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Hearing that, Heather forced a smile. Of course, she wouldn't buy Leon's words—he must have been dawdling out there.

"This is too much! She wouldn't be able to finish it." Matthias was disturbed hearing Leon's words. Since when is he so good at pleasing Heather?

Leon grinned. "It's okay to waste. Just throw it away if you can't finish it."

Seeing Leon's cheeky face, Matthias suspected Leon and Heather were keeping something

from him as he felt the atmosphere between the two had changed.

Initially, Heather was feeling a little hungry, but she had instantly lost her appetite when she

saw Leon bring in so much food.

"I'm already full just by seeing these," Heather said in a disgusted manner.

Leon feigned a sad look. Any other girl would be touched but only Heather would take his kind intention for granted.

"Have some porridge." Matthias took a bowl of porridge. Porridge would be more suitable

for Heather because it was friendly to one's stomach.

However, Heather shook her head. "I don't want porridge. I want to have some meat," she

said in dissatisfaction. Did Matthias really think she wanted porridge after starving for so long?

"No can do. Have some porridge to warm up your stomach first."

Matthias put on a stern

face at once. He knew he couldn't be too kind to Heather—she didn't even acknowledge

herself as a patient.

"Leon, I'd like to have some meat." Heather turned to look at Leon, thinking that she could

only rely on Leon now since Matthias was being so unreasonable. "I agree with Matthias, Heather. It's better for you to have some porridge." This time, Leon sided with Matthias firmly. Matthias put on a victorious smile, which made Heather even more annoyed that she lost her appetite all the more. "I have no appetite and don't feel like eating anything." At this moment, Heather was as stubborn as a kid and was difficult to deal with. "You must eat some since there are still a few examinations you need to go for. You need the energy to walk around," Matthias exhorted as he had already studied the examination schedule provided by the doctor. "I can go for the examinations with an empty stomach. I shouldn't eat too much now anyway," Heather refuted. "The examinations which require you to have an empty stomach have been completed yesterday. You should eat before you go for the examinations today." Matthias was like a stern parent as he wouldn't even give Heather any chance to bargain. As such, Heather gave up on arguing with Matthias. Jerking her nose, she reluctantly took over the plain porridge from Matthias. Oh Leon, you indeed have good taste, buying plain porridge which has no taste at all. On the other hand, the feeling of being a third-wheeler grew stronger as Leon watched the interaction between Heather and Matthias from the side. Heather's proposal yesterday to marry him must be a joke!

Under Matthias's stern gaze, Heather forced herself to eat the plain porridge which was tasteless. After finishing half of it, she put the bowl of porridge on the table and refused to eat anymore.

“Have some snacks.” Matthias had already prepared them for Heather in advance.

Although the porridge wasn’t filling, Heather had gobbled a bowl in one go, so she was

feeling a little bloated and wasn’t interested in having snacks.

“I’m full.” Heather didn’t feel like eating anymore. Moreover, she had lost her appetite even

more having two men staring at her without eating.

“Porridge is not filling. Have some more snacks,” Matthias cooed in a gentle tone as if he

was placating a child.

“You guys can have it. I’m full,” Heather emphasized again. It was true that she didn’t have

much appetite even though her stomach was growling before Leon brought the breakfast

over.

Seeing Matthias persistently stand beside Heather with a determined look, Leon thought

Matthias and Heather were indeed the same kind of people—both of them were equally

stubborn.

If the two of them really get together, they might face lots of conflicts in the future. Leon’s

thoughts ran wild. Seeing how persistent Matthias was, Heather didn’t want to go against

Matthias, so she took over the snack from him.

Heather didn’t like how stubborn Matthias was. Nonetheless, she reckoned no one else

would dare to be this stubborn when faced with her. To think about it, it was actually a good

thing that Matthias was able to control her.

Meanwhile, Leon decided to stop being bothered about them and started lowering his head

to eat his food. Matthias was actually impressed at Leon’s good appetite because the latter

was having fried noodles early in the morning. What was even more surprising was that

Leon had bought steak.

The steak was served together with the fried noodles. Matthias had never seen someone eat steak with fried noodles before. After all, he himself preferred to have a light breakfast instead.

The ward was so quiet that there was only the sound of chewing. Unlike Leon who was cramming down the food, Matthias ate elegantly while Heather ate reluctantly.

The atmosphere in the ward was filled with the aroma of food. The room became warmer compared to it being ice cold not long ago. The three of them savored their breakfast quietly. After slowly finishing a piece of snack, Heather put the snack box on the table beside her.

Matthias observed Heather as she ate. Is it so hard to eat something? Since when did she become so contentious?

It was going to be 9 o'clock soon. It felt like time passed quicker in the hospital. If he were to be in the company right now, the morning meeting would've just ended by this time.

Recently, the Locke Group had been especially hectic. There were a lot of matters which Matthias had to go through personally every day, and he was drowned by all sorts of documents on a daily basis.

"I'm done," Heather said while darting a glance at Matthias as she was afraid that he would be dissatisfied again.

Looking at the leftover snacks, Matthias then glanced at Heather while wearing an unfriendly look. "Do you really have no appetite?" he asked Heather seriously.

"Yeah, I don't feel like eating anything," Heather answered in confidence. Unspirited, she felt weak in her body.

After finishing his breakfast, Leon gave an excuse and slipped away again. Heather was

resigned as she watched him leave. She even doubted if he was truly fond of her. She couldn't understand at all. Leon would always hide away from Matthias when he saw him. Hadn't he thought of competing against Matthias at all? Once again, Heather and Matthias were left alone in silence. Heather was fed up with the atmosphere being this, so she was eager to find an excuse to make Matthias leave.

"Leon will accompany me to the examinations later. You can go back to the company now."

Heather spoke straight to the point. It was better for Matthias to leave now, lest she couldn't control herself with him around.

"Leon is too careless. I won't be at ease to let him look after you on his own. I'll be less worried if I personally bring you to the examinations." Matthias refused to leave and attempted to find every reason to stay.

"I don't feel like seeing you now." Heather had no choice but to provoke Matthias by being mean.

However, Matthias smiled and didn't take her words to heart at all. As long as Heather allowed him to stay by her side, he wouldn't mind her crossing the line.

"President Locke, why do you want to make yourself suffer by staying here?" Heather

continued questioning him upon receiving no response from him.

"I don't think I'm suffering. To be able to stay by your side is something that makes me

happy." Matthias deliberately softened his tone when talking to Heather. He wished Heather would be comfortable staying around him.

"Matthias Locke, don't you understand yet? You and I are not related at all. I don't want to keep seeing you in my life." Heather was being extremely harsh, thinking that any ordinary person wouldn't allow their dignity to be trampled upon like this.

“All I know is that you’re sick and not in a good mood. Don’t worry. I don’t blame you,”

Matthias said while comforting himself. Nevertheless, he knew her sickness wasn’t the only reason this time around.

“Matthias, Leon and I are getting married. Will you give us your blessing?” Heather cruelly told Matthias about the news, but she regretted it the moment she said it.

Matthias stared at Heather in disbelief with the corner of his lips twitching. He didn’t believe this was true. How could Heather possibly marry Leon? This couldn’t be true!

“Heather, your joke isn’t funny at all,” Matthias replied while forcing a calm look. He didn’t believe Heather would marry Leon.

“You can ask Leon when he’s back later,” Heather said firmly. She was willing to lie until the end this time.

“Why?” Looking agonized, Matthias didn’t know how to describe his current feelings after perceiving such shocking news from Heather. He was dumbfounded and really wished to

ask Heather why she would treat him like this. This was ridiculous.

“He’s able to provide me with a happy family.” Lowering her head to look at the snow-white blanket, Heather didn’t even dare to look at Matthias as she knew she was being too cruel to him.

“Can’t I provide you with a happy family?” Matthias didn’t know why he lost to Leon, nor did he know what he had done to provoke Heather.

Why on earth did she make such a decision? Matthias racked his brain as he couldn’t

understand where exactly he was lacking. What was more, he couldn’t understand why

Heather would make such a sudden decision. She was not an impulsive person, after all.

“We are not compatible, Matthias,” Heather said with an apathetic expression. She didn’t want to drag things on and would rather cut things clearly. Matthias walked up to Heather and lifted her chin. “Why don’t you dare to look at me? Are you feeling guilty?” Matthias refused to believe that Heather’s feelings toward him were fake. He knew she must have had some compelling reasons to do so. “I just don’t want to see you.” Heather’s tone was becoming increasingly cold. Even her gaze at Matthias was as if she was staring at a stranger. Matthias attempted to catch some clues from Heather’s expression as he didn’t believe she was this kind of woman. Furthermore, he didn’t want to believe that Heather had toyed with his feelings. “Give me an explanation.” Matthias didn’t want to listen to Heather’s excuses anymore. He wanted a genuine explanation from her.

“There’s nothing to be explained about. Leon and I love each other. Isn’t marriage something meant for two people who love each other?” Heather looked into Matthias’ eyes and smiled coldly. “You guys love each other?” Matthias laughed sarcastically. “Do you know how to love someone? Do you even know what’s the essence of love?” Matthias finally blurted the words which he had kept in his mind for some time. Nonetheless, Heather ignored Matthias’ mocking and answered nonchalantly, “So you know what’s the essence of love then? Are you sure you’re in love with me?” If love meant giving up yourself or anything else just for that one person, had Matthias loved her to this extent? Heather didn’t even dare to contemplate it. Since she couldn’t receive genuine love, it didn’t matter anymore who she married.

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Matthias felt disappointed after hearing Heather's question. It turned out that to Heather, his love for her wasn't genuine. Since Heather thought of him as such, there was nothing else he would like to say either. "Heather, it seems that I've overestimated myself," Matthias said with a cold smile. He had overestimated Heather's feelings toward him. Should he have known that Heather's feelings toward him were merely mediocre, he wouldn't have kept having wishful thoughts. Staring at Heather, Matthias felt like he barely knew her.

Heather remained silent as she could perceive the disappointment in Matthias' gaze. In fact, she was extremely disappointed in herself too. She felt as if she had been messing up her own life since a long time ago. "If you insist that Leon will be able to bring you happiness, I wish you all the best in the future." Matthias solemnly gave up. Since Heather had already driven him into a corner, there was no point for him to continue persisting anymore. There was a slight change in Heather's expression, but it quickly faded. Rendered speechless, she, too, thought it was sarcastic after hearing Matthias' words. Seeing Matthias leave, Heather felt like she was never going to see him again. The door was closed with a bang before Matthias disappeared from her sight. While walking along the corridor, Matthias bumped into Leon and gave him a cold stare. He knew Leon had nothing to do with this matter, and he had no right to blame him for this. On the other hand, Leon forgot to greet him as he was taken aback by Matthias' cold eye

contact. As they brushed past each other, Leon felt uneasy being stared at by Matthias.

When he turned around to look at Matthias, the latter was walking in the opposite direction

in wide strides, and it was daunting to look at his upright figure.

This must've got to do with Heather. Leon opened the ward door carefully to find that

Heather had already gotten out of the bed, so he quickly walked up to her as he was worried

that she was throwing a tantrum again.

"Why did you get up, Heather?" Leon felt as if Heather didn't acknowledge herself as a

patient, so no wonder Matthias had to 'educate' her earlier on.

"I'm feeling much better. So why can't I get up?" Heather refuted. She was in a bad mood

currently, so she naturally wouldn't speak kindly.

"A patient should stay in the bed and have more rest, Heather," Leon said in dissatisfaction.

At this moment, he wished Matthias was around because he was the only one who could control Heather.

"Who says a patient should always stay in bed. Patients need to do adequate exercises too.

You can get even sicker by lying in bed the whole day," Heather continued to rebuke Leon,

having known some basic medical knowledge.

"Fine, fine. Whatever you say." Leon didn't intend to continue arguing with her.

Sure enough, Heather had a dominant personality but not Leon, so he would rather let

Heather do as she pleased. From this perspective, Leon had always been doing a better job

than Matthias because the latter would only insist on whatever he thought was right and

would never compromise.

"What were you doing outside? What took you so long to come back?"

Heather directed the

topic toward Leon. She had been waiting for him to come back in and resolve the awkward situation, but he had been running away all the time.

“Nothing.” Leon smiled guiltily. Truth was, he was too bored in the corridor earlier, so he accosted one of the good-looking nurses. Leon liked pretty girls and he would never deliberately shy away from them. That was who he was, but this didn’t hinder him from having a secret crush on Heather.

“I want to be discharged as soon as possible. Please help me rush the doctor.” If it wasn’t that Heather was feeling weak, she would have gone to talk to the doctor on her own.

“Heather, the doctor has said that you can only be discharged after the examination reports are released.” This time, Leon didn’t go along with Heather. He couldn’t possibly allow her to be this willful.

“I don’t want to go for examinations anymore. The basic ones we did yesterday are enough.

The examinations arranged by the doctor for today are unnecessary.” Heather didn’t want to waste more time in the hospital as she still had a lot of matters to attend to.

“You have to listen to the doctor, Heather,” Leon insisted. It was better to have Matthias around under the current situation because Leon was so used to submitting to Heather he couldn’t bring himself to go against her at all.

“You guys are annoying,” Heather said subconsciously as she was reminded of Matthias.

She felt her heart squeezed. She thought Matthias would insist on staying just now, but little

did she expect that he would just simply turn away and leave. The more Heather thought

Matthias had not loved her as much as she had imagined, the more agonized she was.

Despite already making up her mind to marry Leon, deep down, she was actually hoping for something else. No matter what it was, she was yearning for Matthias to fight for her. Just then, she recalled the day when Matthias was at Myra's wedding, she could tell a lot of emotions were hidden in his eyes.

That day, Heather thought that Matthias would do something—in the end, he didn't. At this thought, she realized Matthias wasn't that courageous either when it came to relationships.

He turned into a coward at the most crucial point of time. Heather thought Matthias would change this time, but it seemed like she had overestimated Matthias and his feelings toward her.

"Heather, did you chase Matthias away?" Leon asked in curiosity while taking the opportunity to change the topic.

However, Heather became even more agitated when she heard that.

"He left on his own," she enunciated each word slowly. Truth was, she was still disappointed at Matthias' reaction just now.

"Heather, Matthias is actually a nice person. It's unfair to him for you to hurt him repeatedly like this," Leon said in all fairness. Although he would occasionally deem Matthias as a love rival, he had a good impression of him most of the time.

"Is this why you refuse to marry me?" Now that there were only ones in the room, Heather brought up the topic from yesterday again.

Leon looked at Heather in resignation. "Take a seat first, Heather. Let's sit down and talk."

He felt rather weird to keep standing.

With that, Heather sat on the bed while Leon sat on the seat which Matthias previously sat

on. Facing each other, both of them were able to observe each other's expressions clearly.

“Heather, to marry you in this lifetime is my greatest wish of all. However, I do not wish to see you compromise. Everyone could tell that you’re in love with Matthias. You should only

marry someone whom you love.” It was very rare for Leon to be this serious. Unlike his usual cheeky manner, he said these words sincerely.

What he said was a principle that everyone understood. Heather had always taken marriage seriously but she had no choice this time around.

“Loving someone doesn’t mean that you must marry them,” Heather said nonchalantly.

“There’s a saying that women should marry the one who loves her more.” Of course Heather couldn’t tell Leon the true reason. Nonetheless, she couldn’t possibly tell him that he was the one whom she actually loved either because such a lie was too obvious.

“Heather, that saying existed because women were regarded as a vulnerable group. Do you think you’re an incapable and vulnerable woman?” Leon refuted Heather reasonably this time. He wouldn’t buy those nonsense sayings. Just because everyone believed so didn’t mean that it was right.

“I am, and I yearn to obtain happiness. Marriage and love are different. I can’t possibly chase after love all the time because only marriage is the ultimate attribution for a woman.”

Heather attempted to use the old cliché to persuade herself.

“I don’t believe this is something you would say, Heather.” Looking at Heather, Leon felt like she was a stranger.

“Perhaps you just don’t understand me.” Heather smiled faintly, thinking that maintaining formalities while living a life with Leon in the future didn’t seem that bad after all.

“Heather, I’m not sure why exactly you said these to me, but I can tell you firmly that I love you, so I hope you can go love who you love too. Besides, I won’t be able to provide you the happiness you’re seeking for. You’ll only be truly happy being together with someone you love.” Leon rejected her resolutely. Last night, he was still tossing and turning in the bed as he couldn’t make up his mind, but today, his decision was a firm no. Heather stared at Leon in disbelief as this outcome was out of her expectation and plans. It turned out that loving someone didn’t mean that one wouldn’t draw the line. In fact, Heather had witnessed Leon’s bottom line today.

“Even you are rejecting me.” Heather was disheartened. It seemed like she didn’t understand Leon enough.

“Heather, your proposal is indeed tempting, but you’ve mistaken one thing—when we enter into a marriage, I won’t be the one giving you happiness but in contrast, you’ll be the one giving me happiness. You have to know that if the happiness that I offer you is not something that you want, it can end up being a burden to you.” Leon understood love clearly.

If two people were forcing themselves to settle for each other, the party who didn’t love his or her partner would suffer more.

Leon was rather certain that Heather wouldn’t fall for him in this lifetime, so he knew he wouldn’t be able to provide her happiness in their marriage. As such, he wouldn’t agree to marry her because he didn’t wish to become the one that brought agony to her in the future.

Heather was stirred up after hearing Leon’s words. It turned out that she indeed didn’t understand the essence of love. What Matthias said before this was true. She was too

stupid, and her decision would only cause agony to all three of them. "Perhaps you're right." Heather was persuaded by Leon. She shouldn't display her filial piety toward Robert in such a way. She could have done it in many other different ways.

This time, Heather wanted to take the shortcut, which looked tempting at first, but it came with a big price—costing her future. There was no shortcut to success, as one should reap what he or she sowed.

"I'm glad that you've thought it through, Heather. Please stop bringing up the proposal. I'm afraid I won't be able to resist the temptation." Leon smiled brightly. He was nearly persuaded by Heather.

He had just pushed his happiness away that was presented right in front of him. As long as he agreed to marry Heather, he would be the happiest man in the world from then. However, he couldn't be this selfish to build his happiness at the cost of her suffering. Sometimes, he reckoned Heather would have these ridiculous thoughts because she hadn't stumbled and learned a lesson before.

Nevertheless, Leon couldn't bear to let Heather experience it. He'd rather her not experience the sufferings, so he had been staying by her side and carefully protecting her, hoping that she would be happier.

"Will you get engaged with me then?" Heather wore a cunning smile. Since Leon had already made himself clear, an engagement didn't sound like a bad idea.

"Not again, Heather." Leon was speechless at her relentlessness.

"Don't reject me so readily yet. Hear me out." Heather was much more relieved at this moment. Since she still had some doubts toward Matthias, she would take it as giving a trial to him this time.

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Not knowing what Heather was up to this time, Leon looked at her doubtfully and had a hunch that she was up to no good. Heather didn't want to continue hiding things from Leon, so she told him the whole story while he stared at her in a daze as he listened to her explanation.

"Heather, I can't believe you'll actually do such a thing." Leon couldn't understand her at all.

Despite the close relationship between Heather and Robert, she shouldn't use her marriage as a means to fulfill her filial obligations.

"I don't want Grandpa to die with regrets." Heather thought about the past. Although she had contributed a lot to the Langstons, what Robert had given her was even more.

The more she thought about it, the more guilty she felt. Robert was already on the brink of death, and yet she hadn't properly repaid his kindness.

"Heather, since you care for your grandfather so much, why don't you go and find some renowned doctors? Maybe some of them will be able to save him." Leon just couldn't comprehend Heather's thoughts.

This could be due to cultural differences; just like how Leon couldn't understand Heather, the same goes for Heather as she couldn't comprehend Leon's family values.

"Grandpa's private doctor is one of the top doctors in the world. I have no idea where to find a more skillful doctor than him," Heather mumbled in despair. Robert had always cared a lot about his health. He didn't mind spending a hefty sum just to hire the most outstanding doctors in the world. He had paid great attention to his health throughout the years but the result was less than satisfactory.

In fact, Heather was aware of Robert's health condition all this while. To think about it, it wasn't surprising that his condition was deteriorating. Robert had once said that he had overworked himself when he was young, and hence he was aging rapidly.

"Heather, I believe you'd understand this more than me. Different fields require different specialists. Even if Old Master Langston's doctor is the top in the world, it's impossible for him to be a specialist in every single field. There must be other doctors who are more skillful than him in certain aspects," Leon continued advising Heather. He was actually an optimistic person when it came to certain situations.

Seeing how hard Leon was trying to persuade her, Heather wore a bright smile. She

understood that Leon had a point, but she just wanted to try her best at times like

these—one would never know if they never tried.

"Are you willing to search for famous doctors with me?" In the past, Heather preferred doing

things by herself, but now, she actually enjoyed being accompanied.

"Since I'm always free, of course!" Leon nodded non-stop. He was indeed a dedicated

back-burner. In fact, he seemed to be addicted to being a back-burner. He had just given up

the opportunity to become Heather's partner, yet he gladly agreed to all sorts of requests from her.

"Are you planning to leave again?" Leon felt uneasy being stared at by Heather's sharp eyes.

Once again, she had seen through him.

Leon scratched his head. "You know me. I can't stay at a place for more than 3 months."

This was such a lame excuse that even Leon despised himself inwardly.

"Take the opportunity to go around the world with me then." Heather found an objective for

herself again. Moreover, it was a perfect reason to leave Bradford City. Leon nodded. After all, it would be nice to leave Bradford City at this moment. Whenever he was reminded that his whole family had moved to Bradford City, he didn't feel like staying in the city at all.

"But..." Leon still had concerns. He felt guilty whenever he thought of Matthias. Until now, he could remember the last gaze Matthias darted at him, and he thought Heather should at least be more considerate toward Matthias' feelings.

"What?" Heather looked at Leon in puzzlement as she didn't understand what he meant. It didn't sound like a favorable turning point.

"Heather, do you really not plan to give Matthias an explanation?" Leon just couldn't understand why Heather would want to treat Matthias like this. If he was in Matthias' shoes, he wouldn't be able to handle it.

Looking at Leon, Heather had no idea how to explain to him. Indeed, outsiders might think she was being too much, but she had her own opinions and secrets that she was keen on keeping to herself.

"If it's true love, the right person will stick to the end." Heather didn't wish to explain more to Leon, so she made an ambiguous remark.

Leon was rendered speechless as he stared at Heather. He didn't want to refute after hearing what she said but he just thought she was overly optimistic.

"Heather, I think there's no harm to at least drop Matthias some hints," Leon continued advising Heather kindheartedly. There was nothing he could do with Heather, so he could only persuade her gently from the side. Heather darted a glance at Leon impatiently. Why does he keep putting in a good word for

Matthias as if what he said before this was merely empty talk? Does he really see Matthias

as his love rival?

Nevertheless, Leon stopped speaking after seeing Heather's attitude. He didn't understand

why Heather had to keep seeking trouble for herself. Back then, he had ruined the possibility

between him and Heather, so he didn't hope Heather would do the same for her and

Matthias.

"Leon, things between Matthias and I are not as simple as it seems. Not everyone can love

freely," Heather said in resignation.

Robert had long eyed the Locke Family. In fact, he had shown Heather some information

regarding the Lockes. Until today, no one knew the motive of Matthias coming to Bradford

City, so Heather didn't wish to become intimate with her family's rival.

The love story

between Romeo and Juliet was lamentable; despite Heather's affection for Matthias, she

had to be concerned about their families' relationship.

"Heather, freedom is self-given. It's not offered by others or the environment." Leon still

thought Heather wasn't courageous enough and hoped to break her out of her bubble.

However, Heather simply lay on the bed because Leon was starting to nag a lot and she

didn't want to listen to his lectures. Everyone understood the principles, but how many could

actually work it out? Currently, Heather only wished to find a way to cure Robert.

It's about time for Heather's body examination, Leon took a look at the time and thought to

himself. The service in the hospital was pretty decent as a houseman had come to remind

them about the examinations before it was time.

"Professor Mason asked me to escort you to the examination room."

Looking youthful and

vigorous, the houseman seemed to be in his twenties. He took glances at Heather from time to time but was too shy to look at Leon because he was so handsome that other men would feel embarrassed in front of him.

The examination procedure was much easier with the houseman's assistance. Heather was vexed when she saw the long queue outside the examination room. But of course, she could skip the queue; that was exactly why the houseman escorted them here. Although she had cut the queue, the other patients didn't complain after seeing her and Leon.

A good-looking appearance was surely advantageous to one. Leon stayed beside Heather while she was doing her check-ups. Initially, the doctor wanted to ask Leon to leave the room, but he felt embarrassed to speak up after seeing Leon's appearance.

Besides, Heather didn't mind it, so the doctor in charge of the examination bit his tongue. It didn't take long to complete a few examinations. After the examination, Heather walked side by side with Leon as if she had already recovered.

"I bet Matthias exhorted them to carry out these many examinations," Heather complained softly to Leon. She didn't even feel like being cooperative anymore. "Even if it's true, Matthias did so for your own good, Heather. It has been some time since you did a full body checkup," Leon said. On the other hand, Heather was dumbfounded at how he firmly sided with Matthias.

"Why do you keep sticking up for Matthias? You must be fond of him instead of me,"

Heather humphed crabably. Even his gaze changed when he spoke of Matthias.

Heather just couldn't understand why Leon would treat Matthias that way. They were love

rivals, yet Leon got along with Matthias well. To think about it, Matthias didn't treat Leon the same way. His courtesy was tinged with hostility. "You better not doubt my sexual orientation, Heather," Leon quickly defended himself. He knew Heather was suspecting that he was bisexual. "Am I wrong?" Heather had once seen Leon being intimate with another guy. At that time, she wasn't able to accept it, but nowadays, bisexuality was rather common. "The incident last time is really a misunderstanding. Please stop imagining things. I'm only interested in women," Leon said in a serious manner while wondering if Heather was actually listening to his explanation.

"Bisexuals are quite common, so you don't have to feel embarrassed about your sexual orientation. I think everyone's sexual orientation should be respected," Heather said justly.

The houseman who was walking in front of them was shocked upon hearing their conversation as if he had discovered an incredible secret.

"Heather, do you think I'm the kind of person who would feel embarrassed about it? It was a misunderstanding from the start, but you keep forcing me to admit it. How am I supposed to do so?" Leon had to emphasize this matter again. Maybe some of his behaviors after that day had made Heather misunderstand him even more.

"I thought what you said the other day was your declaration of being bisexual." Recalling Leon's ambiguous statement at that time, Heather thought he was specifically admitting that love was not about nationality, gender, and age.

"Oh dear, please stop right there. I was hinting that I have a crush on you. You're overthinking!" Leon even had an impulse to strangle Heather. What was even worse, there

was an outsider walking in front of them.

“Fine,” Heather said sulkily. Initially, she wanted to tease Leon but did not expect that he

would be so serious about this matter. As such, she didn’t think it was appropriate to

continue teasing him on this matter anymore.

Nevertheless, Heather was very surprised at Leon’s response. She had indeed thought that

Leon was bisexual, but now it seemed like he was genuinely straight and she had

misunderstood him.

“How many more examinations are there?” Leon asked the houseman who was leading

them as he had already accompanied Heather for several check-ups today.

“There are only two left and we’ll be done soon.” The houseman looked shy like a young boy

and had not turned around at all throughout the journey.

Meanwhile, Heather was relieved hearing that. She had taken a blood test early in the

morning and didn’t have an appetite during breakfast, so she was very tired. It was draining

to undergo these examinations, and she only wished to lie in bed for some rest at this

moment.

“What’s your plan after getting discharged, Heather?” Leon asked all of a sudden. He

wondered if she had any since the examination results would soon be released.

“I don’t feel like going back to the Langston Residence. Why don’t you take me in for a few

days?” Heather felt it was meaningless to go home because Robert wouldn’t allow her to

see him, so she’d rather wander outside.

Leon gladly agreed. He was extremely bored staying alone in the huge mansion, so he was

delighted at the thought of having Heather accompany him.

Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter

Having gone through the check-up, Heather and Leon returned to the hospital room. They could do nothing else but wait for the laboratory report, and the boredom that ensued led them both to start scrolling through their respective phones. Heather, in particular, did not look like she had come to terms with being a patient. "Hey, since you're bored, why don't you join me for a round of video games?" Leon suggested in an effort to persuade Heather to play video games. "I don't like League of Legends," she replied. She had never shown much interest in the video games he played. "No, no, we aren't playing League of Legends; we're playing Honor of Kings. Are you interested?" Leon quipped cheerily, as he had recently become a fan of Honor of Kings.

Heather narrowed her eyes at him. She truly had little to no interest in video games, but it seemed as though he was rather persistent, so she decided to try her hand at a round or two for the fun of it. In reality, he was angling to pull her into the realm of video gaming with hopes that she might see the value of it. However, his efforts were futile. Adamantly maintaining the view that video games were a waste of her time, she bit out with emphasis, "As far as I'm concerned, video games are a waste of time and money." "But it will be time well-spent because of all the fun!" he argued passionately. He could see himself setting up a gaming workshop in order to develop a video game based on his own preferences. "Look, it's clear that both of us have very different views on this matter. Don't try to force

yours upon me, and I won't try to dissuade you from playing your precious video games," she said plainly, sounding so sensible that Leon allowed her to put a swift end to this debate.

He lowered his head with the manner of a child who had lost an argument and carried on gaming. He had to accede to Heather's obstinate refusal to venture into video games. At the sight of his defeatist demeanor, she smiled. There were times when he was just like a kid, and she was starting to see him as family—like a little brother she never had.

Being cooped up in a hospital room left Heather with an abundance of free time. She spent a better part of it staring up at the ceiling, given that she had nothing to do but daydream.

Catching sight of this, Leon tried to persuade her for another round as he pointed out, "It's a waste of time to daydream, too, Heather. You might as well pick up a bit of gaming while we wait."

She blinked slowly and corrected him, "I'm actually pretty comfortable spacing out like this.

Thanks, but no thanks, I don't think I'd start gaming anytime soon." As she turned down his offer once more, she wondered briefly how he could be so patient and insistent on this matter.

He fell into yet another bout of disgruntled silence, growing irritated by her blatant refusal to indulge in video games. Does she really have no interest in gaming at all?

With that question in mind, he began to think about what she often did in her spare time, and concluded that she was a monotonous person. She showed no interest in all the things that trended among young adults, and instead emulated an old soul. "Have you never done anything that isn't a waste of time, Heather?" he asked, refusing to

believe otherwise as he maneuvered his avatar through the game. "I have," she answered bluntly. "Which is why I try to stay away from doing such things, and gaming happens to be one of them." She could not stress enough that she was impassive toward gaming, and the thought of it being a waste of time only bolstered such a lack of interest.

As far as she was concerned, achievements attained in a fictional setting were significantly different from those attained in the real world. If she had to have anything to do with gaming at all, she would much rather invest in a couple of game production companies than waste time traipsing around a fictional world. The former venture was a more profitable one, after all.

"What if video gaming is a job requirement? Would you consider it then?" Leon put forth the question in all seriousness, seeing as he had plans to have Heather invest in his gaming workshop.

"Well, I've not been confronted with such a job requirement before." She paused in thought.

Indeed, the sphere of her job scope would never intersect with that of video games, and she figured it was pointless for her to give an answer to a hypothetical scenario.

"What if I were to set up a gaming workshop for the fun of it? Would you consider investing in my venture?" he pressed on, and this time he was brazenly presenting his proposal. He thought it was about time he set himself to do something useful since he had no goals for the time being.

"I highly doubt if my complete lack of prowess for gaming would do my partner any good," Heather countered coolly and rationally, thereby making it clear that she was not keen on the idea of a gaming workshop.

“Wow, that’s harsh, Heather,” he said in mock disappointment. Just then, he brought up the matter of starting an enterprise. “You know, we still have to set up our company after this.”

Upon hearing this, she grew reticent. She admittedly did not have enough confidence to set up a company in such calamitous times, and the commercial scene in Bradford City was far too unpredictable for her to know how things might turn out. With all the uncertainty that played into the picture, it might be necessary for her to delay her plans for a start-up.

“Are you really planning to hold off on the launch of the business, Heather?” Seeing as he wasn’t able to leave Bradford City anytime soon, Leon thought he might work on the plans he had agreed with Heather previously.

“I don’t know. There’s a lot on my plate at the moment, and I don’t even know if I have the energy to set up my own company,” she explained tiredly as she thought about all the things she still had to face after this. She was frustrated, and she wasn’t sure of her next move either. She had felt so lost before.

“It’s okay to push the plans back; it’s not as if we have to set up the company right away,” he consoled her, knowing that her hands were tied. After all, he knew better than most about the troubles that plagued her.

“We still have the Saffords to think about. They’ve put all their trust and expectations in me, and it would be unfair to them if we kept delaying our plans. It would only wear out their faith and patience at some point.” Heather had been the one who looked for the Saffords and convinced them to jump on the bandwagon in the first place, but as things were, she

was afraid that she might be forced to go back on her word, which was something she loathed doing.

“Don’t worry, I’ll smooth things over with them,” Leon answered confidently. Now that I think about it, I haven’t seen Paige for a while. I wonder how she’s doing. With a sigh of resignation, Heather replied, “If we keep dragging this out, I don’t even know if I could keep my own faith.” She had been riddled with self-doubt recently, and on her worst days, she questioned if she was truly cut out to be a businesswoman. In the business world, the only things that decided one’s standing were success and failure. There was no grey area in between where Heather could get back on her feet and figure things out. She had no intentions of becoming a failing entrepreneur; she wanted to be a winner in that field.

However, it seemed as if she was straying further and further away from her goal. Success was starting to look like a faraway dream, and she was growing unhappy with herself. I

know I can do better, she thought sourly.

“What’s up with you, Heather? You’ve been acting all gloomy lately. Come on, you should be more upbeat. You’re Heather Langston for God’s sake! You were iconic on campus, and everyone wanted to be like you. You shouldn’t think less of yourself,” Leon cheered presently. He could tell how dejected and unsure she was of herself these days. If this carried on, it would only be a matter of time before she spiraled into depression.

Presently, Heather stretched out like a starfish on the bed and mused woefully, “Oh, how meaningless life has become!” She had no qualms about dwelling in sadness, not when she had Leon next to her.

Meanwhile, Matthias had been simmering in anger ever since his return from the hospital and was currently burying himself in work at Locke Group. Having seen the sullen expression on his face, Lara started to worry. Her gaze flickered over to him from time to time. However, he paid no attention to her and was only concerned with the mountainous pile of work at hand. Lara had gone into his office for multiple reasons just so she could get him to take notice of her, but her baiting was futile; he did not even spare her a glance, and she wasn't sure what Heather had done to render him so furious either. "President Locke, here are last month's spreadsheets for your perusal and approval," Lara informed dutifully. She had come up with various ways to start a conversation, but after running through them in her head, she decided that the only way to get a response out of Matthias was to bring up something work-relevant. However, he only nodded and reached out for the spreadsheets. He did not speak to her, nor did he even bother to dismiss her. It didn't take a genius to know that Heather was behind his moody countenance and erratic demeanor. While Lara did not have the slightest idea as to what that woman had done, she figured it had to be something dramatic.

Her skin prickled with suspicion, Lara finally resorted to asking Nikolai to console the sullen man inside the presidential office. She knew her place, and Nikolai was the closest person to Matthias, which meant he had a better chance of getting him to talk. When Nikolai heard her suggestion, he frowned skeptically and said in a somber tone, "President Locke is currently swamped with work, so I don't think it's a good time for me to

barge in and initiate a heart-to-heart talk with him.” It was the wisest thing he could do to turn her down; otherwise, he would end up being roasted on a spit by Matthias.

“You’re his cousin, and it’s only right that you show some concern for him. He’s in a bad mood right now, and I don’t even know what Heather said to him. Just offer him a couple of words of solace and try to get him out of his funk. If we just let him carry on like this, it would only bring down the whole atmosphere of the workplace,” Lara explained gravely, looking serious. She sounded so sensible that Nikolai found himself acceding to her request, but if he had to be honest, he was terrified of being in the same room with Matthias when the latter was having mood swings.

Lara, on the other hand, shoved Nikolai into the presidential office, and when he turned to see that the door had slammed shut behind him, he grew grim. I’ve been tricked by her again!

Presently, Matthias glanced up at him without addressing him, and Nikolai had never felt more invisible than this moment as he grew uneasy at the former’s stony silence.

He swallowed and quietly sauntered up to Matthias, and when he saw the spreadsheets sprawled out on the desk, he realized that this might be a bad time to interrupt the man’s work. He was seized with the sudden urge to bolt out the door; he didn’t want to become the target of Matthias’ inexplicable rage.

After glancing at the documents Matthias was reviewing, Nikolai shuffled over to the couch that had been upholstered on one side of the office. This is a safe spot, he told himself. I’m just going to sit here quietly now since it’s too late for me to back out of this.

Matthias, on the other hand, was no fool. He knew what Nikolai was trying to do, but he couldn't care less about such petty tactics. Work was the only thing that could clear the clamor in his mind right now.

He checked through the spreadsheets quickly, and tossed them aside after making sure that they were accurate. Nikolai saw this as a window for him to cut through the tension and immediately rushed forward to the desk. He skidded to a stop in front of Matthias and stared at him as though he could telepathically talk to him. However, Matthias was not one to crack under pressure. He did not even look up from the rest of his documents. This only made Nikolai feel more awkward than he already was.

"You look like you're having a productive day, Matthias!" Nikolai broke the silence with a cheerful remark, then winced at how stupid he sounded. Matthias merely lowered his head as he buried himself with work. He did not even bother looking up to acknowledge Nikolai's presence. The latter didn't want to give up so easily, so he decided that he needed to persevere before he could get the gloomy president to warm up.

"I wonder how's Heather, Matthias. Do you think she's recovering well?" he asked deliberately, knowing that Matthias had dropped by the hospital to visit Heather earlier.

It was only after hearing Heather's name that Matthias raised a brow and looked up. A dark fire could be seen burning in his eyes and it intimidated Nikolai. Bristling with fear, the younger man thought, I must have said something wrong. After a long pause, Matthias finally said in an icy voice, "Save the leisure talk for outside

office hours.” His warning tone was enough to make Nikolai want to bury himself in a hole somewhere.

With his heart thumping wildly in his chest, Nikolai thought it would be safer for him to retreat. He didn’t want to become the fish in the barrel when Matthias decided to draw his gun.

“I’m sorry, President Locke. I’ll get back to work right away,” he said courteously, his words coming out in a flurry as he dashed out of the presidential office. He knew that he had to leave before Matthias turned him into livestock in a slaughterhouse.

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It took one look from Matthias to send Nikolai running. There was always a murderous gleam in his eyes whenever he was in one of his moods. If looks could kill, then Matthias

could be a mercenary if he weren’t already a businessman.

Now that he was left alone in his office once more, Matthias dived back into work. He knew

that Nikolai and Lara only wanted to make sure he was alright, but he simply could not be

bothered with their kindness right now.

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His heart twisted bitterly at the thought of Heather becoming someone else’s woman. He

was sure that he was on par with, if not better, than the likes of Leon, so why did she choose

to be with the latter instead?

He knew that it was not in Heather’s nature to be impulsive, which meant she had put a lot

of thought into this before finally making a decision. This only added more weight to

Matthias’ mind, and the more he dwelled on this, the worse he felt. He couldn’t come to

terms with the fact that she had fallen for someone else. It had only been days before when he was engaged in flirtatious banter with her, so why did she settle on Leon all of a sudden? Matthias had done everything to win her over, but he ended up failing his endeavors. He didn't even manage to become her boyfriend. How could she so easily decide that Leon is the one for her? This question alone was enough to make Matthias suspend his entire belief system. Presently, he glanced down at the documents in his hand and found that he was no longer driven by work. The tiny words that strung together on the countless pages only made his head spin, and right now, he badly needed an outlet for all the pent-up frustration within him.

He felt rotten, as though he had just lost grip on the meaning of life. He wasn't able to just walk up to Heather and demand an explanation from her. In fact, there was nothing he could do at this juncture, and he had never felt quite as helpless as he did now. He didn't even want to think about what Heather might be doing. Leon was with her in the hospital, and with the modicum of privacy presented to them by the hospital room, it was likely that they were all over each other. Matthias hated to imagine such nonsensical scenarios. He wanted to make his way over to the hospital, but he figured it was too humiliating for him to show up like that. He wished he could install some micro bodycam on Heather so that he could see what she was doing. He was so desperate to see her that he might go insane. He was even beginning to regret having left the hospital in a fit of rage. He had never been one to manage his emotions, so it came as no surprise that he was pushing himself toward a nervous breakdown.

What am I supposed to do now? He had never had to ask himself something like this before—he had never felt so hopeless. Even Myra’s wedding hadn’t added so much insult to his injury, but now, he thought he might very well go crazy if Heather really did end up marrying Leon.

When two people fell in love, the dynamic between them naturally fused into one, heavily centered around torture. Heather did not see Matthias as a safe harbor at which she could finally dock. With a weary soul, she experimented in various ways to prove this, but in the process of doing so, she had no idea how much hurt she was causing him.

The conflict that tore through Matthias was a mirror image of hers as well. He had kept too much to himself, and things would not have been quite so tumultuous if he had been more forthcoming with her. Alas, he was habitually secretive, leaving Heather to guess at the truth instead of telling it to her outright.

No longer able to stand the tension and frustration that settled within his office, he pushed all the documents off his desk onto the floor. He needed to find neutral ground, where he could recollect his thoughts and regain his composure. He was no longer in the mood to continue on with his work.

It wasn’t long before he pulled the door open and stormed out of his office. Having done so, he told Lara in a commanding tone, “I’m heading out. Go into my office and clean it up for me.”

With that, he walked out of the building. Staying at Locke Group would only build on his frustration, and a breath of fresh air might help to clear his mind.

It had been quite a while since his arrival in Bradford City, but it was only at the present moment that he realized he had never explored the vibrant local scene. Evan, on the other hand, was an incorrigible hedonist who had probably already made a home for himself in all the best clubs the city had to offer. Matthias rarely ventured into places like those, but he had to admit that an occasional visit would help unwind him. When Evan came out to greet Matthias, it was with a look of disbelief. He was skeptical and suspicious as he eyed the latter. He wondered what had prompted him to initiate a trip to a clubhouse.

“Out of curiosity, President Locke, has something really good happened, or are you just in a bad mood?” Evan asked inquisitively, but judging from the way Matthias’ lips were pressed into a grim line, it was obvious the man was downcast.

“I told you to bring me somewhere I can unwind,” Matthias began sullenly. “So why are you still asking me stupid questions?” It was clear that Evan had noticed his foul mood, and asking him about it was akin to mockery.

“I just don’t think you’d enjoy yourself in a club, President Locke,” Evan explained. They had visited a clubhouse on a previous occasion, but Matthias was far too uptight to appreciate the novelty of it, and it was hard to imagine that this time would be any different.

“Are you done?” Matthias barked impatiently, then stormed ahead so that he could stop listening to Evan’s unnecessary lecture.

However, Evan caught up to him and pointed out, “You have a girlfriend now. Aren’t you worried that Miss Langston might see you at the club and throw you in the doghouse?” The teasing tone of his voice only succeeded in stoking Matthias’ anger.

Matthias stopped in his tracks and turned ominously to throw a dangerous look at Evan, who felt a chill run down his spine. He blinked innocently at the former, and it was only then that he realized he had slipped up. "Do not mention Heather's name in front of me." Matthias bit out harshly through gritted teeth. He was feeling bad enough as it was, and he only wanted to find an emotional outlet through which he could release all his pent-up bitter resentment. He most certainly did not want to concern himself with anything related to Heather. "Okay, okay," Evan agreed placatingly. He immediately deduced that Matthias had gotten into a lover's spat with Heather, and it looked like it did not end well. He could finally understand why Matthias was behaving so erratically. Evan's idea of Matthias was a tolerant and chivalrous gentleman who had intensive guidance, which would mean that the fight wasn't a small matter. Heather must have crossed the line to make Matthias so angry, Evan thought grimly. He was suddenly seized with the urge to unearth the details of the fight. He wondered if he could get Matthias to down a couple of powerful shots of alcohol, seeing as it would be easier to make him spill the beans once his inhibitions were lowered. However, Matthias could hold his drinks exceptionally well, so there was a chance that this plan might go awry. I might be the first one to get drunk before I could hear his side of the story. Walking into a clubhouse in broad daylight seemed to take the fun out of the situation. As far as preferences went, Evan liked it when he could bask in the robust nightclub culture, 'night' being the operative word. The clubhouse was practically devoid of life at this hour, and he couldn't help but resent Matthias for feeling gloomy in the middle of the day.

Nonetheless, he brought Matthias over to one of his favorite haunts. He might be a responsible butler who worked 24/7, but he still made time for leisure indulgence.

Given that his butler's duties revolved around taking care of Matthias' needs, he would give himself a break whenever the latter was away from home or out late for after-work drinks.

There were even times when he would wait for Matthias to fall asleep at night before partaking in his usual vices.

That said, he made sure that he would be at Matthias' beck and call, and his schedule was tailored to accommodate the latter's. He was a butler who knew how to do his job, and he

had been taking excellent care of Matthias' personal life.

Evan had odd sleeping hours, but that didn't stop him from having a robust lifestyle. He was

used to staying up late and waking up before the crack of dawn, which meant he relied

heavily on two- or three-hour naps during the day to make up for his lack of sleep at night.

When he wasn't tied up with butler duties, he was a vagabond. He had a rather decorated nightlife, and he had fun hanging out with his friends during the day as well.

He was a man who truly appreciated a good time, which made him the polar opposite of

Matthias. There were times when he would warn the latter not to let work take up his

precious days of youth, claiming that it would do him some good to relax every once in a

while.

Presently, he walked up to Matthias and said, "There aren't many clubhouses that operate at

this hour, President Locke." It was true; it was rare for clubhouses to open twenty-four hours

like a convenient store.

Being a connoisseur when it came to nightclubs, Evan knew that the best joints only operated for short hours, but Matthias didn't seem like he was looking for excitement. With that in mind, he began to think about what Matthias did at night, and he came to the conclusion that the man rarely ever had time for himself. After-work dinners were probably the only time when Matthias could socialize in an informal setting. Not long after, Evan brought Matthias to an establishment known as Caliph Nightclub. There was something off about the name of the place, but it was only after Matthias had stepped foot into the club that he fully registered the gravity of the situation. The scene before him was entirely different from what he had expected of a clubhouse, and at the sight of it, he turned to glare at Evan mutinously. Then, he spun on his heels to leave, but Evan caught up to him and pulled him to a stop. "Drinking is an excellent way to unwind, President Locke, and you could always play a game of poker or something. There are other pub games you could try out as well." Caliph Nightclub was a local favorite for poker fans, and Evan had only brought Matthias here because he enjoyed a good game of poker himself.

"I just want to have some mindless fun," Matthias snapped. What he meant was that he would like to down a row of shots mindlessly as he did not want to spend the rest of his day trying out pub games and poker, both of which required the use of tactical thinking. Evan took on a more persuasive tone as he countered, "What makes you think poker isn't mindless fun? It's more about luck, President Locke. Why don't you sit down for a game with me?"

If Evan had not been so earnest, Matthias might have thought he was trying to dupe him. However, seeing as they were already here, he figured there was no harm in a friendly game of poker, though it was not the sort of fun he had had in mind. "A two-person poker game?" Matthias wondered aloud. Upon hearing this, Evan chuckled. "You'll understand in a bit." There was a lewd edge to his chuckling that made Matthias uneasy all of a sudden. Before he could ask further questions, he heard Evan say to the cashier with natural ease, "I'd like to book the Caliph Room with two masters of poker for company." Matthias frowned at this. He had no idea what Evan was doing, but he shrugged it off, and it wasn't long before the mystery was solved. One of the attendants led them into the Caliph Room, and Matthias felt as though they had stepped through the portal to a world that was distinct from the stuffy scene downstairs. When Matthias first entered the club, he thought he had walked into a retirement home, given there were old men huddling together over a game of cards and chess. But as soon as the door to the Caliph Room swung open, he was greeted by the overwhelming atmosphere that was commonly associated with a vivacious nightclub. As Matthias strolled into this hidden cavern, he began to approve of Evan's choice. Evan, on the other hand, had taken a liking to the over-the-top decorations and the old-school track lights that basked the room in jarring neon colors. There was something particularly laid-back and deviant about the almost disco-inspired surrounding for which he had developed an acquired taste.

“The whole scene downstairs is just a cover, President Locke. This place is more than it seems,” Evan explained as he wiggled his brows meaningfully. Sure enough, a couple of sultry female voices spoke up from the other side of the door, saying, “Master, we have arrived.”

Matthias narrowed his eyes at this out-of-the-blue interjection, while Evan merely chuckled like the cat that ate the canary as he rose to open the door. Following this, two scantily-clad young ladies entered the room, and Matthias thought their dedication to their line of work was admirable, seeing as they barely had enough clothing on them to keep warm in the middle of winter.

Then, he noticed the tails that the women were sporting, and he immediately turned to shoot Evan an incredulous look. So this is his twisted fetish? Who could have thought he has such a specific taste?

“You haven’t come by to see us, Master,” one of the beauties purred seductively.

These two women were gorgeous in their own ways, and despite their tacky outfits, they still boasted pretty faces. Their make-up was done tastefully enough to flatter their delicate features, and if they weren’t working at a club right now, Matthias would have easily mistaken them for attractive office girls.

One of the women was taller, and she looked to be about five foot six in height; the other one was petite, and she didn’t look like she was taller than five foot two.

It was clear to see that they were both charming in different ways—where one had an impassive and sultry edge, and the other was endearing and unassuming. Suddenly, Matthias’ eyes trailed downward, and he cursed, Damn it, why are they barefooted?

