

Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter 696

The already fidgety Matthias became even more fretful when he saw the sight, as he didn't have this kind of fetish. Gazing at the ladies, whose skin had reddened from the coldness, he wondered who had come up with this idea. Nevertheless, he didn't have the heart to chase them away, as he wasn't so stone-hearted.

"Evan, I need an explanation from you." Matthias stared at him with a dark expression. He wanted to know why Evan took him here.

While enjoying the company of a beautiful lady, Evan replied to him, "It's all made-to-order.

Just like playing a game, you can choose whoever you prefer to play poker with you. Since you've said you want to get drunk, I've told them to prepare a box of wine for us. There are all sorts of flavors, so I'm sure you'll be happy with it." Evan flashed a grin at him.

After he finished speaking, someone was heard knocking on the door from outside. Evan

looked at the door and uttered, "Come in."

Following that, a burly man stepped into the room with a box of wine in his hands and

placed it in front of them. "Boss, these are the wines you've ordered."

"Evan, are you messing with me?" Matthias suppressed his fury, as he had the urge to kill him.

"President, you've really misunderstood me. Since you're here to unwind, don't you want to try something new?" Evan's life goal was to have fun whenever possible.

The woman with a cute voice wanted to chime in, but Evan stopped her from doing so with

his gaze. The other tall woman was much calmer, as she just stayed at the side like an outsider.

Matthias didn't want to flare up in this kind of place, so he just went along with Evan and tried to find out what the latter meant by something new. Seeing that Matthias was convinced, Evan then went on to introduce the two beautiful ladies to him.

"President, the woman in my embrace is Jasmine, and the other one is Ether." Evan had never tried to touch Ether because he wanted Matthias to take note of her.

It was a coincidence that Ether's name sounded somewhat similar to Heather's. Moreover, her height, body shape, and temperament resembled those of Heather as well, so Matthias might be interested in her.

In the past, Evan had tried to come up with all sorts of ways to make Matthias lose his virginity. However, since Heather's appearance, he had stopped having this kind of thought.

Nevertheless, he understood that all men had sexual needs. Seeing how Matthias suppressed his desire in front of Heather, he reckoned that Matthias needed a woman to alleviate his suffering.

"Let's begin." Matthias didn't want to waste any more time. He wasn't interested in finding out their names, as it was apparent that these were just their aliases. Evan directly took a seat across from Matthias and made Ether sit on the left of Matthias. If Matthias was interested in Ether, it would be quite obvious when they played poker later.

Meanwhile, Jasmine kept stealing glances at Matthias. She knew that Evan was a rich customer, but after she heard him calling Matthias 'President', she reckoned that Matthias must be a big shot. So, she directly took a seat on Matthias' right. When they played poker later, she would try to win Matthias over. She must seize the chance and make sure that

Matthias would take note of her.

All three of them had their own ulterior motives, while Matthias only focused on playing

poker. Even Ether, who was beside Matthias, wanted to hook up with him. She knew that

wealthy men were not interested in women who were too proactive, which was why she

pretended to be aloof. She was fed up with the work here and the destitute state she was in.

While working here, she had been trying to look for her Prince Charming.

She had done her

best to save her virginity so that she could get married to a wealthy man one day.

On the other hand, Matthias wasn't familiar with the rules of poker.

Although he had seen

other people play the game before, he had never personally tried it. Just like Heather, he was

a workaholic himself, so he wouldn't do anything that he deemed a waste of time.

Evan knew that Matthias wasn't familiar with the game. Since they were here to have fun,

the rules didn't really matter. To liven up the atmosphere, Evan said to them, "There are no

rules today. Just reveal your hand whenever possible. The loser will not only lose money but

also have to drink."

Matthias found Evan to be ridiculous. Nevertheless, it seemed that Evan was trying to make

it easy for him by eliminating the rules. After all, he was a rookie in poker.

However, Matthias wasn't aware that there was a special rule in this place. These people,

who played poker with their customers, could get the money from their customers if they

won, but if they lost, they didn't have to give the customers any money.

Therefore, some customers would come up with terrible ideas to mess with them. Drinking

wine was considered a milder punishment. When faced with horrible customers, they'd rather fork out money from their own wallets than be punished by those people.

Perhaps the Goddess of Luck was in favor of poker rookies, so Matthias was extremely lucky on this day. These bottles of wine were meant for Matthias, but he had never even had a taste of it, while the others had already finished three bottles.

"President, you're really lucky today. Why don't we change our seats?"

Evan almost wanted to throw up, as he was a light drinker.

Seeing that Evan indeed couldn't take it anymore, Matthias looked at him with a faint smile.

"You're the one who bought the wine, so you're supposed to drink more of it." He didn't have the intention of letting Evan off. As he was in a terrible mood, he was more than happy to see someone else suffer.

Evan thought that his sacrifice was immense this time. He reckoned that he would suffer

from alcohol poisoning soon and be sent to the hospital. All sorts of thoughts flashed

across his mind, and he had even come up with a will in his head.

Nevertheless, he still kept

losing the game. It seemed his skills were useless when luck was on the other person's

side. Now, he just wanted to eat his words. If he knew that Matthias was so lucky, he

wouldn't have boasted shamelessly and made it easy for him, as Matthias was the biggest winner now.

After Matthias managed to win many rounds, he no longer felt crestfallen. It seemed that

Evan was right to say that playing poker could help him set his mind at ease. It was a better way to unwind than drinking.

Meanwhile, the two ladies were basically ignored by Matthias. He was so focused on the cards in his hands that he didn't even spare them a glance.

"President, let's take a break now." Evan needed a rest. Matthias was too engrossed in the game. Earlier, he had said that he didn't want to play a game that required brainpower.

After that, Evan left with Jasmine, leaving Ether and Matthias in the room. Ether realized that it was a good chance for her as she kept stealing glances at Matthias. She was trying to come up with ways to chat him up since she realized that he wouldn't take the initiative to talk to her.

Bored, Matthias fished out his phone and took a look at the latest developments of the stock market in Bradford City. He seemed to have forgotten that there was a woman beside her.

Silently, Ether tried to get closer to him. With the short distance between them, she could even take a whiff of the pleasant fragrance that was wafting from his body. She wanted to get even closer to him, as the chance was right before her eyes. Matthias seemed to have seen through her intention, so he shot her a glance. Seeing that, she immediately stopped approaching him and hung her head low with a reddened face.

Seeing how bashful she was, Matthias felt slightly embarrassed. Nevertheless, since she wasn't Heather, he couldn't be expected to be gentle to her. After that, both of them fell silent. Countless pick-up lines had flashed across Ether's mind, but she just couldn't muster enough courage to speak to him.

Just then, the door was pushed open from outside. Matthias heaved a sigh of relief as Evan's return had saved him from the embarrassment.

Seeing how Matthias behaved, Evan knew that while he wasn't around, the two of them wouldn't have made any meaningful progress. He wanted to make Matthias happy, but he was too naive. Besides Heather, no one else could make Matthias happy. After the reshuffle, luck was no longer on Matthias' side. Evan and Jasmine worked closely together to make Matthias keep losing, while Ether was still calm and collected on the side. She suddenly understood the difference between Matthias and her. It was then she realized that he wasn't the Prince Charming she had been waiting for. Without any hesitation, Matthias gulped down the bottles of wine one by one. He was born to be a heavy drinker, as he would never get drunk no matter how much he drank. Even if all the wines were mixed together, he still wouldn't get wasted. However, he didn't want to stay clear-headed. His vision started becoming blurred, but he still thought that he wouldn't get inebriated so easily. Perhaps one would get intoxicated easily when he was in a bad mood. Matthias chugged down the last bottle of vodka. After that, he realized that his stomach was churning. He did drink a lot in the past, but he had never drunk as much as this time. The dizziness he felt made him realize that this was how getting drunk felt. "There's no more." Already intoxicated, Matthias looked at the empty bottles that were scattered everywhere. "It's fine. I'll get the boss to send us one more box of wine." Evan knew that Matthias was a heavy drinker, so the wine they had just finished was too little for him. "Alright." Matthias put on a satisfied smile. Matthias wasn't a stunningly handsome man at first glance, but it would take some time for anyone to appreciate that he was actually quite good-looking. Seeing the smile on his face, Ether was enchanted.

A man must be quite crestfallen to have chugged down so much wine in one go. Ether speculated that it had something to do with a woman. The reason he was oblivious to a woman's seduction must be that there was already someone in his heart.

Ether analyzed the situation in a rational manner, but she still felt unresigned. The chance was right before her eyes, but she just couldn't grasp it. Seeing through Ether's intention, Evan put on a smile and thought whether he should give her a hand. However, given Matthias' temperament, he would probably kill Evan after he sobered up.

Evan thought that Matthias had tried too hard to suppress his nature. The suppression, both spiritual and physical, made him incapable of relieving his suffering. "Heather," Matthias suddenly called out, which caused Ether to feel her chest tightening.

Evan knew that Matthias was missing Heather. He regarded himself to be a casanova, but he still couldn't enchant a woman like Heather. Perhaps Matthias and Heather are not destined to be together.

He didn't know how to console Matthias. He even thought that he didn't deserve to be his friend, as he couldn't help him relieve his suffering.

"Heather," Matthias called out again in a clear manner. "Am I such a failure?" He stared fixedly at Ether. At this moment, he couldn't make out who the woman in front of him really was.

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In order to prevent Matthias from doing anything embarrassing, Evan quickly lugged him away. Meanwhile, Ether appeared reluctant to see him go. Seeing that, Evan was displeased,

as he didn't expect that Matthias could win her heart so easily. He had heard that Ether was

an icy beauty, and she had hardly taken a liking to any man. Therefore, it had never crossed

his mind that she'd fall for Matthias.

Unfortunately, she was Ether, and not Heather, after all. Matthias loved Heather and no one

else. Evan shot a pitiful glance at Ether, who had just lost her love crush.

At that instant, he

recalled the woman he had fallen in love with at first glance in the past.

The person who fell

in love first in any relationship was destined to get hurt. Love was the unfairest thing in this

world, as it wasn't an exchange of equal values. Perhaps one might think that they had given

all they had, but to the other party, it was nothing more than trouble.

Evan supported Matthias' weight with difficulty. Although Matthias looked thin, he was quite

heavy when he was drunk. Evan recalled reading from a book that a drunk person's weight

was two times heavier than when they were sober. Now, he could totally relate to what he

had read. He was a frail man himself, so it took him a lot of effort to bring Matthias back to

his home. If it weren't because Matthias was still somewhat conscious, both of them would

have slept over in Caliph Nightclub.

Looking around this familiar place, Matthias shook his head. "Is this my home?" He

appeared doubtful, as everything around him was both familiar and strange to him.

"Mr. President, this is your room." Evan directly threw him onto the bed as he was

exhausted.

At that instant, Matthias felt the world around him spinning. Martial artists could never get

drunk. He always remembered that because no one knew what would happen if a martial

artist got intoxicated, so he had never allowed himself to get drunk. However, he had accidentally become inebriated on this day. Moreover, the sunlight outside was dazzling, so he wasn't sure whether it was daytime or nighttime now. Upon getting out of the bed in a wobbly manner, he stared fixedly at Evan and put on a faint smile. He looked vastly different from his usual self. "Evan, I'm not drunk." Matthias insisted that he was sober. He was walking in a staggering manner now, so it was apparent that he was far from sober.

"President, it's late now. You should get some sleep." As Evan spoke, he pressed a button on a remote control, after which the room turned dim, as though they had fallen into complete darkness.

"I don't want to sleep. I need wine." Matthias was already befuddled. However, he still wanted more wine to continue drinking. It was the first time Evan dealt with Matthias when the latter was drunk as he looked at him with a headache. Nevertheless, he had no better way to handle him. Inside the dark room, Matthias searched around with his hands. Then, he fell into Evan's embrace and caressed his face.

"Heather, don't leave me, and don't get married to another man." Matthias finally uttered the truth after he got intoxicated, while Evan listened to him in shock. He found it hard to believe that things had come to such an irreversible point. Although Heather was willful, she couldn't possibly have agreed to marry someone else on a whim. Initially, he thought that it wouldn't take long before they would make up again. However, it seemed that he was mistaken, as they were indeed going separate ways. "Heather, what else do you want me to do? Why do you doubt my love for you?" Matthias

asked sorrowfully. He had the urge to pry open her head and see what was on her mind.

"I have never doubted your love. Sleep now, will you?" Evan was coaxing him like a mother

trying to put her son to sleep.

"I don't want to sleep. I only want you." Matthias was behaving like a kid who couldn't get his

candy. He couldn't stop himself from missing Heather.

"Alright, alright. I'm yours." Evan squeezed out the words. It was quite nauseating to say

such things, but he had to put up with it for Matthias' sake.

"You're lying. You don't need me anymore. You doubt my love for you. You don't love me

anymore. You've fallen in love with someone else," Matthias uttered in an interrogative

manner. He wanted Heather to come back to him, but it was practically impossible.

"No. You're the one I love." Evan quickly got into character and persuaded himself that he

was Heather. Otherwise, he couldn't have said those things.

Nevertheless, Matthias pushed him away. "No, you're not Heather. You're lying to me."

It was said that force was mutual. Due to the fact that Matthias had exerted too much force

earlier, he had also fallen to the ground. Evan got to his feet and looked down at him in the

darkness as he was torn between tears and laughter. Now, it seemed that Matthias needed

consolation from a woman.

Evan was considering whether he should call Ether to come over, as he really couldn't deal

with Matthias anymore. Furthermore, Matthias had said that Heather was going to get

married to someone else, so he should probably change his target.

After getting out of the room, Evan was still apprehensive, for he reckoned what he was

about to do would make Matthias enraged when the latter sobered up.

Matthias wasn't just

his best friend, but also his boss, so he wasn't sure whether he should make this kind of decision on Matthias' behalf.

After giving it a thought, he decided to take the risk. Even if Matthias wanted to fire him afterward, he would accept his fate. He didn't want Matthias to be troubled by his love affairs again, as he just wanted him to be happy.

Following that, he dialed the number of Caliph Nightclub. "I'm looking for your boss. Tell him to speak to me," he demanded.

Fortunately, the other party didn't dawdle and called out to his boss.

Over the phone, Evan said to the boss, "I want Ether to come over to my place."

The boss recognized his voice and knew that the latter was an important customer, but it

wasn't right to let their workers accompany their customers outside the nightclub. In a

dilemma, the boss replied, "I'm sure you know our rules. This is basically against it."

Evan uttered lightly, "Just tell me the price." A matter couldn't be considered a problem if it could be solved with money.

The boss fell into a tight spot. It was true that businessmen were after profit, but once the

rules were broken, it would be difficult for them to run their business.

"Why don't you tell Ether to speak to me? I'll invite her to the villa as a friend, and it's up to

her whether she'll agree to it." Evan believed that Ether would agree to it as he recalled her

gaze before they left.

"Alright, then." The boss then told Ether to come over.

Over the phone, Evan uttered to her, "Ether, my president needs someone to keep him

company now. Are you willing to come over?" He directly told her his intention, as he

believed that she knew what to do.

“Okay.” Ether only replied to him with one word, and the problem was solved.

Evan put on a satisfied smile and decided to let Ether deal with Matthias.

As a man, it was

inappropriate for him to do such a thing. Moreover, Heather was all Matthias thought about

now. Given Ether’s similar body shape and temperament to those of Heather, she could

probably pass as the latter. Now, Evan hoped that Matthias would embrace Ether and vent

out all his longing.

He could never do such a thing, as it was quite weird for him to make out with another man.

In order to save his reputation, he thought it’d be better to tell Ether to come over. Moreover,

she didn’t look like a loose woman, so she probably wouldn’t seize the chance to take away

Matthias’ virginity.

With this thought in mind, Evan put on a wicked smile, as he had been waiting for the day

when Matthias lost his virginity. Matthias was almost thirty, but he was still a virgin. Anyone

would have thought that he might be practicing some kind of martial arts that required him

to stay as a virgin.

Soon, Ether arrived at the villa, and Evan personally welcomed her in.

Without any small talk,

they got straight to the main point.

“I’m sorry for making you come over.” Evan thought that he should explain to her what

happened.

“How is he now?” Ether was worried about Matthias. It was the first time she saw someone

being able to chug down so much wine in one go. He had even mixed different kinds of wine

together, so she was worried that he might be suffering from alcohol poisoning. Now, she

couldn’t wait to see him.

“Don’t worry. My president is a heavy drinker, and he had never gotten drunk before prior to this. The reason he’s even intoxicated today is that he’s in a bad mood. I’ll briefly tell you what happened. The woman my president loves is going to marry someone else, and that woman’s body shape and temperament are similar to yours. So, I hope that you’ll give him some consolation,” Evan said in a solemn manner, thinking that there was nothing wrong with what he had just uttered. Unexpectedly, Ether started blushing upon hearing that. She hung her head low and questioned in a small voice, “What do you think I am?” She thought that Evan had regarded her as a slut and wanted her to bed Matthias. “Hey, please don’t get me wrong! I just want you to console him with words. It’s not what you think!” Evan quickly waved his hands. “My president is an upright man, so he’ll never do anything inappropriate to you.” Now, he was more worried that Ether might do something to his friend. Ether nodded, as she had seen how restrained Matthias was. It was the first time she saw such an upright man. For some reason, she felt her heart throbbing at the sight of his serious-looking face. Perhaps it was because Matthias was different from other men, so she was hoping to meet him again. However, she didn’t expect that the chance would come so soon. Then, Evan brought her to Matthias’ room and said to her in a hushed voice, “I’ve added some special effects in the room, so it’s pitch dark now. Can you see in the dark?” After Evan teased her, she felt less anxious now. “There’s no problem,” she replied in a serious manner.

“Good luck, then,” Evan said with a grin and opened the door. It was indeed very dark inside the room. He then pushed her into the room and lightly closed the door. Seeing how dark it was around her, she was less nervous instead. At the same time, she could hear Matthias breathe.

“Heather,” he called out.

This time, Ether could hear clearly that the woman he loved was called Heather. Her name was indeed similar to hers. Then, she recalled what Evan had said and realized that she was just a replacement. Despite that, she didn’t think it was a humiliation for her. That was because she could see Matthias again, so she was pretty joyful. Perhaps she had fallen in love with him at first sight without her realizing it. She only found out about Matthias’ name just now. Although she had no idea how Heather would call him, at this moment, she just wanted to call him Matthias. Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter 698

Ether contained her anxiety and muttered, “Matthias.”

Matthias heard a woman calling for him in a confused state. He couldn’t tell who it was, yet

he hoped it was Heather. For some reason, he still had some sense of rationality despite

being intoxicated. In fact, he had a feeling that the person calling his name wasn’t the

woman he loved. After all, Matthias still remembered that Heather was currently at the

hospital. He desperately wanted to visit her, but he had no courage to do so.

After fumbling around for a bit, Ether eventually got to Matthias. In the dark room, she felt

the need to take the initiative this time to do what she once desired to.

When Matthias previously walked away from her, she thought that was the end for the both

of them. From then on, she regretted being a coward and for not taking the opportunity when they were both alone.

“It’s me, Ether.” Nonetheless, she couldn’t bring herself to lie since she was Ether and not Heather. At that moment, she was truly envious of that woman—she had Matthias’ unconditional love, after all.

“Heather? Is that you?” he asked, not having an ‘Ether’ in his mind. He only knew and loved Heather.

“Yes. I’ve come to see you,” she answered calmly. Since Evan had not provided her with much information on Heather, she didn’t know how to pose as the other woman.

“It’s too dark in here. I can’t see you.” Despite trying his best to look for Heather, Matthias couldn’t see anything even though he was eager to catch sight of the woman’s face.

“I can see you.” Now that she finally stood face-to-face with him, Ether simply peered at him as she longed for his attention.

Matthias opened his eyes wide, but it didn’t help much in terms of sight. It was pitch-black in front of him, and he couldn’t even feel the warmth of the person there. Meanwhile, Ether timidly extended her hand to touch him. However, she couldn’t help but wonder if she was being too greedy by hoping to initiate some skinship with him.

Suddenly, a pair of warm hands placed themselves on Matthias’ arms. He felt that something wasn’t right, for Heather’s palms were just like her personality—freezing cold.

“It’s me, Heather.” Ether had no other choice but to deceive him, so she became the woman Matthias loved.

“Heather.” As if he had really seen her, he instantly went for a hug, pulling her firmly into his

embrace. After resting his chin on her forehead, he smugly muttered, "This must be a dream, right? It's so unreal to have you in my arms." At that moment, Ether was indulging in the cosiness of Matthias' arms, and she had no intention of pulling away. She never expected Matthias' passion for Heather to be so miserable and excruciating to this state. Nonetheless, she feared that she'd drown in his snuggle, so she unconsciously pushed him away and removed herself from his beguiling

embrace. She continued to pose as Heather and painfully apologized, "I'm sorry for hurting you this bad." "Don't apologize to me—I'm willing to go through hell for your sake. How could you ever doubt my feelings for you, though? I love you so much, but what did I do to deserve your suspicion? You're even getting married to Leon." Matthias spoke like a kid who had been wrongly punished. Since he needed another comforting hug, he shoved Ether against his chest once more. When she heard that, she couldn't help feeling unjust for Matthias. "I'm sorry, Matthias. I never realized the pain I've caused you." He really loves this Heather, so why would she mistreat him this way? From Ether's perspective, Matthias was merely troubled by his one-sided romance. However, she had no idea about the complex experiences Heather and Matthias shared. Since she was clueless about what really happened between them, she was depressed after seeing the man's state. "I'm not scared of being hurt. I'm only scared that you'll leave me," he answered while

hugging her so tightly. In fact, it was almost as though he wanted to engulf the woman into his body.

How he wished to be able to merge with Heather! If that was the case, she would never leave him. In truth, there were even times when he was desperate enough to feel jealous of the body parts that comprised Heather's figure. He was so desirous that he was willing to become a mole on her body—he could be her eyes, her ears, or even her nose. Above all, he longed to be something she would die without. Although he was extremely resistant to split up with her, he could no longer pursue her.

Despite reaching the point of no return with Heather, Matthias refused to put down his pride and beg for forgiveness. He never anticipated falling so deep in love that he had become so pathetic to crawl out of it. Even with every single cell of his brain, he couldn't figure out what it was about himself that she loathed so much.

With Heather not revealing anything to him, he got frustrated trying to work out what was wrong with himself. Thinking that everything could be solved by talking, he couldn't make out why she had to make things this difficult for him. "Heather, if we were to start over, we wouldn't be in such a mess, would we?" As he looked at Ether, he voiced a question he wished to know the answer to. In his mind, he was continuously contemplating if it was indeed his failing start with her that led to such turmoil. Meanwhile, he never once considered his family a factor to the ruin. "We're not in a mess, Matthias. I love you, and you love me. We'll stay together for eternity," Ether tenderly comforted the devastated Matthias.

“Together for eternity...” Matthias mumbled in dismay as he couldn’t believe that such words were coming from Heather herself. I must be dreaming... This is all a dream!

“Yes, I will love you forever until death do us part.” Since she had no experience in dating, Ether could only spit some cliché lines.

“I’ll love you forever too.” Matthias wanted to love her and spoil her for the rest of their lives.

Up until now, everything he had done was for the sake of Heather’s future. Knowing there were barriers between the two of them, he would work even harder to secure a future with her.

After calming Matthias down, Ether helped him to bed while he grabbed her hand, not

wanting to let her go. She wordlessly sat beside him at an arm’s length to keep her distance,

but Matthias soon dragged her into his arms.

As such, that was her first time sleeping with a man. Since she was overpowered by

Matthias, she found it hard to breathe. Meanwhile, the man wrapped his arms around Ether

with overwhelming strength, showing the intensity of his affection for her through the vigor

he put in his arms.

Right then, Ether was in ecstasy and agony at the same time—she felt happy since she got

to snuggle with the man she liked, but she was in agony because she had been mistaken for

another woman by the very same man.

While she was in his embrace, she wished that time could stop so that she’d be able to stay

this way forever and feel the warmth of his body. Thanks to her excellent night vision, she

could somewhat make out Matthias’ silhouette. Then, she forcefully pulled out her hand and

brushed her finger across his face.

“You’re very good-looking, Matthias.” Ether was amazed by her crush, and she found him more appealing the more she ogled at him. How in the world could anyone look this good? Before she realized it, she had already fallen asleep. When Matthias eventually woke up, she was still sleeping as well. He woke up to a room filled with darkness and a hangover, having no idea whether it was day or night. As he felt some weight on his chest, Matthias heard a feminine groan when he tried to get up. It seemed like he’d heard this voice before, so he hastily sat straight up and searched for the remote control. Since he couldn’t remember where he had placed it, he nervously switched the bedside lamp on and discovered a sleeping Ether, who also jolted wide awake after being seen. As he scanned his own outfit, Matthias couldn’t recall changing into his pajamas—there wasn’t even a minor trace of memory. Meanwhile, Ether donned a red dress and appeared rather alluring under the shade of the lamp. He patted his head and clutched his collars, not being able to remember a single thing. Matthias remained speechless for a while, and he finally figured who had called Ether over after putting some thought into it. “I’m sorry, I...” Matthias didn’t know whether he had done anything inappropriate. “You didn’t do anything,” Ether muttered with a blush. Other than being hugged to sleep, nothing happened between the two. In fact, she was rather eager to surrender herself to him, but there was no telling if he would want that to happen. “Evan had you over, right?” he asked, almost certain that it was the brat’s doing.

As she lowered her head, Ether made a guilty face. Meanwhile, the man beside her hadn't a single clue how horrifying his face was. With such an intimidating expression, no one would dare to look into his eyes. Likewise, Ether was currently shocked to her core.

"I'm sorry," she apologized like a child who had made a mistake.

"It's not your fault; it's just one of Evan's pranks." Matthias didn't know how to explain it to

her, and he felt that he couldn't justify his actions either.

When she raised her head and exhibited an expression that was about to burst into tears,

Matthias felt even more awkward. With that, he was troubled by the complicated nature of

women, for he wondered why she was crying even though he had done nothing to her.

Although he wanted to fly into a rage, he had no way of venting his anger—certainly not

toward Ether when he knew that Evan was the one pulling the strings.

No matter how he

thought about it, he had hugged the woman to sleep and taken advantage of her.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come." Since she had never expected him to be this furious, she

lowered her head in embarrassment.

Meanwhile, Matthias stared at her in frustration since he was bad at consoling women.

Other than putting himself down to comfort Heather, he couldn't do the same with anyone

else.

"I'm really sorry..." As she apologized non-stop, Ether got up in a panic.

When he saw how

pitiable she was, he felt slightly sorry.

Under the lamp light where he could barely see her, she definitely possessed some minor

resemblance to Heather. When he noticed that, he figured that was probably the reason why

Evan sent her over.

Hence, that was more of a reason for him not to get mad at Ether.

Instead, Evan should be

the one to be blamed for making such a decision. Matthias was not one to bring problems upon himself, let alone woman issues. Since Evan had the audacity to send a woman to bed with him, there was no way he would let this pass easily.

“I’ll take my leave now,” said Ether. She was utterly distressed with her head lowered and tears in her eyes.

Unlike the gentle Matthias she had slept with, the man in front of her right now was completely different. Feeling extremely shameful by this, she decided not to linger around and immediately left.

After pulling the door open, Ether quickly rushed out. Meanwhile, Evan, who was supervising his subordinates’ clean-up in the living room, remained a casual face. In fact, it seemed like he wasn’t worried about what was coming his way.

Without even putting on her shoes, Ether covered her face as she left the room. When she got to the living room, Evan looked at her in confusion. He approached the woman and was about to ask her what happened when she sped up her pace and completely ignored the butler.

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Matthias attempted to chase after Ether moments later, but she was already far gone. With his pajamas on and a messy hair, he looked rather chaotic. After giving Evan a threatening glance, he then ordered, “Bring her back. She hasn’t even put her shoes on.” After all, Matthias felt that he was also at fault and could not just let Ether go without apologizing.

However, Evan thought it was better not to chase after her. From his understanding of Matthias, the man didn't like to owe anyone. Although he didn't like being intimate with women, there was still a sense of chivalry in him. With Ether's departure this time, it would make Matthias even more guilty. In other words, it would secure a follow-up meeting for the two of them. Evan was obviously reluctant to go after her, so he said to Matthias, "She's far gone, sir. There's no way we can catch up to her." Since he didn't want to go out the house with his pajamas on, he could only gaze at Evan and perturbedly uttered, "I really hate it when you make such decisions on your own. Clean up the mess you've made." Although his words were rather amiable, his tone was nowhere near friendly as it carried a strong, threatening vibe to it. "What else could I have done, sir? If only you're able to see how scary you look whenever you're drunk... You kept crying for Heather, but how could I have brought her to you? As such, I had no choice but to bring Ether to you instead," he answered boldly. Since things had already gone south, he was prepared to accept whatever atrocities that cast upon him. "Shut up." Matthias grew more infuriated as Evan was pushing his limits. Since he knew that he had triumphed over his boss, Evan looked at Matthias smilingly without sensing the hint of danger from the latter. "There's plenty of fish in the sea, so why dwell on just one, sir?" said Evan as he tried to advise the other man. If what Matthias said was true about Heather marrying someone else, there was no point in waiting for her. "Shut up. You're fired," said Matthias. It was rare of him to spit such cruel words. However, Evan merely grinned upon hearing that. He hadn't expected things to transpire this

way, for Matthias even suggested firing him. Right then, his grin turned into a sarcastic smirk. Unlike the Matthias he once knew, the person before his eyes had certainly lost his ambitions and assertiveness ever since knowing Heather.

“Look at what the woman has turned you into, Matthias. Do you realize how embarrassing you’ve become?” Previously, Evan expected Heather to bring joy and happiness into Matthias’ life, but that wasn’t the case at all. On the contrary, all he received from her was pain and demise.

Because of her, Matthias became more and more unhinged—he was even willing to ruin his future. Naturally, Evan couldn’t bear to see him gradually turn into another person for Heather’s sake.

Matthias had once proposed to Evan about expanding his business worldwide, and the latter had high expectations and hopes for him. However, Heather had become the only thing on his mind right now, and all the plans about going global had been thrown out of the window.

“It’s none of your business,” Matthias answered as he shot Evan a malicious gaze. Since they were always synergistic, no one could remember the last time they had a fight.

Now that they were arguing because of Heather, Evan felt deeply disappointed.

Indeed, love is lethal.

Anyone who fell under love’s spell would be so blinded that they could only think of the person they adored, effectively ignoring their friendships and blood ties. With that, Evan turned back to leave. If his departure failed to wake Matthias up, perhaps there was really no more hope for him!

At this very moment, Evan felt especially remorseful for becoming Matthias' wingman in his pursuit of Heather, and he blamed himself for allowing his boss to say those affectionate words to her. The very things he couldn't do himself were exactly what he pushed Matthias to do. Why did he have to turn him into a love saint? Now that he thought about it, everything was ridiculous. After all, there were so many obligations Matthias had apart from his love life. Since he possessed the potential of

becoming an influential businessman, Matthias shouldn't be wasting so much time and effort on Heather. Besides, it didn't feel like Heather was right for him; given how she was tormenting him, even Evan wanted to cry out for him. As he watched Evan's decisive turn, Matthias suspected that he had been planning to leave him earlier. Since he knew that Evan had his own expectations for him, he was fully aware that a big part of his success was due to Evan's assistance. However, his impulsiveness from earlier had caused him to say such absurd words to the latter. Although he was somewhat regretful about it, Matthias would not beg for him to stay. Nonetheless, Evan's departure wasn't entirely bad because he would have to leave either way—Matthias would soon become an ordinary man, after all. Naturally, an ordinary man did not require a butler. As he turned his head around, Matthias couldn't tell whether Evan had turned back to look at him. Regardless, the latter's departure had been pushed forward, and that contributed to the progress of his plans.

Sadly, Heather was a key factor to his ultimate goal, but she was no longer with him. Now that she had chosen somebody else, he didn't know what else he could utilize to strive for Heather's return. If he didn't fight for her, would she really get married to Leon? Since he was afraid that his fear would turn into reality, he didn't dare to ponder about it any further. He initially had no clue whether he was on the right path, but now, it seemed like he was going the wrong way based on how everything was crumbling down. If I can't even keep the woman I love, what's the point of having more plans? Matthias couldn't stop thinking about the woman. Perhaps he should have lowered his head and put down that despicable pride of his. He thought about all the possibilities in his head, yet he did not take any action to bring her back. With Evan's departure, the mansion suddenly felt like an empty hall. He stared at his servants as they continued on with their tasks, looking as though nothing ever happened.

Before this mess, he always believed that the earth would stop rotating without him, but he eventually realized it stopped for no one as time went by. Around him were the faces of the servants, each of them unfamiliar to him. As he observed them, it felt like it was his first time meeting them. Matthias walked back to his room and locked himself in. Warmth and passion belonged to others, whereas he only experienced coldness. Moreover, he felt that it wouldn't be a terrible idea if he could just stay in his room all day. After all, he had always wanted to try being a couch potato for once.

However, he never got the chance to experience that due to the never-ending pile of work he had. Despite being a busy man of the upper class, the only person he had was himself. He became truly alone once Evan left him, and he felt really uneasy because of that. All these years, he had viewed Evan as a crucial part to his life. Nevertheless, the two were bound to split up. Even the end of a relationship between a couple was inevitable, so who could say it wasn't the same for friendships? At that moment, Matthias coldly grinned upon realizing that he'd lost both his relationship and friendship. Despite that, he knew he had to collect his jumble of thoughts and head to the Locke Group to be the director he was. Given the hectic activities awaiting him at the Locke Group, Matthias didn't have time to dwell on his sob stories since he was the director of the company. On the contrary, there were even times when he had to function like a robot. As sprinkles of water fell upon his body, he was eased by the warmth of the water. After allowing his body some comfort, Matthias suspected that his emotions would eventually fade away. He was aware that a businessman's purpose was to be a money-making machine, and Matthias smirked as he forgot what his true purpose was. Even if he were to turn the Locke Group into an international success, what then? What he truly desired was to be a human made of blood and flesh, not a mindless machine. Needless to say, he found himself in a dilemma.

Meanwhile, he had given himself a very short haircut—it was so short that he could simultaneously wash his face and hair. With a buzzcut as such, he didn't even have to use a

hairdryer.

Matthias then changed into his elegant black suit and headed to the company. After all, the more he procrastinated, the more unfinished work he would have to deal with later on.

By 10.00AM, he showed up at the Locke Group. Nikolai saw his fresh look and was about to approach him for a talk, but his fear of Matthias' glare stopped him from doing so.

On the other hand, Lara boldly approached Matthias and greeted, "Good morning, President Locke!" In fact, she welcomed him warmly as though nothing had happened.

She didn't even care where he had been yesterday and gave Matthias a sweet smile, to which the latter forced out a slight grin in return.

"Come with me, Lara." After observing her subtle gestures, Matthias had something he wanted to clarify with her.

When she looked at his stern face, Lara couldn't tell what he had to say to her. However, she put immense effort in her job every day and was probably the next person after Matthias who was most familiar with the Locke Group.

Matthias entered his office and saw the pile of documents on his desk, but he was already far used to it. Nonetheless, he felt rather suffocated by his job after being welcomed by his endless amount of tasks.

"Close the door," he said as he reminded Lara, seeming as though he had a serious issue to talk about.

She promptly closed the door and stared at Matthias anxiously.

"I've arranged your documents in order, President Locke. You just have to start from the left," she said. Although she was an exceptional secretary, Matthias had enough of her petty actions in the dark.

“How long have you been working for me, Lara?” Upon hearing Matthias’ sudden question, she was slightly taken aback.

“About three to five years? I don’t really remember,” she casually replied. Despite claiming that, she actually remembered how long she had been in the company—she just didn’t want to reveal it.

Naturally, she wouldn’t let anyone in on her dirty little secret of crushing on him, let alone the man himself.

“In that case, you should know what I detest the most, which is being deceived.” As his face grew more and more strict, Lara became nervous.

Upon hearing that, she felt a little guilty. Moreover, she realized that she should have

expected him to be sharp enough to notice her suspicious movements.

“I’m sorry.” Lara had no intention of denying her actions. Since he already knew about it, there was no point hiding it anymore!

“I’m not here for your apology nor your explanation. Instead, I’m here to fire you. Any

objections?” Since he wanted to leave her some bits of pride, he held back his words.

“No, President Locke. I’m very grateful.” When she raised her head, her face was wet with tears. It was great, for no one would be burdened any longer.

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With that, Matthias watched as Lara turned around and left. Deep down, he knew Lara bore

no ill intent and was well aware that she was being taken advantage of. However, he didn’t

know why she would act this way and fall in love with him so painstakingly.

There were many secrets he noticed yet didn’t know well about, but he chose not to look

into it because the truth behind such things were often too trivial for him to put his mind into.

When Nikolai saw Lara walking out of Matthias' office with her face full of tears, he was instantly reminded of the time she had just started working for their boss.

When he saw how her tears fell so profusely, he hurried over to comfort her, certain that Matthias must have rebuked her.

"Did the president scold you, Lara?" Nikolai was clueless about what happened inside earlier, and he just wanted to cheer her up.

"No, he didn't." Despite her attempt to hold back her tears, they wouldn't stop dripping down.

Perhaps she wasn't as strong as she imagined herself to be.

"Why are you sobbing so much then, you crybaby?" asked Nikolai in a calm voice, attempting to distract Lara from her sadness.

"That's because I'm leaving. From now on, you'll be the only secretary and assistant. You're now responsible for everything, happy?" Lara responded with a chuckle as she beamed and wept at the same time—it was hideous.

"What? Don't say that!" Nikolai was dismayed. Naturally, he didn't believe that she was actually leaving.

"I'm serious. Anyway, I'll be going. Be well, Nikolai," she said. As she patted his shoulder like a senile woman, she realized that she felt rather attached to him.

While she stared at his face, she noticed that his appearance sort of resembled Matthias'. In fact, they even had similar qualities.

Perhaps Nikolai isn't that bad... Lara thought to herself as she looked at him with tears streaming down her face.

Meanwhile, Nikolai panicked instantly since he didn't know how to console her. Moreover, he

couldn't tell if Lara had resigned on her own initiative or if Matthias had fired her.

When she saw how nervous he was, Lara felt slightly comforted by it.

She proceeded to ask,

"Can you give me a hug? This might be our last time seeing each other."

It was only before her departure did she understand that what she felt toward Matthias was

merely infatuation, and she had been slowly noticing Nikolai's subtleties.

Not only that, she even felt a tinge of adoration for the latter. Thanks to Matthias' words, she

was finally relieved from her secret crush of many years.

Perhaps she had truly failed in winning him over. After adoring him for so long, all she

received was her crush's disdain. As such, the more she thought about it, the harder she

cried. Meanwhile, Nikolai grew flustered since he felt rather embarrassed when getting

close to a female, let alone going in for an embrace.

"Don't cry." He held her tight in his arms. Since he had also gotten used to her presence, the

man had also grown attached to her.

Since he assumed that they were going to work under Matthias' wings for a long time, he

could feel the emptiness in his heart when Lara announced her leave.

After embracing each other for quite some time, they were rather unwilling to let each other

go. Words like colleagues, friends, and lovers could no longer describe what they felt about

each other.

Following that, Lara looked at the items that were neatly arranged on her desk. The sight of

it was rather pleasant, but she had no intention of bringing any of those objects with her

because she wanted to leave as she came. She had come empty-handed, so there was no

point in taking these things along with her.

"I'm not taking any of these, Nikolai. If the president finds them irritating, please discard

them on my behalf. I came into the company empty-handed, and I intend to leave that way,” she said while wiping her tears. She then urged herself to be stronger, unlike the young girl who constantly wept when she first joined the Locke Group. How embarrassing of her! Back then, she would always cry after being reprimanded by Matthias. As she reminisced about her time in the company, she felt like her career was a dream. However, it felt rather pitiful that she had been awakened from it. “There must be some kind of misunderstanding. I’ll try talking to him.” No matter how stupid Nikolai was, he could tell it was Matthias who fired Lara. “There isn’t, and nothing is meant to stay forever. I’ll be leaving now. Good luck.” Although she still had much to say to him, she eventually stopped herself from saying those words. After having betrayed and deceived Matthias, she had lost her right to care about him. Although she had predicted this to happen, she never imagined that he’d show her tenderness at the final moment, allowing her to retain her last bit of honor. The harder it was to obtain someone’s heart, the deeper Lara would fall for that person. Knowing that, she couldn’t help thinking she was a masochist. Moreover, she even remembered that she used to complain to Nikolai about how problematic and ambiguous Matthias was, but little did she know, she fell for him for the very same reason. And so, she had admired him for a long time. There were many instances where she’d go back on her own words, and she would hate herself for it. Even Nikolai had figured out her feelings for Matthias, but the latter remained unwavering as ever. Needless to say, it was a disastrous romance.

As Nikolai watched Lara taking every step further, he knew that the woman was wiping her tears off with her sleeves. After all, she was but a young lady. All these years, he had been observing Lara's behavior in front of Matthias; he could tell that she had feelings for him. As such, he couldn't help but wonder if her feelings toward Matthias had been the reason he fired her. No way. Nikolai felt compelled to barge into Matthias' office so that he could demand an explanation from the latter—never in his life had he been so bold. Back when he had a little interest in Heather, he was always secretive and cowardly about it, but for some reason, he was able to muster up the courage to speak up for Lara. When Nikolai entered Matthias' office, the latter raised his head indifferently with not even the slightest bit of surprise in his face. In fact, he was aware of the relationship between both his assistants and always wondered when the opportunity for them to realize their importance toward each other would come. "Why did you fire Lara, President Locke?" Nikolai interrogated aggressively. "That's what she told you." As if he hadn't heard the former's question, Matthias simply lowered his head and went through the documents on his desk. "No, but there's no way she would suggest her resignation, so you must have done so," Nikolai replied furiously as he couldn't fathom Matthias' motive behind his decision. "Yes, I did fire her." Matthias spoke as if he was talking about a trivial matter. "Are you that heartless, Matthias? Why would you discharge your secretary who's been loyal to you all this while?" Nikolai found Mathias's decision absurd, wondering what it was that Lara had done that deserved such treatment from him.

Although Matthias wished to reveal the truth to Nikolai, he was worried that the latter would develop feelings of repugnance toward her once he knew the full story. Thus, Matthias decided to play the bad guy. "I no longer need her, and it's as simple as that. Besides, she's learned a lot since joining the company, so it's more of a win-win situation. What has heartlessness got to do with it?"

Matthias answered faintly, knowing that the more emotionless he sounded, the more furious Nikolai would become. "If that's really the case, then fire me as well!" Feeling vexed, Nikolai glared at his director as he had lost his patience for a parley. Since his own boss was being so ridiculous, he might as well double down on it! "That's very childish of you. Why are you venting your anger on me just because of a woman?" Matthias questioned Nikolai, noticing a tinge of admiration the latter had for Lara. Moreover, there was a chance that it was actually a two-way thing. Although he wasn't entirely certain about it, his intuition was that letting Lara go would be beneficial for everyone. "She's merely an insignificant woman in your life, isn't she?" As he grew even more irritated, Nikolai was baffled by Matthias' persisting apathy and couldn't help but wonder if he was truly a reptile. "What about it?" Matthias shot him a confused look. When he saw how frustrated the man was, Matthias was made certain that Nikolai sincerely liked Lara. After all, Nikolai had always been a timid man in front of him, and no one understood that more than Matthias.

“Do you know how much effort she’s put into her job? Do you know how much pain she has gone through by admiring you?” Feeling that Lara’s discharge was unjustifiable, Nikolai felt as though the feelings Lara had accumulated these years were all in vain. “I’m aware of her efforts, but that’s only the basic requirement of every employee. As for her feelings toward me, I have no clue about that and nor am I affected by it.” Matthias brutally spat every single word without any expression. “Are you really not human, Matthias? Do you not have emotions? Look at how loving Heather pained you! Out of everyone else, you should be the one who’s able to comprehend the agony of having a secret crush on somebody, right?” Nikolai was thoroughly disappointed, and he was surprised by the fact that his president was so much more indifferent than he had expected. At that moment, it was as if Matthias was a complete stranger to him.

“My love for Heather was no secret, so I can’t possibly understand what it’s like to admire someone in the dark.” As Matthias voiced the words that were against his own feelings, he started to grasp the feelings Lara had for him. If it weren’t for the repeated mistakes Lara had made, Matthias wouldn’t have been so cruel. Moreover, love wasn’t something to be forced. Who could blame him for her continuous errors? Since Matthias’ decision was final, he couldn’t even convince himself to give Lara another chance. The best thing he could do for the lady who had been covertly fancying him was to put her far away from him. “Fine, you’re right. Very well then, Matthias. If that’s the case, fire me as well then, okay?”

Nikolai had visibly gotten more enraged. Although he had originally intended to talk Matthias into bringing Lara back, it seemed like the boss was final with his judgment. Hence, he decided to accompany Lara in her unemployment. Suddenly, Nikolai had an outburst of tenacity to defy Matthias. "If you think that you can't continue without Lara, you're welcome to join her any time." Having said that, Matthias hoped that Nikolai could heed the hint in his words. "Fine. I'll leave right now." As he spoke, he took out his phone. With that, he quickly dialed Lara's number and said, "Slow down, Lara. Wait for me. I've been fired as well." When she heard that, Lara was stupefied. She had been dwelling on her agony at first, but now that it seemed like Nikolai had done something stupid, she suddenly had a change of heart. As she approached the parking lot, she was hesitating between going to find Nikolai or waiting for him there. "Are you mad, Nikolai?" she rebuked angrily, evidently against the idea of him joining her. "I'm not. In fact, my mind is clearer than ever. I just can't bear to continue working for a heartless man," Nikolai claimed as he leered at Matthias. It was as if he was exhausting his entire life's courage all at once.

"Don't be stupid, Nikolai! Calm down, all right? My dismissal has nothing to do with the president, you dumbass!" Lara was frustrated, for she didn't know how to explain everything to him.