before he left, he gave me a sapphire ring. I was very close with Tara back then and she fell in love with the ring the moment she saw it, so I gave it to her. That's how Odell came to mistake her as the one who saved him that night instead of me."

Chapter 648

A sharp silence took over the moment Sylvia disclosed these past events.

Sylvia assumed that Thomas was baffled by the tale and chuckled self-deprecatingly. "You think it's absurd too, don't you?"

He clenched his hand into a ball of fist underneath the table, but hung a faint smile on his lips. "It's pretty incredible, I admit." After a pause, he asked again, "Does that mean he realized that you were the one who saved him all along?"

"Yeah, Tara ended up returning the ring to him. It was sometime around when you took me to Lush Heaven with Isabel and Liam to visit him. After that, I paid him another visit and that's when I accidentally saw the ring." An awkward silence descended upon them again. She sensed that something was off and stole a look at him. His handsome expression seemed to beam underneath the ceiling lights. She could see her own reflection inside his hazel eyes. He spoke suddenly, "So, are you planning to go back to him?" This flustered her and invoked a sense of guilt that came out of nowhere. "I never even thought about that, Thomas." He curled his lips into a faint smile. "We're not officially together yet so you can go back to him if you want to." "I won't ever get back together with him again," she declared firmly, "There was some misunderstanding between us, that's true. But it doesn't erase all the hurt he's done to me in the past."

The pain he caused her was not something that can be erased with mere explanations and the evidence of the sapphire ring.

A soft, endearing look returned to Thomas's eyes. He suggested, "So does that mean we can begin dating officially?"

Something gleamed in Sylvia's eyes, and she stammered for words, "I... I..."

"You haven't made up your mind?" he asked. She avoided his gaze and grunted, "Hm."

This was all too sudden so she was unprepared. "Is two days enough for you?"

"Two days?" She was still registering what he said. He grinned and stated, "Two days for you to consider whether you would become my girlfriend."

She felt her cheeks radiating with heat. "Okay."

He looked at her with a profound look, then he added, "You can choose to return to him after these two days if you want to. However, if you promise to be my girlfriend, I won't simply give you up anymore."

He declared with a sharp, resolute tone.

Sylvia pursed her lips. "Okay."

After breakfast, she went back home with Thomas. He promptly went to see Madam Carter while she returned to her room.

Isabel and Liam were already up.

By the time she entered the room, Liam had already put on a shirt and a pair of denim trousers with suspenders. He was busy helping his sister with the collar of her shirt. Upon noticing her, Isabel rushed to her and asked, "Mommy, Aunt Tonya told us you went out. Where have you been?" Sylvia patted her head and said, "Your uncle is here to see Great-grandma. Mommy was having breakfast with him just now." Isabel's eyes lit up. "Uncle is here?" "Yes, he's visiting Great-grandmother next door." "I want to see Great-grandma too!" She wrung herself free from Sylvia's arms and bolted outside. Sylvia emitted a soft sigh, then she took Liam's hand and left the room.

Aunt Tonya had just made breakfast. It was a special ndoodle dish that the children loved. Since it did not seem like Isabel was going to come downstairs anytime soon, Sylvia ate a little more than usual with Liam and Aunt Tonya.

Shortly after they finished eating, two figures of different sizes emerged. Isabel had a bunch of treats in her arms and was lying comfortably in Thomas' arms. The moment she showed up, she announced at the top of her voice, "Mommy, Uncle says that he's going to bring us somewhere very fun!" Sylvia turned to Thomas.

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Thomas smiled at Sylvia. "There's this new children's clubhouse that opened in the new district. There are all kinds of activities going on there which I think should be very fun for Isabel and Liam."

With Isabel being so excited, there was no reason that Sylvia should refuse. She turned to Liam and asked, "Liam, do you want to go?"

He stared blankly at Thomas.

Isabel was worried Liam would not want to go and quickly urged, "Liam, lets' go. Lets' go!"

Liam gave a curt answer, "Okay." Sylvia turned to Thomas and smiled faintly. "Alright Thomas, we'll leave in a bit."

"Alright."

Just as Thomas described, there were all kinds of fun activities in the children's clubhouse. There were even some high-tech installations that offered virtual gaming experiences such as the spacewalk simulator. Isabel had a blast. Even Liam enjoyed some of the simulations. There was also an escape room designed for a family-sized group. There were several tricky stages, but Thomas and Liam managed to effortlessly solve the puzzles. Even Isabel, who was always obsessed with messing around, managed to find important clues so they could pass the level. Sylvia barely had to contribute anything and they all made it out.

The day came to a close before they realized it. The sky had darkened by the time they stepped out of the clubhouse.

Thomas drove in the driver's seat.

Sylvia and the children were seated in the backseat. The children were worn out from the day's activity and fell asleep next to Sylvia shortly after getting in the car.

Even Sylvia was a little exhausted after they left the clubhouse. She was absent-mindedly scrolling through her phone when she saw another article on Carter Corporation that immediately jolted her awake.

It was quiet inside the car. She peered outside the car windows and looked at the cityscape at night.

Soon, the car stopped in front of the house.

Thomas turned to the backseat and announced, "Sylvia, we're here."

Sylvia immediately recollected herself. They carried a child each and took them back to their room to settle in for the night.

Then, the two of them went to the living room.

Aunt Tonya smiled very politely and cheerily at Thomas. "Thomas, sit down and have some tea."

He answered politely with a friendly smile, "Sure."

He sat on the couch.

Sylvia was going to walk him out and was not expecting Aunt Tonya to invite Thomas for a cup of tea. She ended up sitting on the couch as well.

After Aunt Tonya set the brewed tea for them, she informed dutifully, "Take your time, you two. I'm going out for a walk."

N

With that, she vanished.

Sylvia pursed her lips meekly. Thomas turned to her. "You don't look very good. Are you tired?" She avoided his gaze and answered, "Maybe a little."

He drew closer to her, making sure to still keep a respectable, short distance from her. Then he broached the topic. "Carter Corporation is on the news again. Have you seen it?" She did not lie to him and grunted, "Yeah." "Looks like my brother is still shackled up at Lush Heaven." She frowned. "I guess so." As she said this, she felt the cool touch of his fingertips pressed against her brows. She slowly turned to him and met the soft gaze in his eyes. He was gently massaging her brows and temple. "You're frowning. Are you worried about him?"

"I'm not," she said defensively. He smiled. "I won't be angry. I just don't want you to be in a bad mood because of him." "Thomas, you don't have to be so good to me, 1 –

Before she could finish, her voice was muffled by his finger pressed against her lips.

She zipped her lips shut.

He looked at her tenderly. "Even though I don't have a legitimate profession, the projects I have invested in these years have paid off remarkably well. I also have shares in Carter Corporation, so I

managed to save up a decent amount of money this way. Even if Carter Corporation goes down, I will do what I can to help Odell. He's my brother after all."

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Something warm glowed in Sylvia's eyes. Just as she was about to voice her opinion, a sharp and intent look surfaced in Thomas' eyes. Even the very air around him seemed to solidify. He declared, "I'll see to it that he will not be reduced to poverty, so there's no need for you to worry about him or concern yourself with this news concerning the state of Carter Corporation."

With that, he removed his finger from her lips. Sylvia smiled and thanked him sincerely, "Thank you, Thomas. I'll stop worrying myself over these matters."

Now that she had Thomas' word, she finally could stop worrying about Odell.

With Thomas' help, it was very feasible for Odell to recover from this and make a comeback in the future. She only needed Odell to live through this and stand on his two feet so the children have a father to turn to.

She felt a weight lift off her chest. Finally, she could breathe easily again. Thomas turned up his wrist and looked at the time on his watch. Then he urged, "It's getting late, you should get some rest."

He rose.

Sylvia got up and offered, "Let me walk you out." He swept a glance at her. "Alright."

Cold tuffs of wind blew across the night sky. Sylvia had just stepped out of the doorway and a gust of wind swept past her and made a mess of her hair, sweeping them all over her face. She tried to pry her hair away from her face.

Thomas was one step ahead of her. He briskly gathered her hair into a small clump and tucked them behind her ears.

She turned to look at him.

He stood like a totem in front of her and gazed into her eyes.

The streetlamp shone on them.

In just one glance, she could vividly see his genuine feelings, passion, and fervent for her.

Something flickered in her eyes. She tried to lower her head to avert his gaze. Thomas moved his hand from the back of her head to her chin and softly raised her chin to look at him again.

Immediately afterward, he lowered himself and planted a light, gentle kiss on her forehead.

His lips were soft to the touch.

Sylvia felt as if she had been electrocuted. Her body stiffened and her eyes widened.

Thomas let go of her after the kiss. A faint red shade began to color his pale cheeks as he mumbled shyly, "Sorry, I couldn't hold back."

She broke out into a hearty chuckle upon seeing him in this state. "It's okay. Hurry up and get home. Drive safely."

"Alright." With that, he turned and got into the car.

The silver car came to life as its engines rumbled.

Sylvia waited for the car to drive away before turning back to the house.

Meanwhile, across the dark road and underneath the shade of trees diagonally across her gates was a black car hidden from view. It had been parked there since Thomas and Sylvia returned home with the children and never left since.

There was nothing but dead silence inside the car. The air inside was stagnant.

The driver as well as Cliff who was seated in the passenger seat held their breaths and kept their mouth shut the entire time, afraid to even utter a single whisper.

In the backseat was Odell's broad figure. Through the car windows, he gaped at Sylvia who was just stepping into the living room

There was impenetrable darkness inside his eyes. His body exuded a bone-chilling air that made the driver and Cliff want to escape from the car and make a run for it.

After what seemed like forever, when the driver and Cliff were on the verge of suffocating, Odell suddenly broke the silence. "When are the shareholders holding their meeting?"

Cliff gulped and answered cautiously, "Tomorrow, at 3p.m. in the afternoon."

Three p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

Odell glanced at the time on his watch, nineteen hours to go. He pressed his knuckles together and cracked his fingers one by one. The crunch of bones resounded in the car and echoed unendingly.

He shut his eyes to suppress the vicious, murderous intent that felt like it was going to lunge out of his body.

After a while, he asked, "Is everything arranged?" Cliff promptly answered, "Everything has been arranged, all according to your instructions."