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Chapter 152: I'll Put on A Good Performance Right Now

Samantha was puzzled. She followed along his line of sight and saw that he was staring at her name...

Was he unable to react because he did not expect her to pass the interview?

"Timothy?" She stretched out her hand and waved it in front of his eyes. "Have you forgotten how to read? Or is my name just so eye-catching that you can't help yourself from staring at it?"

A glimmer appeared in Timothy's eyes and he finally returned to his senses. He tapped the tip of her nose with his long fingers and said slowly, "You didn't disappoint. Good job, Mrs. Barker."

It was rare to hear praise from him, so Samantha's heart started to bubble with a little bit of sweetness and pride.

Timothy smiled, held her chin with his slender fingers, and lifted it slightly. He leaned his handsome face over and her face was reflected in his black eyes. His tone then became deeper as he asked, "Isn't it about time for you to show the appropriate amount of appreciation after passing the interview and securing a spot in the competition?"

'Show the appropriate amount of appreciation?'

Samantha rolled her eyes, but she felt that it was a reasonable request. Had Timothy not guided her in writing her resume, taught her some interview skills, and cheered her on to boost her confidence, she might have been eliminated at the resume stage alone.

She regarded her success as a joint one with him.

Samantha nodded and looked at Timothy. She first straightened her posture before saying sincerely, "Thank you for your guidance and encouragement, Mr. Barker. I shall reward you..."

She paused, blushed slightly, then quickly leaned over to cup his cheek and kiss his lips.

It was but a brief peck.

Timothy raised his hand and touched his lips. After cocking an eyebrow, he said unhappily, "Aren't you a little too stingy with a reward like that, Mrs. Barker?"

“Don’t you know that not everyone can receive guidance and assistance from me?”

Although Timothy spoke in a very arrogant manner, Samantha knew that he had every right to say those words. He had been smart ever since he was a small kid and no one else was ever able to surpass his academic achievements. In just a few years, he doubled the Barker Group’s assets several times over and all the major business magazines scrambled to get an interview with him. After all, listening to the advice of a wise man might sometimes prove to be superior than spending ten years studying books.

Samantha, on the other hand, had very little. Timothy had everything she had, and he also had things that she did not have. The only reward she could think about was that.

She was unable to figure out just what exactly Timothy lacked, so she asked unabashedly, “What reward do you want then, Timothy?”

She then hurriedly added, “It’d be better if the reward is something that’s within my ability...”

“Don’t worry, it’s definitely within your abilities. Besides, this is something only you can give me,” the man emphasized each word as his bottomless eyes stared at her.

“Oh?” Samantha was surprised.

What could she possibly have that Timothy did not? What could it possibly be if it was something that only she could give him?

“What is it?”

Samantha watched as Timothy’s handsome face approached her. The distance was so close that his breath was practically spilling all over her face. His voice became hoarse as he said, “Give me a baby, Sammy.”

‘A baby...’

Samantha did not expect that Timothy was still thinking about it.

Her long eyelashes trembled severely. Instinct drove her into shrinking back, but Timothy wrapped his long arms around her and prevented her from evading him.

His black eyes stared deeply at her and he probed her, “Are you still reluctant?”

In terms of reluctance, it was not as strong as the time they were on Barrkjaer Island.

For the most part, she felt that it was too sudden and was a little confused as a result.

Having a baby was serious business, after all. Should they not consider all possible factors and be more prudent with such things?

Samantha looked up and gazed right into Timothy's eyes as she whispered softly, "I'm not reluctant per se... It's just that—"

Timothy's eyes were already glowing luminously. Before she could even finish her sentence, the corners of his lips curled in a smile and he interrupted her directly, "So you're willing, then."

"I— Nghhff..."

Timothy lowered his head and sent a kiss to her lips, swallowing up the words that were about to escape her mouth.

His kiss was extraordinarily tender that day, perhaps due to his good mood. Samantha, who was unable to struggle and free herself from him, could feel her head becoming light due to his kiss.

Unsatisfied with just the kiss, Timothy bridal carried Samantha, lifting her from the sofa and carrying her to the big bed. He then laid her down on the soft mattress.

Samantha could feel his strong body pressing down on her while his big palm slipped into her clothes and started meandering all over. His cool fingertips returned a bit of soberness to her mind and she pushed against his chest. She was almost out of breath when she called out, "Timothy!"

"Mmm?" The man acted as if he did not hear it and his voice was brimming with magnetism. He preempted her words and said, "I've already healed from my injury."

She could no longer stop him using the same excuse she used in the hospital.

Samantha's cheeks were warm and she gritted her teeth and said, "But... B-but I said it depends...on your performance!"

The nerve of him to just demand it whenever he wanted!

"My performance?" Timothy nodded in agreement. He placed his thin lips near her ears and said slowly, "Keep your eyes peeled, Mrs. Barker. I'm going to perform to the best of my ability for you."

Samantha's eyes widened uncontrollably. She was both angry and annoyed! What an utterly shameless man! That was not the kind of performance she had in mind!

Timothy, however, did not give her any chance to protest. He said not another word and kissed her passionately.

Their clothes fell to the ground one after another and the temperature that night was only just starting to rise.

...

The next day, Samantha felt soreness in her whole body as soon as she opened her eyes. It was as if moving a finger was a strenuous enough task. She recalled Timothy's unrelenting demands and could not even remember how many times she had come. All she remembered was being railed in a myriad of positions, as well as being forced to say all that shameful dirty talk.

'That b*stard!'

She could not help but gnash her teeth and curse silently at that rascal!

After she had gotten used to the soreness, she propped her body up and took a hot bath in the bathroom, soothing her body considerably.

She went out after the bath and walked to the bedside table, where she unconsciously opened the drawer and took out her bottle of morning-after pills.

Timothy did not use protection the day before and she had not decided whether or not to have a child. Therefore, she had to take her own precautions.

That was her responsibility to the child, to herself, and to Timothy.

Although Timothy wanted a child, she did not seem to be ready just yet and was still afraid of the unknown.

She frowned, and her eyes seemed to believe her convoluted emotions.

Timothy had just finished exercising and was about to go back to the room, but upon seeing the scene before him, he halted his footsteps all of a sudden and focused his attention on her.

Samantha poured one pill into her palm, held it between the fingers of her other hand, then placed it slowly on her tongue.

Chapter 153: Take the First Step

Timothy's hands clenched suddenly as they hung on either side of his body and even his breathing became heavier.

Samantha picked up the glass and raised it to her mouth, but she froze just as she was about to drink from it. Her hand squeezed the cup unconsciously and her conflicted feelings became more intense within her eyes.

She closed her eyes for about five minutes.

After taking a deep breath, she reopened her eyes with a look of determination. She placed the water glass, spat out the pill from her mouth into the palm of her hand, then threw it into the trash can beside her.

Old Madam Barker always wanted to hug great-grandchildren and Timothy wanted a child too. Since she decided to start over with Timothy and live happily for the rest of their lives, that was the first step that she had to take.

All other factors aside, she asked herself the question 'Do I really want to have a child with Timothy?'

Her answer was a yes!

She liked Timothy, and since she had always thought about marrying him, it was only natural for her to think about having his baby after getting married to him.

They missed out on each other two years ago and had to go through a lot to finally end up together. What else could she worry about?

Samantha finally convinced herself and took a paper towel to wipe her hands. She then took the entire bottle of morning-after pills and threw them directly into the trash can.

The instant she released her grip on that bottle, it seemed as though all her worries and indecision had vanished too.

She finally got that weight off her mind.

The sound of footsteps came from behind, and the next second, her entire body was hugged in a familiar embrace. Samantha was taken aback for a moment and soon realized that it was Timothy. She turned her face slightly and looked at him. "What's wrong?"

Timothy continued hugging her from behind without giving an answer. He unconsciously tightened his arms, as if to knead her into his body.

"Timothy?" Samantha became more confused.

His hug was a little too tight and she felt difficultly breathing. "You're going to hurt me!"

Timothy loosened slightly but he still continued embracing her as he rested his chin on her shoulders. He spoke in an extremely smoky voice, "Nothing. I just wanted to hug you."

She had no idea how happy he was when she spat out the morning-after pill.

Her willingness to have his child was the most solid proof that she would no longer think about divorcing him and would live with him happily for a long time to come.

"Oopsie."

Aunt Julia had shown up at the door at some point and covered her face with her hands, although her fingers were open rather than closed. She had a smile that extended almost from ear to ear and she said, "Mr. Barker, Mrs. Barker, sorry to bother you, but...it's time for breakfast. The food's going to get cold and Old Madam is waiting too."

Samantha blushed as soon as Aunt Julia spoke. She freed herself from Timothy's arms and rushed out of the room without looking back.

Timothy smirked. "I'll go down after changing my clothes."

"Okay."

Aunt Julia turned around happily and could not resist humming a sweet tune as she followed Samantha down.

...

When Timothy walked into the dining hall, Samantha was breaking the good news to the old lady regarding her successful interview. Old Madam Barker was so happy and looked just like an old child.

She took Samantha's hand and said, "Sammy, you're without a doubt the most beautiful contestant among them! I'm sure you'll make it to the final and win the competition to become Lychee TV's new anchor!"

Samantha smiled and her eyebrows turned into little arcs.

Everyone saw the best in their own family members, and in Old Madam Barker's eyes, Samantha was always number one.

Unfortunately, reality could sometimes be different from one's expectations.

Samantha felt that it would not be good to let Old Madam Barker place too high a hope on her. She was afraid that greater hope would only set the old lady up for greater disappointment, so she said, "Grandma, the other contestants who made it this time are

a force to be reckoned with too. From what I saw the other day, some of them have already made a small name for themselves and boast a lot of experience under their belt. They all have an advantage over me.”

“Bah, that’s no big deal. I know how good your grades were when you were in school, and if it weren’t for—” Old Madam Barker stopped herself just in time before changing her remark. “If you hadn’t been held up due to certain issues last time, you’d already be a shining star by now!

“The point is, you’re a very capable person, Sammy. I’m hopeful for you, and I want to be your number one fan!”

Aunt Julia acknowledged and said, “I’m your number two fan!”

Timothy strode in, pulled the chair beside Samantha, and sat down. He picked up a piece of bread, slathered some blueberry jam, then placed it on Samantha’s plate. “Aunt Julia, I’m afraid you can only be her number three fan.”

Aunt Julia was puzzled. “How so?”

She turned to the old lady and wondered why she was number three if the old lady was number one.

Timothy turned to his grandmother and said, “Grandma, I’m sorry to say this, but you’re number two.”

Old Madam Barker patted the table. “Why is that!”

“Because I’m her number one fan,” Timothy said in a confident and unquestionable manner.

Old Madam Barker and Aunt Julia were both speechless.

Samantha ate her bread and had an amused look in her eye as she watched them bicker.

Perhaps God was showing mercy to her, and all the hardships she went through were finally exchanged for happiness.

Despite losing her parents, she was still loved by the old lady and Aunt Julia. She also finally got back her beloved Timothy, and she was already on the road to achieving her dream.

Everything was perfect, but that inexplicably made her feel surreal.

Would that perfect life be hers forever?

...

After having breakfast, Samantha's cell phone rang and she got up to answer it.

Timothy went upstairs and headed back to the bedroom. He shed his home clothes and chose a nice suit to wear. As he was putting on his jacket, he suddenly noticed Samantha's clothes hanging in the closet.

The dressing room might be huge, but her clothes were paltry in number and she had no jewelry at all. Even her bag was limited to only one, which was the same one she used day in day out.

Samantha used to love beautiful clothes, fancy jewelry, and all kinds of bags, but that had all changed.

Timothy frowned when he recalled how miserably she dressed.

Once he was fully dressed, Timothy picked up the phone to make a call. He then reached for his wallet and car keys, walked out of the bedroom, and went downstairs.

Timothy came down just as Samantha had just finished her call, so she asked, "Are you going to the company? I'd like to visit Corey at the hospital. Can I take a ride?"

"Sure."

"Okay, gimme a moment! I'll be ready soon!"

Samantha went upstairs, changed her clothes quickly, then picked up her bag and went back down.

After getting in the car, Timothy started the engine and drove out of the villa.

The morning air was exceptionally fresh and Samantha lowered the car window to breathe it all in. The pink flowers blooming on both sides of the road were an extremely pleasant sight to look at.

As the journey went on, she started to sense that something was wrong.

She turned her head to look at Timothy and said confusedly, "Timothy, this... This isn't the way to the hospital. Where are you going?"

Timothy glanced at Samantha from beside and smiled.. All he said was, "You'll know soon."

Chapter 154: If You Like It, Then It's Yours

Why was Timothy being so mysterious?

Samantha could not control herself from being curious. "Could you give a little hint?"

"No," the man answered firmly.

"...Then could you at least tell me if it's something scary or something pleasant?"

She was not to be blamed for her overly suspicious nature. Timothy had always been an unpredictable person, and she did not want a good start to the day to be ruined just like that.

When the car stopped at a red light, the man freed up a hand and patted her head to comfort her.

She felt uneasy only because the sense of security he gave her was not enough.

It was strange of Timothy not to answer her, but that small gesture was enough to dispel Samantha's anxiety little by little.

More than half an hour later, the car finally came to a stop.

Samantha was somewhat taken aback when she looked at the big shopping mall in front of her. Why did Timothy bring her there? Did he want to buy something?

Timothy got out of the car first, then walked around to the front passenger seat. He opened the door, bent down slightly into the car, then unfastened her seat belt and said softly, "Let's go."

Once Samantha got out of the car, Timothy took her hand and led her in.

Many luxury brands set up shop in that mall. Timothy kept his eyes open and took Samantha to the special VIP elevator. They took it to the top floor and walked out.

They stepped out of the elevator and saw a clothing store with a lavishly grand layout. The manager was already waiting there and he immediately came over to greet the couple. With a respectful little bow, he said, "Nice to see you, Mr. Barker, Mrs. Barker."

Timothy responded by raising his head slightly.

Samantha nodded in a very courteous manner.

She glanced around and instantly knew that it was no ordinary clothing store. If her guess was correct, those clothes were on the highest end of the luxury spectrum, for all of them were custom-made and bore no logos.

The price of any one piece of clothing or jewelry could render a person speechless.

The store manager gestured to come in. "We have prepared refreshments for you. Right this way, please."

Timothy led Samantha into the store, but instead of going to the VIP seat, he walked to the clothing area and glanced at Samantha from beside. He then opened his lips and said, "Go ahead and choose."

Samantha blurted out a question, "Choose what?"

That was the women's section. Why did Timothy need women's clothes? Was he buying them for the old lady? Or did he have...some kind of weird fetish?

Timothy seemed to have seen through her thoughts and he did not know whether to laugh or get angry at her. He placed his hands on her shoulders from behind, then pushed her forward to the clothes and said, "Choose the clothes. If you like it, it's yours."

Samantha was startled. Did Timothy bring her there because he wanted to buy something for her rather than for himself?

She was stunned for about half a minute before she managed to find her voice. "Why... W-why are you buying clothes for me?"

The man whispered in her ears "Are you really asking me this, Mrs. Barker? Does a husband need a reason to buy clothes for his wife?"

"But, I... I have clothes! These are too expensive..."

The price of a single piece was enough for her to buy a couple of years' worth of clothes. She had been pinching her pennies all those years and has long discarded her indulgent habits.

Moreover, money was a cause of her conflicts with Timothy in the past, so she was subconsciously reluctant to have anything to do with Timothy when it came to money.

Timothy remained silent for a while and asked, "Aren't you going to choose?"

Samantha pondered over her reply and answered cautiously, "I...still have plenty of clothes."

Timothy nodded. "If you're not choosing, then I'll choose for you."

He raised his black eyes, looked at the store manager who was waiting at one side, then ordered, "I'll take them all."

Samantha was speechless.

She wanted to stop from buying them, not let him buy them all!

The store manager smiled with glee and his eyes had practically disappeared. "Sure!"

"Wait... Hold on!" Samantha said hurriedly. "I... I didn't say I wasn't going to choose. I'd like to have a look around before choosing!"

Samantha turned around and pretended to give Timothy a disdainful look. "As if you know what kind of clothes women like. Even if you can afford to splurge, you can't just buy them willy-nilly. You... You should just sit down and wait for me. I'll look at the clothes myself."

Timothy's eyes seemed to sparkle with joy. Rather than being angry, he replied happily, "Okay, my dear beloved wife. I'll do as you say."

Samantha's cheeks turned uncontrollably red when he said the four words 'my dear beloved wife'.

The store manager pursed his lips and complimented with a smile, "You're very kind to your wife, Mr. Barker."

"Take your time. I'll wait for you."

Once he ended that sentence, he turned around and walked toward the VIP seat.

The shop manager looked at Samantha and said, "Mrs. Barker, do you need me to introduce you to what we have in store?"

"It's fine. I'll look at them by myself."

"Sure."

The shopkeeper kept quiet and followed behind her.

Samantha did not really want to buy any clothes, but if she had not stopped Timothy, he would have bought everything there! She was not about to let him waste his money like that.

It would be a shame to spend money so recklessly!

She had no choice but to pick a few just for the sake of it.

In all honesty though, she still felt elated when her husband bought clothes for her. That being said, it was the first time Timothy personally came and kept her company when she bought clothes.

During their past relationship, Timothy bought countless clothes, jewelry, and bags for her, but they were mostly the latest releases, which he sent directly to the Larssons. He never once accompanied her to buy them in-store, much less wait for her as she chose them and tried them on.

An inexplicably romantic feeling surfaced in her heart.

Did the 'marry first, fall in love later' cliché that often occurred in novels apply to her relationship too?

Samantha thought to herself and smiled uncontrollably.

Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted the store manager looking at her and immediately felt embarrassed, so she hurriedly retracted it and continued looking at the clothes.

Her attention was subsequently drawn to a light green dress up ahead.

The design was exquisite and the skirt of the dress had a motif resembling a sea of flowers. Any woman would fall in love with it at first sight.

The store manager looked in the direction Samantha was looking and said with a smile, "You have a good eye, Mrs. Barker. This dress is Master D's latest creation this year. He presented it as a gift to his beloved. There are only two for sale. The other one was bought, and this is the only one left."

A gift for a beloved... What a delightful story behind its creation.

Samantha said, "I'll try it then."

She looked around again and chose a few more items.

The store manager said, "You may head to the dressing room and wait for a moment there, Mrs. Barker. I'll have the fitting room attendant pick up the clothes and send them over."

"Alright."

Samantha started walking to the dressing room.

There was tea inside the dressing room too. Samantha sat down, picked up a teacup, and drank slowly from it.

A minute later, the attendant came in with the clothes and said to Samantha, “Ms. Johnson, I’ve taken these sizes based on your measurements.. Please try them on.”

Chapter 155: Handing Over All Assets

Samantha was both surprised and confused when she heard that. She turned around and looked at the attendant, “Who are you referring to?”

The attendant looked at Samantha’s face and was startled, but she reacted quickly and explained right away, “Mrs... Mrs. Barker, I’m sorry I mistook you for someone else.”

She bowed deeply while saying, “I’m really sorry.”

Samantha was not the kind of person who enjoyed making life difficult for others. Furthermore, all the attendant did was mistake her for the wrong person, and after seeing how panicked the attendant’s apology was, Samantha said softly, “It’s fine.”

The attendant breathed a sigh of relief and smiled obsequiously, “You’re too kind, Mrs. Barker. Shall I help you try the clothes on?”

“I’ll wear them myself.”

The dresser hung up the clothes and said, “I’ll be just outside then. Please let me know if you need anything.”

“Okay.”

She bowed slightly, then walked out and closed the door.

As soon as the door closed, she could not help but place her hand over her heart, as if she had just survived a damning ordeal.

...

Samantha tried on the light green dress and stood in front of the full-length mirror to look at herself after wearing it. She had to admit that the light green color made her skin look much fairer. Her slender neck, delicate shoulders, and the elegant collarbone were all exposed. Those graceful contours added a touch of sensuality to the gentleness of her overall look.

It had been a long time since she dressed up properly, so her mood improved gradually when she wore such a beautiful dress and looked at how pretty she was.

She did a little turn in front of the mirror and wondered what Timothy would feel about it.

With a tight purse of her lips, she walked out of the dressing room toward the VIP seat.

Timothy stood by the window to take a call and his back was facing the entrance. When she walked in, she cleared her throat slightly to signal her arrival.

The man turned his face slightly to glance at her, but he then turned his back to her again as if he had not seen her.

Samantha was at a loss for words. Her initially excited mood sank suddenly to rock bottom and felt like she was on a roller coaster ride.

Did he react that way because she did not look good? Was that why he did not even bother to look twice?

Samantha suddenly started doubting herself even though she originally thought that she looked amazing. She decided to just turn around and head back to the dressing room to change the dress.

“Where are you going?” the man’s voice asked all of a sudden.

Samantha looked up and saw that Timothy had turned around once more. He had ended the call and his black pupils were staring faintly at her.

She pouted and said in a sulky voice, “You don’t think the dress looks good, do you, Mr. Barker? I’m going to change it right now. Wouldn’t want to be an eyesore.”

Timothy frowned slightly, but a little grin soon appeared as he asked, “Did anyone say it doesn’t look good?”

“Your reaction did.” She saw his reaction very clearly earlier, and the first reaction was always the most genuine!

Timothy did not say another word. He strode toward her and extended his long arms to embrace her from the front, whereupon he planted his thin lips on hers and gave her a kiss.

She never expected him to kiss her so suddenly and her eyes widened as a result. Although she was stunned at first, she soon came to her senses and placed her hands on his chest to push him away. “Hey, what are you doing?”

The man placed his forehead against hers and her eyes were captured in his eyes. His voice was hoarse and he emphasized each word of his sentence, "I'm using my reaction to let you know just how beautiful you are.

"I just wanted to finish the call as fast I could and pour all my attention into praising you."

Whoever said that Timothy did not know how to sweet talk?

He seemed to be very good at it!

Samantha wanted to maintain her pride, but she could not control the corners of her lips from curling up into a smile.

She cleared her throat again and restrained the smile on her face. "Do I really...look that good?"

Timothy released her from his embrace and nodded while looking deeply at her. "Yes, you do."

After a pause, he added, "You look good in the dress because you look good to begin with."

People usually said that 'clothes make the man' or—in Samantha's case—a woman, but he said it the other way around.

He was implying that she looked beautiful.

Samantha could no longer hold back her beaming smile and her eyebrows even turned into little arcs as a result.

In the end, Timothy bought all the clothes that Samantha tried on, along with some other clothes she did not try on as well. He then had them sent directly to the villa.

Samantha suddenly felt that her deliberate strategy to save his money ended up going down the drain.

What else could she do about it? Timothy was just too rich.

...

When the car arrived at the hospital, Samantha said to Timothy, "I'm going in now. Drive safely."

She unfastened her seat belt and was about to push the door open, but the door was not yet unlocked.

A frown manifested on her face and she turned to look at Timothy. "Is there anything else?"

Timothy gazed deeply at her as his thin lips parted open and he said, "Yes. I have something for you."

What else could he possibly give her when he had already bought her so many clothes and jewelry earlier?

"What is it?"

Timothy took out his wallet from his inner suit pocket, opened it, then took a card from it. He held Samantha's hand and placed the card in her palm.

Samantha's gaze fell on the card in the palm of her hand.

She recognized the private bank card that had Timothy's name engraved and was customized especially for him. It was equivalent to a seal that allowed full access to all the assets under his name.

Samantha stared dazedly at the card and her head was completely blank. Although the card was light in her hand, she felt that its weight could crush mountains of gold and silver.

"T-T-Timothy, why are you... What is the meaning of this?" she stammered. "You can't... You're not... Are you going to...give me this card?"

Timothy gazed deeply at her and replied softly, "Yes."

'Oh God.'

That was the equivalent of Timothy handing over all his wealth to her!

The first thing she wondered was what got into him that day? Was that still the same Timothy?

He never did such a thing even when they were at the sweetest point in their relationship.

There must be some reason behind his actions!

Samantha stared dumbfoundedly for a couple of seconds. She then stretched out her trembling hands and touched Timothy's forehead.

His temperature was normal and there did not seem to be any fever...

Timothy allowed her to touch him and said gently, "From now on, you don't need to worry about money anymore. You can spend the money here."

He did not want money to be the reason she frowned, went from place to place to make a living, and was cautious all the time.

They were starting anew and had vowed to live a good life, so it was common sense for him to provide for his wife.

However, she felt completely shell-shocked when he gave her his entire net worth just like that, especially when he used to misunderstand her for being a gold-digger who worshiped money.

The shock was just so great that she blurted out a question without first processing it through her mind. "Timothy, aren't you...afraid that I'll leave with all your money?"

The light in Timothy's eyes dimmed suddenly and even the smile that was lurking at the corners of his lips disappeared.

Chapter 156: Unwilling

Upon seeing the situation, Samantha could not help but cover her neck. She was annoyed at herself and wanted to just bite off her tongue for mentioning all that nonsense.

She knew full well that their unpleasant past should not be mentioned even though they were starting afresh.

What she did was nothing more than self-inflicted torture!

Samantha immediately spoke up to try and remedy the situation. "Timothy, I was—"

Before she could say the word 'joking', the man interrupted in a low voice, "If you want to leave with the money, then remember...to bring me along."

Samantha's words ended up stuck in her throat.

She initially thought that he would get angry, so it came as a surprise that Timothy said something like that instead of getting mad at her...

Timothy's transformation after waking up from the coma was just too surreal. He pampered her, treated her gently, and even said he wanted to start again. His actions left her feeling giddy one after another.

It was as if she was not yet fully grounded in reality, and any step she took could send her slipping down.

That was why she was innately cautious, careful, and unconfident.

At that moment, however, she felt slightly at ease.

A wave of emotions surged forth from her heart and her entire person seemed to have been soaked in a hot spring. She opened her mouth, as if she wanted to say something to express how touched and happy she was, but she felt that her words were simply not good enough.

She could not control herself from leaning forward and planting her red lips on Timothy's to kiss him.

Words might not be able to express what she felt, but actions could. That kiss marked the first time she willingly kissed him since they got married, and it was a kiss that came from the heart.

Although they had done plenty of other intimate stuff, that willing kiss made Samantha blush, and the redness began spreading to the tips of her ears.

Without saying anything else, she unlocked the car quickly and pushed the door open. Once she got out of the car, she immediately ran into the hospital.

Timothy was stupefied. It was not until Samantha's figure disappeared from his sight that he stroked his lips gently with his fingertips. The warmth of her lips seemed to linger on them and he soon curled his lips into a smile.

After savoring it for a couple of minutes, he finally restarted the engine, stepped on the gas pedal, and drove away.

...

Samantha ran all the way until she reached Corey's ward, as if a wild beast had been chasing her from behind. She closed the door, leaned her back against the door panel, and took a deep breath.

Her heartbeat took a while to ease and she lowered her head to look at the black card she was holding in her hand. She smiled unknowingly.

Although she was unlikely to use Timothy's money, she was still going to take good care of the card.

It signified the erasure of all their unhappy pasts together.

Samantha walked to the bed, sat down, and said to the sleeping Corey, "Do you see this card, Corey? It was your brother-in-law who gave it to me. He just...handed all his wealth into my hands."

She had an unusually radiant light in her eyes when she was talking.

"I admit that I told you a white lie when I said that I had a happy marriage with Timothy before, but it's not a lie anymore. When you wake up, you can see that Timothy and I are really happy together.

"After he broke off the marriage two years ago, I thought there I would never have a chance to be with him anymore. I didn't expect that...God would have mercy on me and give me another chance with him. I'll definitely cherish the chance I now have."

Samantha put the card carefully in her purse before holding Corey's hand and continuing, "I've joined a news anchor competition, Corey. I just passed the interview. You know it's my dream to be an anchor. If it's possible, I hope you can open your eyes and watch me win the competition!

"Maybe there's a chance for everyone to bounce back in life. Just look at me. I'm now in a happy marriage and I'm going about to start my path to pursue my dream career. If you can wake up... Everything will be perfect.

"You won't let me down, right, Corey?"

There was a response as soon as she spoke.

"He won't."

Samantha immediately looked at Corey but felt that it would not have been his voice. The voice clearly belonged to Alan.

She turned around and there he was. Alan had arrived and was standing there with a smile.

"Dr. Sherwood."

Samantha smiled in return. She stood up and walked over to him, asking, "Did you come to see Corey? Did the attending doctor call you over?"

"Yes." Alan paused for a moment before continuing, "The attending doctor and I have just performed a detailed examination on Corey. He's recovering well and is showing a strong survival instinct. I believe he'll wake up soon."

That really was the best news she could ever get.

The things she wanted had come to her just as she thought about them.

Was that the rainbow after a storm that many people spoke about?

All the hardship she had to go through was more than worthwhile.

Samantha could not help but cover her lips with excitement. She was speechless for a moment.

Alan looked at the glimmer in her eyes. He had just heard everything she said and felt very happy for her deep down.

The happiness that she deserved was finally coming to her one by one.

His only regret was not being the one who brought that happiness to her.

Samantha's excitement took a bit of time to calm back down again. She raised her eyes to look at Alan and said to him, "Dr. Sherwood, you've spent so much trouble treating Corey during this period, so I'd like to treat you to dinner again! Do you have time to spare later?"

Although she had treated him once before, she felt that it would never be enough to express her gratitude!

Dinner...

Alan was briefly silent before saying, "My flight is in the afternoon."

Flight?

Samantha asked right away, "Dr. Sherwood, are you leaving?"

"Yes. I'm going back."

Alan lived abroad after all. The reason he stayed there during that period of time was because he had to treat Corey.

Too much of his time had been wasted.

In actual fact, it was very difficult to set a time and have a meal with him, because it was always one thing or another that made it inconvenient.

Samantha did not want to delay him anymore and said, "Please have a safe journey, Dr. Sherwood. Come over again when it's a holiday and I'll bring you around. As for that meal, we'll set a time again when you visit again next time."

During that period, she had been busy with all sorts of things and failed to show him enough hospitality.

'Next time...'

Alan had a sudden thought. Would the situation end up like that if the both of them had managed to show up the first time they were supposed to have a meal together?

When all was said and done, he felt a little unwilling. With the imminent goodbye, they might not be able to see each other again in the future...

He raised his wrist to look at the time and said, "Even though we can't do dinner, there's still time for a cup of coffee. Shall we? That'll be enough to send me off."

"Sure."

Samantha and Alan went to the cafe opposite the hospital where he ordered an Americano and she ordered a latte. She raised her cup and said to him, "I guess I'd have to use coffee instead of wine to thank you for your help."

Alan picked up his cup, clinked it lightly with hers, and took a sip of coffee. He had long been accustomed to the bitter taste but it tasted even more bitter then.

He raised his head and drank it all in one gulp.

Samantha was slightly surprised. "You...seem really thirsty, Dr. Sherwood."

It would be too bitter to drink it like that!

Alan put down the cup and stared fixedly at Samantha before saying, "Sammy, there's something I have to tell you."

Chapter 157: I'm Back, Tim

Samantha placed down the cup and sat straight as she looked at him and said, "You can tell me anything, Dr. Sherwood."

'You...'

Everything he wished to say to her seemed to get stuck as soon as she spoke.

Alan pursed his lips tightly and kept quiet.

His intention was to at least confess his feelings to her and have no regrets when he left.

However, he was worried about burdening Samantha if he spoke up just so he would not have any regrets.

It was exhausting to keep holding in feelings that could never be reciprocated.

That was also a reason why people would rather keep their feelings to themselves than speak out—they were afraid of the possibility that they would not even be able to remain friends.

Alan had a conflicted look in his eyes and he still could not bring himself to say anything.

He looked right at her and spoke in his heart. ‘Sammy, I like you. You’re an amazing woman, but I let you slip through my hands because I didn’t understand my feelings for you back when you were abroad. I envy Timothy for getting a second chance even after missing the first one because my chance is gone and I will never be able to get it back. My only hope...is that you’ll be happy in the future.’

After saying all that silently, he finally spoke up in a soft voice, “Sammy... You can always look for me if you need anything in the future.”

She initially thought it was something else due to his solemn expression, but it turned out to be just that.

After breathing a sigh of relief, she smiled and said, “I’m really lucky to have you as a friend, Dr. Sherwood. If you ever need my help in the future, please let me know too!”

Alan unknowingly wanted to reach out to pat her head when he saw her smile, but he quickly restrained himself from doing so.

He opened his lips and responded softly. “Sure.”

His phone then rang and he glanced at the caller ID to see that it was a call from his driver. It was probably a reminder that it was time for him to go to the airport.

He muted the call and said, “I have to go, Sammy.”

“Then I’ll send—”

Alan interrupted her before she could finish her words. “You don’t need to. We’ll just say goodbye here.”

Since he could not tell her his innermost thoughts, his only hope was for her to send him away.

“Ah?” A trace of confusion appeared in Samantha’s eyes, but she decided to honor his wishes when she saw how serious he was. “Alright, Dr. Sherwood. Have a safe flight home. Goodbye.”

Alan smiled, got up, and walked away.

Each step he took was taking him further and further away from her.

His ride was already waiting outside and he walked over. The driver opened the back seat for him and he turned to have one last look at the cafe.

He hoped that Samantha would be happy and healthy. Although that meant they would not see each other again, he still wished for her to be happy and healthy.

Alan then retracted his gaze resolutely and bent over to get into the car.

The car door was closed and the car started driving away.

...

Samantha drank her latte, paid the bill, and looked at the receipt with a touch of melancholy.

For all the kindness that Alan showed her, she could only pay him back with a cup of coffee.

She did not have plenty of friends either, and with Alan’s departure, she would have one less friend. There was a feeling of regret because she did not know if there would be a chance for them to meet again in the future.

Samantha had the sudden urge to look for someone to talk to and tell them what was on her mind, so she unconsciously took out her cell phone and wanted to call Timothy.

However, she stopped herself again.

She was not a clingy person who would call Timothy even though they had only been away from each other for a while.

Besides, Timothy’s work had piled up during his injury and his work for the morning had to be pushed to the afternoon after he took time out to buy clothes and jewelry for her. He was probably concentrating on handling his work, so it was better for her not to disturb him.

He went back to the villa for dinner every night too, so she could still talk to him later in the evening.

...

At the Barker Group, Timothy presided over a video conference in the afternoon and it was already half-past five when it ended.

He leaned back in the chair and massaged his tired eyebrows.

A notification was soon heard from his phone.

Timothy held his phone up and looked at it. He then clicked on the popup as soon as he saw that it was a WeTalk message.

Samantha: [Grandma says she's going to cook your favorite sauerkraut fish tonight! What time will you be back?]

Timothy smiled and typed out a text on the on-screen keyboard.

[Are you urging me to come back? Do you miss me already?]

[...Not at all. I was asking on Grandma's behalf.]

[Since she's the one asking, could you let her know not to prepare the fish? I might not come home tonight.]

Samantha sent an angry emoji over to him.

Timothy continued: [Are you still asking on grandma's behalf?]

After a wait of about three seconds, Samantha finally replied: [I'm the one asking okay. You happy now?]

Timothy's expression turned cheery and he replied: [Since this is a personal request from Mrs. Barker, it's only right that I come back home at once.]

It was rare for Samantha to take the initiative and urge him to go home for dinner, and fulfilling her request was the proper thing to do.

After putting down the phone, he felt that his exhaustion had all been swept away.

Ronald knocked on the door, walked in, then placed all the documents he had earlier sorted on the desk. "Mr. Barker, these are the meeting minutes from earlier. Please have a look."

“Yeah,” Timothy said while flipping through the minutes. “Cancel my dinner plans tonight. I’m going home for dinner.”

Ronald was not too surprised and nodded. “Understood.”

Timothy signed his name at the end of the document and raised his gaze at Ronald, who was still standing there. “Anything else?”

“Well, there’s one other thing…”

Ronald hesitated for a few seconds and decided to just tell Timothy. “About that problem you told me to investigate. I’ve already found…”

Timothy’s cell phone rang before Ronald could finish speaking.

He initially thought it was from Samantha, but it turned out to be an unfamiliar number when he picked it up and glanced at it.

Few people know his personal phone number.

He lifted his chin and glanced at Ronald, who stopped talking immediately. He then swiped his finger on the screen and answered, “Hello.”

A gentle and instantly recognizable female voice came from the other end of the line. “Hey, Tim. It’s me.”

Timothy’s eyes glowed slightly.

Ronald heard the voice on the phone and thought to himself, ‘Looks like I don’t need to tell him about Ms. Johnson anymore. She called him right away.’

Timothy did not say anything, not that Harmony seemed to mind. She giggled softly and continued, “I’m back. I came back a few days ago.”

Timothy finally opened his mouth and spoke in a faint voice, “Is that so.”

“I didn’t tell you before because I wanted to give you a surprise! Don’t be angry..” After a pause, Harmony said again, “Zachary is holding a little gathering tonight to welcome me back. You’ll come, won’t you?”

Chapter 158: It’s Been a While

As if knowing that Timothy was not going to refuse, Harmony continued without waiting for his answer. “I have something else to attend to, so I’ll see you tonight, Tim.”

After saying that, she ended the call before he did.

Timothy set his phone down as the light in his eyes started to dim. There was no trace of emotion at all. A few seconds later, he looked up at Ronald once more and said, "Go on."

Ronald knew that Timothy was waiting for him to continue giving the report, so he could only pick up from where he left off and said, "Ms. Johnson did return home some time ago. The Harmony Johnson you saw on the name list the other day was her."

Timothy kept quiet. After about ten seconds, he said, "You may leave."

Ronald nodded, turned around, and left the office.

After closing the door behind him gently, a crack appeared on his calm face.

'Why did Ms. Johnson come back at such a time...?'

'Why would she return when Mr. Barker and Ms. Larsson were about to start afresh?'

An inexplicable feeling of unease crept up to him. Was there about to be turbulence just as things were starting to get better?

...

At the villa, Samantha was learning how to make sauerkraut fish from Old Madam Barker in the kitchen.

Although Samantha knew how to make sauerkraut fish, Old Madam Barker possessed some unique skills which she said she wanted to pass down. That way, Samantha could cook it for Timothy in the future.

Samantha went along with the suggestion of course. Old Madam Barker's sauerkraut fish had always been Timothy's favorite dish.

Old Madam Barker taught Samantha everything she knew, and Samantha paid full attention to her teachings. The dish was done more than an hour later. Samantha smelled the aroma and wondered whether Timothy could tell it was her cooking just by taste alone.

She prepared a few more dishes and it was already seven o'clock when everything was ready.

Timothy would have returned at around that time, but his figure was nowhere to be seen that day.

Samantha took off her apron, washed her hands, then walked out of the kitchen and grabbed her cell phone from the living room sofa. She wanted to send a WeTalk to ask where Timothy was, but instead saw an unread WeTalk message from Timothy.

Timothy: [Something came up tonight. I'll be back a little late, so just go ahead and eat without me.]

Samantha looked at the time that she received the message and saw that it was half an hour ago.

It was difficult for Samantha to contain her frown because he had already promised to come back home for dinner. She even cooked an entire table of food, only for him to end up not making it...

She nevertheless knew that Timothy had a lot of work, and last-minute issues were not at all unusual. The urgency of work matters was understandable.

Old Madam Barker came over and asked, "What time is Tim coming back?"

Samantha put down the phone and did her best to put on a smile. "Something came up tonight and he won't be back for dinner. Come on, Grandma, let's eat."

"That little brat!" Old Madam Barker scolded, "He should've told us earlier if he wasn't going to come back. You cooked all this food for nothing."

"Forget about it. It's his loss to not be able to eat all this food. Don't you worry, Sammy. I'll finish it all and I won't leave a single portion for him!"

Old Madam Barker's statements amused Samantha, cheering up her initially dejected mood. She nodded, "Okay! We'll finish all the food!"

Samantha took Old Madam Barker's arm and walked toward the dining hall.

...

Inside the VIP room of a clubhouse.

Timothy opened the door and strode in.

Zachary was someone who loved enjoying himself, so whenever he organized a party, he usually called every single of his friends over—the more the merrier. However, there was no one else in the VIP room that day, aside from him, Jonathan, and Harmony.

The three of them looked over when they saw Timothy coming in.

Zachary was the first to call out to him. "Here comes Timmy! We were all waiting for you!"

Timothy narrowed his eyes at Zachary and gazed down at Harmony when he approached them. The woman was sitting elegantly on the sofa, and she raised her eyes to smile at him. "It's been a while, Tim."

"Yeah," he responded curtly, then sat down.

"Alright, now that everyone's here, it's been too long since the four of us met up! Tonight's the night we drink till we drop!"

Zachary spoke while picking up the opened bottle of red wine, which he poured into each person's glass. He was the first to raise his glass and say to the other three, "Cheers! Welcome back, Bunny."

Harmony's name rhymed with the word bunny, so those who were close with her usually called her 'Bunny'.

She smiled, reached out to pick up a glass of red wine, then held it up. "Cheers."

Jonathan glanced lazily at Timothy and raised the wine glass without saying anything else.

Timothy looked askance at Harmony, but instead of raising a toast, he said to the waiter beside him, "Change her drink to juice."

Everyone knew that 'her' referred to Harmony.

Zachary said unhappily, "Come on, Timmy! We haven't seen each other for so long! A little wine isn't going to hurt. Do you really have to be so protective that you have to change it to juice?"

Harmony smiled and turned around to look at Timothy, saying, "I can take my alcohol, Tim."

Timothy did not respond to that.

The waiter quickly brought the glass of juice over. Timothy picked it up and placed it directly in front of Harmony.

Harmony lowered her gaze and chuckled. "You're still the same as ever, Tim. Okay, I'll drink juice instead of wine."

She put down the wine glass, then picked up the one with juice and took a sip from it. "Is this okay, now?"

Zachary clicked his tongue and shook his head, as if he could not bring himself to look at it. "Forget it. Come on, Jon, let's drink!"

He clinked glasses with Jonathan, raised his head, and drank it all in one shot.

...

Rochelle made an appointment with an investor to discuss a couple of things that night, but after waiting three hours in the private room, the investor was still nowhere to be seen. She unconsciously curled her lips in a cold smile.

That was the third investor who failed to show up that month.

It might have been a coincidence if it happened once or twice, but she would rather believe in the supernatural than buy the excuse that the third time was a coincidence too.

She did not need to be a genius to know who was responsible.

Rochelle got up unhesitatingly and walked out of the room.

Her bodyguard immediately emerged from the darkness and followed some distance behind her.

Rochelle asked aloud, "Where's your boss?"

The bodyguard said nothing.

Rochelle stopped, turned around to look at him, and remarked coldly, "And don't tell me that you don't know his whereabouts. He wouldn't've sent you to watch me twenty-four hours a day if you weren't his most loyal dog."

The bodyguard lowered his gaze and spoke in a rather monotonous voice. "The boss just wants to protect you."

"Pfft." Rochelle had no intention of talking nonsense with him. "Where's Jonathan? Don't let me ask you a third time!"

The bodyguard was silent for a few seconds before saying softly. "He's here. In the VIP room."

Rochelle pushed him away as soon as he said that and immediately walked toward the VIP room.

As she passed by a fire extinguisher, she paused for a moment to pick it up before continuing to walk in an aggressive stride.

Her fury could only be quelled if she drew Jonathan's blood!

The waiter had just pushed the door open and walked out when Rochelle walked up to the VIP room entrance. He trembled in fear when he saw a beautiful woman carrying a fire extinguisher while sporting a murderous look on her face.

Rochelle ignored the waiter and was about to barge in, but she suddenly caught sight of Timothy placing a glass of juice in front of a woman.

Chapter 159: Wife's Orders

Although Rochelle's interactions with Timothy were few and far in between, she understood his character to some extent. After all, he was a childhood friend of Jonathan's and used to be in a relationship with Samantha.

Timothy's cold disposition was the stereotypical kind, deterring people from approaching him. Jonathan had a cold disposition as well, but it was the ruthless and ravenous kind. It would not be out of place for Jonathan or that playboy Zachary to do such an act, but it looked absolutely incongruous when Timothy did it.

Rochelle might be a fiery woman, but impulsiveness was the one thing she lacked. After all, one could never form conclusions just from a glance. She cocked a brow, looked askance at the waiter who seemed ready to shout at any time, then ordered frostily, "Shut your mouth and leave—quietly."

One look and the waiter knew that she was not someone to be messed with. The waiter knew his place and slipped away while covering his mouth.

Rochelle put down the fire extinguisher in her hand, then said to the bodyguard who was following behind her. "Hand me your phone."

The bodyguard offered it respectfully without hesitation.

Rochelle took his cell phone, typed out a short text, then sent it.

...

Inside the VIP room, Jonathan glanced at his lit-up phone screen when his phone buzzed. He clicked on the message and saw a line of words: [Come out. I'm at the door.]

Those words were so concise and domineering that one could not easily say no.

Although it was sent using the bodyguard's phone, he could tell who the real sender was at a glance.

Jonathan put away the phone, straightened his clothes casually, then stood up.

Zachary started to complain when he saw that. "Hey, hey, where are you going? We're just getting started and you're already leaving? Didn't we all agree to welcome Bunny back by drinking till we drop?"

"Wife's orders," Jonathan remarked curtly.

Rochelle's icy expression appeared instantly in Zachary's mind. Although she was as beautiful as could be, her ruthlessness was also second to none.

He still remembered that one time Rochelle smashed a wine bottle over his head after he tried to stop her fight with Jonathan. He ended up having gauze around his head for more than half a month.

From then onward, he never said anything to them nor got involved when they were at each other's throats.

He immediately sported an ingratiating smile. "In that case, you should leave, Johnny. Remember to say hi to the missus for me."

Jonathan's lips twitched. He looked at Timothy and Harmony before saying, "I'm leaving."

Timothy nodded slightly.

Harmony smiled. "Let's meet up again some time."

Jonathan turned around and strode out of the VIP room.

He spotted Rochelle standing in the corridor and walked over to her. He had just only approached her when he saw Rochelle's fist coming sharply toward his face.

Rather than dodging, he allowed her to punch him and took it like a man.

Rochelle still felt irked even after giving him that punch. Punching him was no different from tickling him, but the reason she did not use the fire extinguisher was because she wanted him to remain conscious and answer her questions.

Jonathan was a little surprised when Rochelle only gave him one punch. His dark eyes stared at her and he finally asked, "That's it?"

"Yep."

Rochelle snorted coldly and said, "I have something to ask you. If I'm satisfied with your answer, I'll ignore whatever stuff you've been doing behind my back recently. If I'm not, then you'd best prepare yourself to spend half a month in the hospital."

Under normal circumstances, Rochelle would have given him only one option, which was to be hospitalized for half a month. At that moment, Jonathan had another option.

Who could possibly have been able to turn Rochelle into such a merciful woman?

Jonathan raised his eyebrows and said, "Ask away."

"Who's that woman in there?" Rochelle went straight to the point without saying another word of nonsense.

Jonathan replied without even thinking, "None of my business."

"I'd much rather she be your business." Rochelle rolled her eyes at him. "Don't sidestep my question. You know what I'm asking."

She could not care less if that woman inside the room had something to do with Jonathan.

As long as Jonathan did not end up fathering a child, he could play as much as he wanted and she would not give a single damn about it.

Timothy's involvement, however, was a whole different matter altogether. Sammy's relationship with him had just started to progress and they were about to live the rest of their days in happiness. Rochelle was not prepared to let anyone destroy that.

Jonathan pursed his lips and said again, "Harmony Johnson. A friend."

"And?"

"That's all."

Rochelle felt amused at that moment. "You think you can dismiss me with that answer?"

She took one step closer to Jonathan and reduced the distance between them. Her beautiful eyes gazed up at him and she emphasized each word of her sentence, "Well then, you enjoy playing word games with me, don't you? I'll spell it out for you then. What's the relationship between Timothy and that Harmony or whatever her name is?"

Jonathan lowered his gaze at her and did not shy away from making eye contact with her. He opened his lips and said the same two words, "A friend."

Rochelle could resist remarking sarcastically, "Bros always have each other's back, don't they? It's always this sort of chicanery that gets covered up so well."

Jonathan remained expressionless and Rochelle could not discern anything at all from his expression.

Having lost all patience, she chuckled evilly and said, "Fine. It looks like you prefer being hospitalized for half a month. I'll be happy to grant your wish!"

...

At the villa, Samantha took a short walk with Old Madam Barker after dinner, then spent an hour watching the old lady's favorite television series. Once it ended, she sent the old lady back to her room to get some rest.

Samantha went back to her own room too. She took a shower, dried her hair, and did her skincare routine. It was not until she finished talking with the nurse that she realized it was already past ten, and Timothy still had not returned yet.

Just how much work did he have?

Samantha thought for a moment and decided to ask him out of concern. She clicked on WeTalk, typed a message, then sent it.

[Are you still busy, Timothy?]

The message went unanswered for a long time and Samantha frowned slightly.

Although it was about time for her to sleep, she did not feel like sleeping at all, perhaps because Timothy did not reply to her message.

She leaned on the bedhead and decided to start reading the book about news anchors and presenters that she bought.

Having passed the interview, the first knockout round would soon begin and she had to prepare by studying more.

She pored over the book so seriously that she had no idea how long she had been studying. When her eyes felt slightly sore, she closed them and opened them again before looking up at the wall clock. It was already almost midnight.

More than an hour had passed since her message to Timothy.

Did work take so much of his time that he could not even spare a moment to look at his phone?

Samantha placed her book down and picked up her cell phone. Just as she was dithering over whether or not to call Timothy, her phone started ringing all of a sudden.

She originally thought that Timothy had finally seen her message and was calling back, but she glanced at the caller ID and saw that it was Rochelle.

Samantha was taken aback for a moment. Rochelle would not have called her that late under normal circumstances, so could something have happened to her?

She gulped and hurriedly answered the call, "What's the matter, Chelle?"

Rochelle's characteristically hoarse voice could be heard from the other end of the line, but she asked instead of answering the question, "Haven't you slept yet?"

"No.. Why are you asking me this?" Samantha was confused.

Chapter 160: Why Did You Come Back?

Rochelle was not the kind of person who called for no particular reason just to ask her whether she was asleep.

She still did not answer Samantha's question. "Why are you up so late when you're usually one to go to bed early? Are you getting insomnia because that scumbag Timothy hasn't come back to warm the bed yet?"

Rochelle's view of Timothy started to change, just a little, and she had no longer called him a scumbag since then. Why did she start calling that all of a sudden?

Was she unable to change it out of habit, or could there be some other reason?

Samantha thought for a moment and could not help asking, "Chelle, are you calling me because of something that involves Timothy?"

It was one of those rare times that Rochelle felt a little sentimental.

Samantha had grown up and fooling her was not that easy. The acuity she had honed after spending two years in a foreign country could and should not be ignored.

In Rochelle's heart, Samantha was not just her closest and best friend. For the most part, she treated Samantha as her own sister. Therefore, her sole hope was to see her be happy rather than be sad.

One of the most difficult questions in the world was before her. Would you tell your best friend that her boyfriend or her husband was suspected of having an affair?

Rochelle was already prepared to tell her everything, but she could not bring herself to say those words when she heard Samantha's voice.

It had been far, far too long since she heard Samantha speaking in such a calm and gentle tone.

In the past, Samantha had always been holding back whenever Rochelle spoke to her. She had been like that since the marriage was broken off two years ago, up until she went abroad. It was the same when she finally came back and was forced into an unhappy marriage with Timothy.

Rochelle felt heartbroken to see Samantha in that position.

After a moment's silence, Rochelle said, "Nah, that b*stard Jonathan pissed me off again, so I might as well lash out at Timothy while I'm at it."

"What did he do?"

"Don't get me started. He's not worth being mentioned." Rochelle sounded absolutely disgusted. After a pause, her tone became more serious. "Sammy, I know your relationship with Timothy has been improving recently, but you can't be that silly girl you used to be anymore. Love yourself first before loving others."

Jonathan really seemed to have pissed Rochelle off, otherwise she would not have called in the middle of the night just to say such emotional words.

Samantha replied softly. "I understand, Chelle."

Rochelle opened her mouth, as if to say something else, but she eventually kept quiet and said instead, "Alright, it's getting late. You should go to bed. See you."

"Okay. You should get some sleep too. Good night."

Rochelle clenched her phone tightly after hanging up.

Although Jonathan did not tell her the truth, he probably did not lie to her either. After all, he was the kind of man who found it beneath him to tell lies.

He had to have been telling the truth when he said that Harmony was a friend.

Ultimately, boundaries might sometimes be blurred when it came to friendships between men and women, so it was imperative for her to keep an eye on Samantha.

It might be better for her to get to the bottom of Timothy's relationship with Harmony before telling Samantha anything.

...

In the VIP room.

Timothy's cell phone rang and he picked it up to glance at the screen. It was a message from Samantha.

He placed it down and looked askance at Harmony before asking faintly, "Where are you staying right now?"

Harmony smiled and said, "I'm currently staying in an apartment hotel. Why do you ask? Are you planning on sending me back?"

"Let's go," Timothy said monotonously and stood up.

Zachary yelled disgruntledly, "What's up with you guys? You ditch your friends as soon as your wives come calling! This is unbecoming!"

Timothy shot him a cold look.

A chill came up Zachary's spine and he immediately changed his tone. "I much rather enjoy the loneliness. It's fine if you guys leave."

Harmony was amused by his antics. "You haven't changed at all, Zac."

Zachary waved her off. "Go, go. Scram, I'll call my new girlfriend over for round two. You think you guys are so great just because you've all got partners? Well, I'm not too bad myself, you know!"

He spoke while taking out his cell phone and dialing a number.

A car was already waiting by the door when Timothy and Harmony walked out of the clubhouse.

Ronald stood by the car and watched the two of them coming over. He looked right at Harmony's face and was fairly surprised to see that she really had returned.

Perhaps it was never a case of mistaken identity at all when he saw someone like her at the hospital entrance.

He was still in deep thought when Harmony walked up to him and flashed a warm smile at him. "It's been a long time since I saw you, Mr. Crawford."

Ronald returned to his senses and responded with a polite smile, "It has been some time, Ms. Johnson. You look much prettier now!"

Those were the kind of words that every woman wanted to hear. Harmony covered her mouth and giggled before remarking softly, "Thank you, Mr. Crawford. You're much more handsome now as well."

Ronald smiled like an idiot as he opened the door of the rear seat. "Hop on in, Ms. Johnson!"

Harmony bent down to get into the car and Timothy followed right behind. After Ronald closed the door, he walked around to the driver's seat and got in before starting the engine and driving off.

The road was quiet because there were no cars at such a late hour.

It was even quieter because no one spoke in the car.

Harmony seemed to have gotten used to Timothy's reservedness a long time ago and did not seem to mind it at all. She lowered the car window to let the night wind in, which tousled her hair up slightly.

She admired the scenery outside the car for a brief moment before breaking the silence. "Capital City has changed a lot, but in just a few years, everything seemed to have changed in a certain direction."

Harmony then looked at Timothy and spoke in an even gentler voice. "Even the Barker Group has changed, with Barker Tower becoming taller and much more spectacular. You did what you said you would, and you brought the Barker Group to new heights."

Timothy looked up and turned his attention to her. He opened his lips to speak, but he did not respond to her remarks. "Why are you back?"

Harmony seemed to have expected that he was going to ask that question and did not seem surprised in the least. She answered very honestly, "I came back to pursue...my dream."

She placed emphasis on the dream and said it with determination.

Two seconds later, she added, "Tim, you know that my dream has always been to become a renowned news anchor."

"That's why I've signed up to participate in the competition that Lychee TV organized. I've already passed the interview."

There was a sparkle in Harmony's eyes when she spoke about her dream. "Tim, I know you'll always support me! I'll give it my all and win the competition!"

The car reached the hotel just as she said that.

Harmony then said, "This is the hotel, Tim. I'll head up now. Good night."

As soon as she said that, she pushed the car door open and got down. She stood there and waved at Timothy in the car before turning around and walking in.

Timothy then instructed, "Go back to the villa."

Ronald responded affirmatively and started driving.

...

Samantha was fast asleep when she suddenly caught a whiff of alcohol, along with hints of a rather familiar fragrance.

Chapter 161: Were They Together Before?

Samantha opened her eyes and saw that Timothy had returned. He was standing right beside the sofa, taking his clothes off.

Timothy seemed to have sensed her gaze and turned his face slightly to look at her. When he saw her sleepy eyes and heavy eyelids, he said softly, "Did I wake you up? Go ahead and sleep."

Samantha's heart finally calmed down after his return and her sleepiness had also reached its peak. She groaned softly, then closed her eyes again as she drifted back to sleep.

Timothy took off his shirt and pants, tossed them to the sofa armrest, and headed into the bathroom to take a shower.

The alcohol smell lingering on his body had almost disappeared completely when he came out of the shower. After drying his soaking-wet hair, he walked to the bed and got under the blanket to sleep.

He turned to his side, stretched out his long arms, then spooned the soundly sleeping Samantha.

Samantha moved unconsciously, perhaps because she had already become used to his embrace, and shifted her in his arms a couple of times to find the most comfortable position. She hugged him and fell back asleep once more.

Timothy lowered his gaze to look at her quiet, sleeping face. A content expression of happiness appeared in the bottom of his eyes, and he lowered his head to give her a

kiss between her eyebrows. He then hugged her tightly, closed his eyes, and fell asleep.

...

Early the next morning, Samantha opened her eyes slowly and looked beside instinctively. She was startled to see no one beside her because she clearly remembered Timothy coming back home that night.

She reached out to touch the bed and felt a lingering warmth in the empty space. He seemed to have gotten up already.

Samantha had nothing but admiration for his self-discipline. He could still get up early even if he slept late at night, and that was a factor contributing to his success. On the other hand, she still had nothing to show...

Although her initial thought was to stay in bed for some time, she was hit by a rush of inspiration. She covered herself with the blanket and sat up, then stretched a few times to loosen herself up before lifting the blanket and getting out of bed.

After heading to the bathroom to wash up, she went to the dressing room and changed into some comfortable home clothes. Once she was ready, she did some vocal warm-ups on the balcony and practiced reading some scripts.

She walked over to the sofa because her book was there, but when she saw that the clothes Timothy wore a day ago were still lying on the sofa's armrest, her lips twitched slightly and she picked the clothes up.

The first thing she did was feel the pockets to make sure that there was nothing in them. She then walked to the dirty clothes basket and put them in.

All of a sudden, she caught a whiff of that familiar scent again.

It was not the cologne that Timothy frequently used, so she subconsciously put the shirt to her nose and sniffed again.

The smell seemed present yet not present, and she did not know whether her nose was just overly sensitive or whether the smell had become faint overnight.

Did Timothy change his cologne? Those fragrance notes did not appear to be the kind that men would like.

In any case, she felt as though she had smelled it somewhere, but she just could not put her finger on where exactly.

Two sudden knocks came from the bedroom door.

Samantha snapped back to her senses and said, "Come in."

Aunt Julia opened the door and walked in with a smile. "You're early, Mrs. Barker. I'm here to get the dirty clothes."

"Ah, here they are."

Samantha chucked away those thoughts she had and immediately put all the clothes in the basket. She then handed the basket over to Aunt Julia.

After taking the basket, Aunt Julia said, "Breakfast is almost ready. You can come down to eat in a bit."

"Okay," Samantha answered. A thought crossed her mind and she asked, "Where's Timothy? Is he back from his morning exercise?"

"Ah, Mr. Barker?" Aunt Julia thought for a moment before replying, "He received a call early in the morning and left in a hurry. He's not at home anymore."

'He left? Isn't that too early?'

Did he have to rush to work so early in the morning after he came back so late the night before? What a heavy workload he had.

"I see, okay."

Aunt Julia turned around and walked out of the room.

Samantha went to the bedside table to grab her phone. She sent Timothy a message that said: [No matter how busy you are, you must remember to eat.]

She then sent a 'do-your-best' emoji to him.

After setting down her phone, she picked up the practice book and walked to the balcony outside. Facing the bright rays of morning sunshine, she placed all her focus on practicing.

...

Rochelle knew that there was nothing she could glean from Jonathan, so she no longer bothered to waste her time and energy on him. She got a renowned private investigator to help her investigate and used Jonathan's card to give the private investigator an advance payment of one million.

Once the money was paid up, it was only natural for the private investigator to be efficient. He needed only one day to gather everything and hand her a paper bag with background information on Harmony.

Rochelle took it, opened the bag, and found an A4-size document inside.

She chuckled, scanned through the information inside, and immediately sneered after she finished reading it.

“I gave you one million and this is all you managed to get?” She slapped the piece of paper right on the table.

There was nothing at all about Harmony’s background.

The only information given was that Harmony grew up with Timothy, Jonathan, and Zachary, but then went abroad to study when she was ten.

She then returned to the country once and stayed for an indeterminate amount of time, after which she went abroad again and nothing else was known of her time there.

Then, she returned to the country again.

She was exactly what Jonathan said she was—a friend.

No other information was available.

The private investigator looked particularly worried because he felt as though it was the first time that he encountered such a tricky assignment in his career. He felt humiliated when that was all the paltry information he could get despite his contacts and network.

Harmony’s information seemed to have been sealed off by someone, and the person protecting her was not someone he should underestimate. For the moment, he could only find so much about her.

The private investigator felt ashamed when he told her, “I’m sorry, Ms. Tyrell. You can choose to give me a little more time, or I will refund the payment back to you. Just please don’t give a bad review!”

Rochelle wanted to tattoo her bad review on his forehead for having the nerve to actually make such a request!

“You don’t need to give me a refund. I’ll give you more time. Be sure to investigate to the bottom of everything. Most importantly, you must find out if she has any special relationship with Timothy!” Rochelle answered concisely.

The private investigator understood at once.

It turned out to be a case of a wealthy wife wanting to catch her cheating husband. There was no surprise then that she was so anxious.

He thought for a moment and added, "If that's the case, I've managed to discover one thing. Harmony is much closer to Timothy compared to the others."

Rochelle's eyebrows twitched. "How close is close? Were they together before?"

The private investigator scratched his head and his voice became softer. "Answering that...would require me to find out more."

Rochelle closed her eyes and took a couple of breaths before finally restraining her urge to beat someone up. "Then do it! Or else you'll have to refund my one million payment and top it up with another million in damages!"

The private investigator left immediately without saying another word.

Rochelle looked at the fluttering piece of paper and felt a headache coming on.

It would be fine if Harmony was nothing more than an ex-girlfriend or a first love, but the situation suggested that there was more to it than meets the eye. In an era where information spread like wildfire, nobody could remain hidden from scrutiny. She was either a very powerful person herself, or the person protecting her was very powerful.

Rochelle was not too worried if Harmony was a formidable person in herself.. Her greatest worry was if the person protecting Harmony turned out to be Timothy.