

《Once Bitten, Twice Shy》

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Chapter 42: He Adores My Feet

Samantha's heartbeat quickened. She freed up a hand, took out the needle she carried with her, and hid it in the palm of her hand.

She would use it if Violet really opened the closet door!

In any case, she would never give her the opportunity to make a fuss out of the predicament.

All of a sudden, the housekeeper strained and yelled, "Mrs. Schmidt, I can't stop the guests. They're about to break in again. The first thing you should do is to send the guests away!"

They had suffered enough of being the butt of jokes that day and could no longer afford to let things simmer.

Although Violet was extremely reluctant, she knew that the housekeeper was right. If photos of Penelope in such a state were taken by the guests and circulated, no wealthy family would be willing to accept her, much less the Barkers!

Violet had no idea how, but she managed to force herself to calm down. She walked quickly into the bathroom, grabbed a towel to wrap Penelope's naked body, then helped her out, and handed her to the housekeeper. "Take care of her."

The housekeeper nodded. "Understood."

Violet closed her eyes for a moment, and when she next opened them, she had regained her dignified and elegant character. Then, she opened the door and walked out.

Facing everyone's intense gazes, she acted as if nothing happened and even sported a smile on her face. "I'm sorry, everyone. I have some housework to attend to, so that's it for today's party. Thank you for coming today!"

She then turned to her servants and said, "Send them off!"

Although the guests were reluctant to see the commotion ending just like that, they were all figures of note who could not possibly drag their feet on the ground when their host had already declared the end of the party.

They could only leave regretfully.

Violet turned around and walked quickly toward the master bedroom.

As soon as she walked to the door, the door of the master bedroom opened from the inside. It was Sheena, whose face was red as she walked out of the inside while straightening her skirt.

Both women locked gazes at each other.

Sheena had a panicked look when she saw Violet and she wondered why the latter was upstairs instead of socializing in the banquet hall below.

Although Violet had already seen the live broadcast earlier, her anger shot through the roof after looking at Sheena, then at the messy bedroom. The nauseating smell still lingered in the air and she could hear the sound of trickling water in the bathroom!

How dare the daughter of a humble servant seduce her husband under her nose and made her look like a fool in public!

Everything that happened earlier—the humiliation she suffered, the failed plan, and the guests' ridicule—were all Sheena's doing! Violet was never going to forgive her!

Violet grabbed Sheena's hair viciously with one hand and used her other to slap Sheena with all her strength.

Her anger had reached its peak and she delivered three slaps in a row. "You b*tch! You're nothing but a dog in our home and you dare to climb onto our bed? I'll kill you today! Just you wait!"

'A dog...'

It was the same insult again!

For Sheena, no other insult could hurt her as much as those words.

The Schmidts all treated her like a dog from the very beginning. No one saw her as a human. No one!

In that case, she would show them how dogs retaliate when they get anxious!

The panic in Sheena's eyes disappeared. It was instead replaced by an unusual glimmer. She raised her hand as well and grabbed Violet's hair, returning the three forceful slaps!

Slap.

Slap.

Slap.

Violet could never have imagined that the little b*tch Sheena would dare to fight back and slap her in the face. Those slaps left Violet looking dazed and silly.

She was hardly able to stand firm and collapsed onto the ground.

Sheena looked at her condescendingly. She could feel as though the breaths she held inside her chest had finally cleared up, but she was not done yet!

She curled her lips, squatted down, then approached Violet and spoke with clarity, "Let me tell you something, Mrs. Schmidt. The person you call a dog didn't take the initiative to climb onto your husband's bed. Your husband is the one who likes me. He likes me so much that he can't control himself. He's smitten with my body. Don't you understand?"

"Oh, well, you probably don't... I heard from Justin that he hasn't touched you for a very long time now. As if that's not bad enough, he can't even be bothered to look at you. He doesn't feel anything for you!"

"You..." Violet nearly collapsed in anger and began gesticulating. "You little sl*t. I'm going to tear your mouth open."

Sheena sneered disdainfully and pushed Violet's hand away. "By the way, do you know what Justin likes the most about me? He...adores my legs the most."

As she said that, she deliberately lifted the hem of her skirt to reveal love marks printed all over her fair-skinned feet.

Violet was so incensed that she was unable to get up from the ground. All she could do was clutch her heart while panting.

She practically snarled when she said, "You little b*tch. Shut up! Shut your mouth!"

Sheena did not expect that Violet—whose head was always held high and only ever looked down on her—would one day end up being humiliated so severely. It felt really good!

The sound of water came to a stop inside the bathroom, and Justin's voice rang as soon as the bathroom door opened. "You... What are you doing!"

Sheena immediately suppressed the smug expression on her face. With lightning speed, she grabbed Violet's hand and slapped her own cheek forcefully.

She then fell to one side along with the flow of the strength.

Justin just so happened to walk out and instinctively stretched out his hand to catch her. He lowered his head, saw the slap marks on Sheena's face, and became so angry that he shouted at Violet. "It's not Sheena's fault. Why did you have to hit her?"

Justin cheated and went so far as to defend his side chick after being caught. Violet could only taste iron in her throat—she was so angry that she spurted out a mouthful of blood.

Sheena hid in Justin's arms and watched coldly as Violet vomited blood. At that moment, all she felt was that she had successfully exacted her revenge!

...

At the other end, the housekeeper brought Penelope out after the guests had left and the guestroom had reverted to quietness again.

After Samantha made sure that there was no one outside, she breathed a sigh of relief and tucked the needle in her hand away.

Unfortunately, her heart soon sank yet again.

The aphrodisiac's effect on Timothy had completely worn off. His expression lost all sense of cognition and his actions were based purely on instinct.

Samantha raised her hand in an attempt to push him away, but his strength was just too great. Not only did she fail to push him away, she ended up having her hands clasped tightly and twisted behind her so she could not move at all.

Timothy's other hand had already grabbed her clothes and he tore it open with a hiss.

"No, Timothy, don't!" Samantha's voice faltered uncontrollably because she knew she could not escape.

Someone was bound to enter anytime, but that aside, the last thing she wanted to be Timothy's antidote!

Timothy, however, did not listen to her at all. His hands went about their way, just like before, but when he was getting more anxious, Samantha blurted out subconsciously, "If you really need to relieve yourself, I.... I'll bring Penelope to you!"

Chapter 43: Find Another Woman

As soon as Samantha said those words, she could feel the man's tall body stiffen all of a sudden.

Timothy slowly distanced himself slightly from her. His black pupils appeared sullen and dark, while another layer of chilliness was thrown into the mix. His voice was as sharp as a knife's edge, jabbing straight at her. "What did you just say? Say it again!"

Samantha was not nearly as panicked then as she was earlier when they could have been discovered at any time by anyone else. At that moment, Timothy's expression and tone made her gulp a few times. Beads of cold sweat even began appearing at her back.

She did not understand why he was so angry. Did he and Penelope not love each other? There was nothing wrong with what she said!

Could he be angry at Penelope because...Penelope schemed against him?

Indeed, Timothy loathed it when other people schemed against him. After all, the reason he hated her that much was because he had constantly misunderstood her!

Samantha bit her lower lip and corrected herself duly. "Okay, I was wrong, but... Please hold on a little longer. I'll bring you out right now, and once you're out, you can look for another woma—"

"Samantha!" Timothy gritted his teeth and called her name, interrupting her sentence midway. The anger in his eyes became more intense. He stared straight into Samantha's gaze as if he was about to skin her alive.

That damn woman was his wife, yet she went so far as to tell him to look for another woman!

The immense anger spread throughout his body and the strong medicinal effect further made Timothy's vision hazy. A murderous aura emanated throughout his body, making him look very shocking.

His hand reached for his waist, and he seemed to have conjured a special dagger out of nowhere, which he held in his hand.

The sharp glimmer at the edge of the blade was still visible despite the rather dim light inside the closet.

He raised the dagger.

Samantha was stupefied. Did he want to kill her because he was too angry?

Timothy's actions were extremely quick and precise. Samantha dodged back by instinct, only to notice...that he stabbed his own thigh instead of her.

She could hear the sound of clothes tearing and the dull sound of a wound forming on his flesh...

Samantha's breathing stopped abruptly.

He wanted to stab himself...not her...

She stared down at his thigh in a daze. Blood had already begun to flow out and the entire scene was just shocking.

"Timothy, you..." At that moment, she did not know what to say.

The pain caused Timothy's blurry vision to regain a brief moment of clarity. Without even looking at Samantha, he opened the closet door and walked outside.

Samantha was stunned for only a few seconds, after which she quickly snapped back and walked out.

No one noticed them because it was still chaotic outside. After Timothy went out, he took out his cell phone and called his assistant Ronald, who rushed over in a jiffy.

Ronald was shocked to see his boss suffering such an injury and looking somewhat indisposed. He was equally as startled to see a miserable-looking Samantha following behind Timothy.

Ronald hurriedly stepped forward to support Timothy and asked worriedly, "Mr. Barker, this..."

"Let's go." Timothy's voice was dull and low. He gave that order simply and concisely, with a tone that left no doubt to his intentions.

Ronald did not dare to ask any further and shut his mouth at once. He held Timothy, walked to the car that was waiting outside, and helped the man in.

Samantha stopped as soon as she saw that.

Timothy was probably not going to face any issues since Ronald was around. Samantha could then leave, since Timothy was definitely not too pleased to see her.

She was about to turn around and leave when she heard Ronald's voice, "Ms. Larsson, where are you going? Get in the car!"

"I don't think I—"

Before Samantha could even refuse, Ronald said again, "You were with Mr. Barker all this time, right? I have no idea what happened to him, and I have to find a doctor to examine him. Mr. Barker is now in a confused state, so someone has to tell the doctor about his situation!"

Samantha hesitated for a few seconds, but she eventually started walking toward the car and got in.

After all, Timothy saved her life when she fell ill after calling the doctor just in time to treat her. She could not bring herself to be ungrateful to him for that.

In any case, all she had to do was give the doctor an account of what happened!

When Samantha got into the car, Timothy's handsome face had a frown and he seemed to be in immense pain. Cold sweat was oozing out from his forehead and his lips had turned pale.

It was clear that he was feeling very uncomfortable; there was the pain from his injury and the suffering he had to endure from that aphrodisiac.

He nevertheless closed his eyes and leaned motionlessly against the back of the chair without saying a word. Had it not been for his ugly expression, no one would have realized that things were not quite right with him at that moment.

The car raced fast on the road.

Ronald sat in the front passenger seat and gave the doctor a call before asking, "Ms. Larsson, what happened to Mr. Barker?"

Samantha retracted her gaze from Timothy and answered truthfully, "He inhaled an aphrodisiac that probably has a very strong effect. It was Mrs. Schmidt and her daughter's doing."

"What?" Ronald was so scared that he pressed his fist against his lips. "So, uh, did Mr. Barker's injury come about because...you wanted to stop him from doing stuff to you?"

Samantha had to control herself from rolling her eyes. "I didn't do it. He inflicted it on himself."

'Don't put the blame on me again!'

Ronald was speechless.

After a few seconds of silence, he asked weakly, "Then do I still need to get...another woman for Mr. Barker?"

As soon as he finished his question, he felt a gust of wind behind him and raised his eyes to glance at the rearview mirror. All he saw was his big boss's eyes staring at him even though the man had kept them closed ever since getting in the car.

It was a death stare!

Ronald immediately understood that he had said something he should not have. He shut his mouth and lowered his head silently.

Ronald did not drive back to the villa, because he was afraid of making Old Madam Barker worried. As a result, they went to a five-star hotel where Timothy had an exclusive presidential suite.

Inside the room.

The doctor examined Timothy before giving him an injection to suppress the aphrodisiac in his body. Once that was done, he began to treat the thigh wound.

After dealing with the injury for some time, the doctor wiped a handful of sweat from his forehead. He walked to Samantha and Ronald, then said, "Mr. Barker's condition is stable for now, but he still needs to be observed. If the thigh wound becomes infected, he will be down with a fever tonight. Someone has to accompany him here tonight and take his temperature every two hours."

Samantha frowned. "If that's the case, wouldn't it be better to send him to the hospital? At least he'll receive prompt treatment there if a problem pops up."

Ronald shook his head without even giving it a second thought. "No. We can't hide it from Old Madam Barker if we go to the hospital. If she finds out that Mr. Barker is injured, Mr. Barker will kill me."

Samantha did not want the old lady to worry.

The doctor soon left after telling them what to do.

Since everything was done, Samantha was about to bid Ronald goodbye after looking at the time and noticing that it was already getting late. However, she was just about to speak when Ronald spoke ahead of her.

"It's getting late, Ms. Larsson, and I need to go. I'd have to trouble you and leave Mr. Barker in your capable hands."

Chapter 44: What Are You Hinting At?

Samantha was speechless. That was her line!

"No..." Seeing Ronald making his way out, Samantha hurriedly stood before him to stop him. "Mr. Crawford, shouldn't you be the one to stay behind and take care of Timothy? He's your boss!"

Ronald retorted, "But Ms. Larsson, Mr. Barker is your husband!"

Samantha was lost for words.

He really lived up to his position as the executive assistant to a man like Timothy. One sentence alone left her powerless to refute.

"Moreover, Ms. Larsson, I'm a man who does things roughly. I'm never going to be as careful as a girl like you, so you're the most suitable person to stay back and take care of Mr. Barker! I appreciate you taking the trouble to do so!"

Ronald left the suite hastily, as though he had oil on his feet. He did not even wait for Samantha to speak and the only sound that he heard was that of the door closing behind him.

It was only when he got into the elevator that he breathed a sigh of relief.

If he did not misinterpret the signs and hints, then it was clear his big boss was hoping to be alone with Samantha. After all, his big boss acquiesced when he invited Samantha onto the car earlier, but the second he mentioned about finding another woman, the man shot him a murderous gaze!

The more he thought about his decision, the more justified he felt it was. Since that was the case, he wanted to be a better wingman and smiled when a sudden thought occurred to him.

Ronald walked out of the hotel and headed toward the big shopping mall just opposite.

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Inside the room.

Samantha shuffled her feet. She wanted to leave but ended up following them there. She had shown enough kindness to Timothy already. After all, they were not really husband and wife!

She was under no obligation to stay there and take care of him.

Samantha raised her foot, but as time passed, she could not bring herself to take a step forward.

She clenched her fists, gritted her teeth, and finally walked back to the bedside again.

Like it or not, she was not an ungrateful person! In any case, Timothy had also taken care of her all night when she fell sick.

Once Samantha had managed to convince herself, she did not worry too much about it anymore.

Timothy was already asleep but his sleep was not a peaceful one. It was unknown whether that resulted from the pain of the wound or the effects of the aphrodisiac that had yet to wear off. Cold sweat oozed continuously from his forehead and his eyebrows were knit in a tight frown.

Samantha walked to the bathroom and grabbed a towel. She then returned to the edge of the bed and sat there, wiping off his sweat before feeling his forehead. She compared his temperature to her own and it came as a relief that he was not having a fever.

She put the towel on his forehead and shifted her attention to his frown. She unknowingly reached forward and tapped her fingertips on them, smoothing the frown little by little.

It was rare of her to see Timothy being so pale and fragile, so much so that the feeling of pity began rising unconsciously in her heart.

A knock was suddenly heard on the door of the suite, interrupting Samantha's thoughts. She snapped to her senses and walked toward the door puzzlingly.

It was already very late, so who could it possibly be?

She opened the door only to see that Ronald had returned and was standing at the door.

Samantha cocked an eyebrow. "Why are you back, Ronald? Have you finally decided that you want to take care of your boss yourself?"

“Not at all. Don’t get me wrong.” Ronald handed the big bag in his hand to Samantha. “There are some women’s products in there. I came to personally send these to you. I’ve bought some essentials as well as clothes for you to change into!”

“That’s very thoughtful of you, Mr. Crawford.” Samantha accepted his gesture and took the big bag. “Thank you.”

“As it should, Ms. Larsson! I’ll be leaving then. Do call me again if you need anything. Good night!”

“Good night.”

Samantha watched as Ronald strode away. For some reason, she had the feeling that he was running for his life.

Could he be worried that she would make him stay and take care of Timothy?

Samantha closed the door and returned to the room with the big bag.

She opened it to try and find a nightdress she could wear after a bath. However, she was utterly dumbfounded to see what was inside...

There were a few nightdresses inside, but they were all the sexy kind—the fabric and design might be different, but the one thing in common was that they were...short, see-through, and revealing!

Samantha could not help but clench her hands into fists as she held the nightdresses.

Ronald was really considerate alright, but he was being considerate toward his big boss rather than her!

No wonder he ran off so fast. It turned out that he was doing something cheeky! Had he left any slower, she would have caught him and definitely insisted on getting him to wear them one by one!

It was already too late for her to go out and buy a new set. The shops were closed and she had to stay there to keep watch over Timothy.

She was wearing a dress at that moment, but she could not be wearing it all the time because it was uncomfortable. Those nightdresses were better than nothing...

In any case, Timothy was asleep and it was not as though he would be able to see it.

Samantha tried her best to pick out the less raunchy one among them and brought it into the bathroom.

After taking her shower, she put on the nightdress rather awkwardly, then wrapped herself in the bathrobe before going out.

She turned off the main light in the room, leaving only the wall lamp beside the bed as the sole source of light. After that, she lay down on the sofa next to the bed and got up every two hours to take Timothy's body temperature.

Although she was able to keep herself awake in the beginning, she eventually became a little sleepy and ended up sleeping directly on the bed after taking Timothy's body temperature.

She had no idea how much time had passed, but the sky had quietly begun to light up.

Timothy's eyelids moved, and he opened his eyes slowly. He was in a daze for a few seconds, but his gaze became profoundly sharp when the memories soon flooded into his mind.

The last, reasonably clear memory he had was that of Samantha telling him to find another woman. He then stabbed himself and asked Ronald to pick him up.

From that point on, his memory was completely vague. He knew that someone had been taking care of him and it was probably Ronald.

Sensing pressure on top of his arm, Timothy turned his face and looked over.

The first thing he saw was that long, luscious black hair, followed by a woman's pretty and delicate facial features. The woman's eyes were closed and she was asleep. Some of the sun's mischievous rays of light shone through the window and landed on her cheeks, creating an inexplicable feeling of tranquility and calmness.

Timothy's heart was like a lake that had endless ripples on the water surface because a boulder had been thrown right in.

It was her? She was the one who stayed and took care of him?

Was he dreaming, or was he seeing things?

Timothy moved his hand slightly—so light that it was almost as if he was afraid of shattering the scene in front of him. His fingertips then lightly touched Samantha's eyebrows.

She was real.

Samantha seemed to have sensed his touch as her long curly lashes trembled slightly and she slowly opened her eyes.

She made direct eye contact with Timothy.

There was a gentle look in his eyes that she had not seen for a long time.

Samantha was stunned too. Did she fall asleep?

She blinked to try and have a closer look, but Timothy's expression had reverted to normal, as though everything she saw earlier was just an illusion.

Samantha had an imperceptible sense of loss in her heart. She cleared her throat lightly, stood up directly, and asked, "You're awake. How are you feeling right now?"

Rather than answering her, Timothy merely stared at her and grinned evilly, "What are you trying to hint at by dressing like this, Samantha?"

Chapter 45: Feed Me

'Dressing like this?' How was she dressed?

Samantha looked down at herself in confusion. That was when she found out that the bathrobe sash had been undone, probably as a result of having moved a lot after falling asleep, only to reveal her sexy nightdress.

She was incredibly seductive from Timothy's point of view...

Samantha's cheeks turned red and she hurriedly wrapped the bathrobe over herself before tying the strap around her waist. The more nervous she was, the more difficult it became for her to tie it.

Timothy kept his calm amidst his excitement and continued to tease her. "It might be inconvenient for me now, but if you really want it, I have no problem putting in some effort to satisfy you!"

Samantha finally tied a firm knot on the strap. She blushed and explained, "Ronald bought this. I... I wore it because I didn't have any other clothes to change into. Like hell I'd want it!"

She felt even more embarrassed after saying the last few words and could not help but call him out again. "Quit it with all those dirty thoughts of yours!"

Timothy felt even more pleased when he saw Samantha blushing and stomping her feet anxiously. He enjoyed that kind of attitude much more than when she gave him the cold shoulder and got angry at him all the time.

Taking care not to overdo it, Timothy coughed slightly. "I'd like something to drink."

Samantha obviously did not want to continue the topic, so she turned around and walked out of the room to pour him some water.

After returning with a glass of warm water, she handed it to him and said, "Here."

Timothy did not move. His black eyes looked at her and there seemed to be a hint of weakness in his faint tone. "I can't get up. Can you help me up?"

Why did she have this feeling that he was very energetic when teasing her earlier? Why pretend to be weak all of a sudden?

As Samantha chastised him in her heart, she saw his frowns and realized that he really might be feeling uncomfortable.

She looked at him suspiciously for a few seconds, but she eventually reached out, grabbed his arm, and used a bit of strength to pull him up.

However, Timothy was only halfway up when he fell back on the bed, seemingly because his wound was hurting again. At the same time, Samantha ended up being pulled down as well.

She had no time to be prepared for what was coming as her upper body landed on his body and her red lips planted an imprint on his thin lips.

Their eyes were facing each other and they could see each other's reflections from the surface of their eyes.

Samantha's mind was blank for a moment. She got up hurriedly from him the next second, but by then her earlobes had already turned bright red.

Timothy touched his own lips suggestively and her warmth seemed to still linger there. With his eyebrows cocked slightly, his voice became hoarse as he teased, "And you said you didn't want it, Samantha."

She had witnessed first-hand how guilty individuals were often the first ones to cry foul!

It was she who ended up buying his lies and believing he was really weak! True enough, a man's words were always lies!

Samantha set down the water cup forcefully on the bedside table and said coldly. "It's your call whether you want to get up or whether you want to drink!"

Timothy did not feel annoyed at all, and asked instead, "Is this how you're supposed to act when you're caring for me, Samantha? When you were sick that night, I let you hold

me however you wanted just to make sure your little life was not in any danger. I stayed up the entire night to take care of you.”

Samantha’s anger disappeared little by little after hearing what he said.

Timothy was right... He did help her once...

Samantha took a few deep breaths and stretched out her hand again. She grabbed his shoulders and exerted considerable force to pull him up, but Timothy was quite cooperative on that occasion and managed to sit up with the help of her strength. He then leaned against the bedhead.

He lifted his chin and motioned for the cup. “Bring the glass to my lips.”

Samantha frowned. “You hurt your leg, Timothy, not your hands! Drink it by yourself!”

Timothy replied calmly, “My entire body is weak and my hands are even weaker.”

Samantha gritted her teeth. ‘You seemed pretty strong when you pulled me just now! Forget about it! I’m not that ungrateful of a person!’

Samantha repeated those sentences silently in her heart before picking up the glass of water. She bent over slightly and leaned toward him, placing the glass to his mouth and helping him drink it.

She then forced a smile and asked, “Are you satisfied now, Mr. Barker?”

Timothy had a gleeful look in his black eyes and he glanced askance at her, saying, “It’s reasonable. A bare pass.”

How dare he fault her like that!

Samantha’s lips twitched and she smirked annoyedly. “Mr. Barker, if you’re not satisfied with my care, you’re free to hire a caregiver who can satisfy you. There are loads of people who would be happy to take care of you. I’ll be leaving now, then,” Samantha said, then turned around to leave.

She felt a sudden grip on her wrist which startled her. She then turned to look at Timothy and asked him, “What are you doing?”

She tried to break free of his shackles but was unable to do so.

Timothy looked up at her and his black pupils were staring deeply at her. A few seconds later, his thin lips opened slightly and he asked each word with clarity, “Samantha, why did you interrupt me and Penelope yesterday? ”

His tone contained imperceptible traces of inquisitiveness and expectation.

Samantha was stunned by his question. She did not expect him to ask that question out of the blue. What did he mean?

She looked into his eyes but failed to see any hint of emotion within his dark pupils. After thinking for a moment, she replied, "It was clear as day that Penelope was scheming against you yesterday. I know you don't like it when people conspire against you, plus you helped me back in the detention room last time. I'm just returning the favor."

Timothy frowned slightly but his tone remained unchanged. "That's it?"

What did he mean 'that's it'? Could he have figured out that she had other motives?

Samantha rolled her eyes and she decided to come clean with it. She shrugged and said, "Okay, I'll admit that I don't want to see Penelope's plan succeed. Violet and Penelope framed me for stealing, caused me to get arrested and nearly disfigured as a result. What I did was nothing more than taking revenge."

If Timothy wanted, he could easily be able to find out the reasons behind her actions the previous day. That was why she had no reason to conceal it.

"If you want to get even for Penelope, or if you want to get back at me for disturbing your time with her yesterday, by all means come at me."

Samantha did not even realize the hint of bitterness at the tail end of her sentence.

He had been so incensed the previous night after Penelope conspired against him, but then forgave her as soon as he woke up the next day. On the other hand, Samantha clearly never did any of that, but he misunderstood her time and time again.

True love really was amazing!

Timothy's black eyes were focused on Samantha's face and not a single one of her expressions could escape his attention. He reached out and pulled her, catching her off guard and sending her tumbling right on the bed.

The distance between Timothy and Samantha narrowed in the blink of an eye, and all she heard was his hoarse voice, "Don't you have any other reasons besides those?"

Chapter 46: The Secret About the Called-Off Marriage

What other reason could there be?

Samantha unwittingly blinked several times.

She had already revealed her motives to him and was not hiding anything else. What other reason was he expecting to hear?

As she was still in deep thought, Timothy's handsome face approached her and those dark eyes stared right at her as if he could see through her innermost thoughts.

His thin lips opened slightly and he repeated his question. "Is there any other reason you interrupted my time with Penelope yesterday?"

Samantha's heartbeat quickened uncontrollably. Her gaze flickered slightly and she could not bring herself to look directly into his eyes.

She was afraid that he would see the thoughts she hid deep down in her heart.

Samantha lowered her eyes and took a deep breath. By the time she raised her eyes to look at him again, her expression had become much calmer. She even sounded a little puzzled when she spoke and questioned him back instead of answering, "What other reason could there be?"

Timothy looked deeply into her eyes in an attempt to find some traces of unease or dishonesty, but he could not find any of that.

Aside from the two reasons she gave, he originally thought that she had another reason for interrupting his time with Penelope that day—that she did not want to see him with other women.

As it turned out, he read too much into it...

It was to be expected though, considering how she had no qualms telling him to deal with his desires by looking for another woman. Why would she care if he was with someone else?

A self-deprecating smile slipped through Timothy's eyes.

He released his grasp from Samantha's hand and leaned back on the bed. His handsome face then turned cold along with the aura surrounding his entire body. "I don't need you here. You can leave."

Samantha watched as his expression turned frosty in the blink of an eye. Despite knowing that Timothy was a cold and gloomy good-for-nothing man, that was just way too cold and gloomy of him.

She thought that she had been very polite when she spoke. Was he really angered just because of that?

He even commented that she was ungrateful earlier, yet the same could be said of a scumbag like him! Like it or not, she was the one who took care of him all night, and rather than saying a word of thanks, he pulled a long face instead!

In his eyes, merely breathing might already be cause for reproach!

'Fine, I'll leave if you want!' She could not wait to be as far away from him as possible and hoped that they would not meet each other again!

Samantha turned around and left without saying another word!

She went to the bathroom, changed back into her dress, then threw all the nightdresses into the trash can. After picking up her bag, she walked out of the room and slammed the door.

...

Samantha's phone rang as soon as she walked out of the hotel entrance. The caller was Rochelle, so she immediately answered the call.

Rochelle's mellifluous voice was heard saying, "The revenge you exacted yesterday was perfect, Sammy. The Schmidts are now in the limelight today, making headlines all over the major entertainment news. Even the top three trending searches on Waybo are about the dirt on their family. The Schmidts have never been under such intense public scrutiny before."

Under normal circumstances, Samantha would be eager to discuss her victory with Rochelle. Unfortunately, she was filled with anger at that moment and simply wanted to vent it all out!

"Your call came at just the right time, Chelle. I have loads to tell you!"

It was rare for Samantha to speak so much and she blabbed about Timothy's misdeeds in one breath. In the end, she even said angrily, "Don't you think this b*stard Timothy is being a bit much? I slept against the edge of the bed last night and my entire body is feeling sore. I wasn't expecting him to thank me, but why the hell did he have to get angry at me? I shouldn't have helped him yesterday! I should've just let him fall into the trap that Penelope and her mother set up, then he can get caught with his pants down in public. It'll serve him right to be forced to marry Penelope!"

"I'm just too naive. Timothy loves Penelope to the point where he doesn't give a hoot about whether she's conspiring against him. All that scumbag does is hate and misunderstand me!"

Samantha was almost short of breath when she finished complaining.

On the other side of the line, Rochelle was silent for some time before she finally said, "Sammy, what's the real reason you interrupted Timothy and Penelope yesterday?"

Samantha practically laughed due to her anger. "Seriously, Chelle, are you in on it with Timothy? Why is everyone asking me the same question? Didn't I already say that it's because Timothy helped me in the past? I'm just returning him the favor, and at the same time, I don't want Penelope and her mother's plan to succeed!"

"Come on, Sammy." Rochelle had seen through Samantha's thoughts a long time ago. "Do you still have to hide it with me?"

Those words left Samantha feeling choked but she still insisted and said, "I'm telling the truth."

Rochelle was not about to let Samantha believe her own lies and immediately poked a hole in her excuse. "I'll help you say it if you're reluctant to. The real reason is that you don't want to see Timothy being with other women."

"You still haven't completely let him go."

Samantha's hand clenched fiercely around her cell phone. She opened her mouth to try and come up with a rebuttal but was unable to utter a single word.

She always thought that she had given up everything and no longer had any wishful hopes toward Timothy.

However, when she saw with her own eyes that something was about to happen between Timothy and Penelope, she still stormed off without a second thought.

In fact, she was not actually that anxious at the time. She merely wanted to avoid seeing some scenes that she ought not to have seen.

That was the reason she became so flustered earlier when Timothy posed that question to her.

If he really saw through her, she would have to put up with his cynicism and humiliation again...

Rochelle knew exactly why Samantha was silent. She was well aware of how much Samantha liked Timothy two years ago, and how painful it was for Samantha to have the marriage publicly broken off.

After a moment's thought, Rochelle said softly, "Sammy, I always have this feeling that Timothy isn't as ruthless to you as you say he is. There's plenty of other ways he can retaliate against you. Why did he want to marry you? It's to keep you by his side."

“Furthermore, he came to rescue you just in time when something happened to you. Why would he do that if he really hates you?”

Samantha returned to her senses. “What are you trying to say, Chelle?”

“What I’m trying to say is, do you think there could be some miscommunication between you and Timothy?” Rochelle paused for a while, then continued, “I’m referring to two years ago. Could there have been some miscommunication that led to all these subsequent misunderstandings and caused him to break things off so suddenly during the day of your wedding?”

Her words were always straight to the point.

Samantha calmed down slowly and thought about Rochelle’s words.

When the marriage collapsed two years ago and she went to ask why, Timothy sent Ronald to respond to her and the answer she got was that he got tired of her.

Those words left her heartbroken and she was unwilling to relive it and think about it again.

Rochelle’s questions jolted Samantha’s memory of the anonymous email. Could...there really have been a secret back then?

“Sammy, since the both of you are married and you still can’t let go of him, it’d be better for you to ask clearly instead of hurting each other like this. If there really is a misunderstanding, work to solve it. You and Timothy might be able to start afresh.”

After ending the call, Samantha stood there for a full five minutes just to think.. She then turned around abruptly and walked into the hotel again.

Chapter 47: It’s Inconvenient for Him to Take the Call

As soon as Samantha walked to the front desk, the young lady there stopped her because she was not registered as a guest of the hotel’s presidential suite. If she wanted to go up, she must first get the consent of the person staying there.

Ronald had brought her up directly the previous night and the receptionist did not recognize her.

Samantha took out her cell phone. Her finger hovered on the screen for a few seconds before she dialed Timothy’s number.

Rochelle's words had inspired hope in Samantha's heart. During the past two years, she had not been able to rid herself of the pain she suffered when Timothy ended things with her in public.

From then onward, the thorn had always been lodged in her. It would appear from time to time and sting her, but she was never able to pull it out.

Perhaps the only way to really be free of that was to face that matter head-on...

The dial tone sounded in her ears and sped up Samantha's heartbeat little by little. She did not know what kind of answer she would get. Would it be the same as two years ago or was there really a misunderstanding?

During that short period of time, her thoughts were all jumbled up in a complete mess and her mind was chaotic.

The call was finally answered and her breathing stopped right at that moment.

"Hello." The voice was not Timothy's familiar, low, and melodious voice. Rather, it was a sweet-sounding female voice.

"Hi, who am I speaking with?"

Samantha was stunned and her first reaction was doubt whether or not she had made the wrong call. She took the cell phone from her ear and looked at the number.

Those eleven digits were infinitely familiar to her and she had memorized them well enough that she could even recite them backward. It was impossible for it to be wrong.

It was Timothy's number.

Then why did a woman answer the phone?

The other person could only hear silence from Samantha's end. Their sweet, feminine voice once again asked in a confused tone, "Who are you? Are you looking for Mr. Barker? He's changing his clothes right now, so it's not very convenient for—"

Samantha could not bear to continue listening and hung up right away.

Her impulse, confusion, expectation, and those ridiculously wishful thoughts had all turned crumbled into ash. She stood blankly at the center of the hotel lobby and everyone around her was long gone, leaving her all lonely and laughable.

Those who could enter his exclusive suite were either close to him or had received his permission.

Timothy had already called another woman over even though she had just left not too long ago. It was probably another close female friend. Given his character, he absolutely did not let anyone touch his stuff casually, especially not something as personal as a cell phone.

One could imagine what kind of relationship he had with that woman if she was allowed to casually answer the calls that he received!

If that was the case, he ought to have called that woman over the night before! Why bother pretending to be a pure-hearted man!

Perhaps it was a blessing in disguise that Timothy did not answer the call. Otherwise, she would have foolishly asked whether there were any ulterior motives in breaking off the marriage two years ago. If that happened, she really would have been presenting herself to be ridiculed by him.

While it was true that Timothy saved her numerous times, the reasons for that were because she was still of use to him. He needed her simply to reassure Old Madam Barker and facilitate his frolicking outside. There were no other reasons at all.

Samantha blamed herself too—she failed to control herself during that time and still retained traces of her delusion toward him.

She deserved it!

Tears somehow began to well in Samantha's eyes. She raised her head high, took a deep breath, and forced all those tears back. After putting away the phone, she turned and left without the slightest hesitation.

...

Inside the suite, Ronald helped to change Timothy's wound dressing before changing the latter's clothes. He then helped his boss lie back down before walking out of the room.

The woman—a secretary whose name was Tiana Reece—heard footsteps and placed the phone down right away. She turned around casually, looked at Ronald, then asked in a soft voice, "Hey, Mr. Crawford, is Mr. Barker alright? Is the wound really bad?"

"You can leave after leaving those urgent documents," Ronald ordered her rather than answering her.

Ronald had come to see Timothy, but not before handling some company affairs. Tiana was from the CEO's office as well, and she happened to have some urgent documents that Timothy needed to review. When she heard that her big boss was injured, she insisted on following along.

Unfortunately, Timothy was not in the mood to meet anyone, so Ronald had to come out and ask her to leave.

Tiana was a little reluctant when Ronald ignored her question, so she craned her neck and looked at the door of the room, saying, "Don't you think someone has to stay here to take care of Mr. Barker? He's having difficulty moving and someone has to watch over him, right?"

Someone—or rather, Samantha—had been taking care of Timothy, but who knows what happened between the two of them. She was long gone, and she even threw the nightdresses he so carefully selected for her in the trash can. Meanwhile, Timothy's expression was exceedingly ugly.

When he was changing his boss's wound dressing and clothes earlier, he did not even dare to breathe too loudly.

It went without saying that there was no need for him to explain that to the secretary. Ronald's tone started to get a little impatient. "You may go back to the company, Ms. Reece. I'll be taking care of Mr. Barker."

Tiana gave Ronald an angry glare.

She wondered whether he was so by-the-book that he did not understand her implications, or whether he simply pretended not to understand!

As dissatisfied as she was, she did not dare to offend Ronald. She bit her lower lip unhappily and said, "Okay, I'll be leaving then, Mr. Crawford. Call me if Mr. Barker needs anything. I'm available twenty-four-seven!"

Tiana left reluctantly and dawdled for a bit before finally leaving.

Ronald closed the door and frowned. His boss's charm was so great that there was always an endless stream of women casting flirtatious glances, be it overtly or implicitly.

He had sent away countless women over the years.

Initially, Penelope's presence meant that those women did not have the guts to approach him even though that was what their hearts wanted. Ever since Penelope's unbecoming acts went public, those women began getting restless again.

Each and every one of them spared no effort to attract Timothy's attention: they wanted to become the Barkers' daughter-in-law.

Little did they know that Timothy already belonged to another woman.

However, Ronald had to wonder... Where did that woman go?

...

Ronald had to tread carefully during the next few days.

He had been with Timothy for so many years that he knew the latter's temper like the back of his hand and understood how exactly to avoid lighting the fuse.

During those few days however, he felt like he was walking on thin ice and could easily provoke Timothy regardless of how cautious he was. If it was not one thing, it was something else.

Even the way he held a cup was an eyesore to Timothy, who shot him a cold look.

Although injured people were fragile, and fragile people would easily be bad-tempered and hypocritical, Timothy's moodiness seemed to be just too much.

Those who had no idea of the situation might have the impression that he was Timothy's enemy.

Ronald could no longer bear the pressure and he felt like he would suffocate if it continued.

He stood by the bed and asked weakly, "Mr. Barker, was I too unprofessional in the way I took care of you? Would you prefer for me to hire a professional nurse to take care of you?"

Timothy looked up at him and squinted.. In a stiff voice, he said, "You know I don't like strangers."

Chapter 48: Misunderstanding

'Don't like strangers...'

Ronald repeated those words softly to himself. After pondering for a while, something seemed to click in his mind and he finally had a realization.

The reproachment he suffered from Timothy those few days was not because of substandard care, but because the person giving that care was not what Timothy wanted!

The 'caregiver' Timothy wanted all along was not him, but Samantha!

Ronald felt distraught at his own dumbness. He would not have had to suffer all that abuse if he simply understood it two days earlier.

As a professional assistant, his duty was to solve problems for his boss.

If his big boss was unwilling to put pride aside, then he should be the one to do it!

“I understand what you mean, Mr. Barker. I’ll find a caregiver that will meet your needs!”

After speaking, he walked out of the room, picked up his cell phone, and dialed Samantha’s number.

...

At that moment, Samantha was with Corey in the hospital. Ever since leaving the hotel that day, she has been wallowing in depression and was absent-minded in everything she did.

It was not her choice to stay sad, but rather, those upsetting emotions lingered around her like a shadow.

If she stayed in the villa, she was worried that Old Madam Barker would notice that something was not right with her. As a result, she went to the hospital and stayed with Corey because talking to him could divert her attention.

Having spent the past two years abroad, she had learned how to heal her own pain. What she lacked as of then was simply time. Give her a few days and her mood would no longer be affected by Timothy!

“Would you like some apples, Corey? I’ll slice one up for you.”

She reached into the fruit basket she brought and picked the biggest, most beautiful one there. Then she took the knife and began to peel it.

Her cell phone rang all of a sudden, but she merely glanced at the screen and continued peeling the apple.

A frown appeared on her face when she saw that the call was from Ronald. She tilted the knife slightly and shook the apple peel off.

She did not want to see that scumbag Timothy, including anyone and anything that had to do with him!

She ignored the call and continued peeling the apple.

The phone rang and rang until the call disconnected by itself, but it soon began to ring again.

Corey glanced at the phone and asked softly, "Hey sis, don't you want to answer the phone?"

He glanced at the caller ID again. "This Mr. Crawford... is Timothy's assistant, right? There must be a reason Timothy's looking for you. You should answer the call."

"I..." Before Samantha could even refuse, Corey had reached out for the phone, pressed the answer button, and put it to her ear.

Samantha was speechless.

She had not told Corey about her true relationship with Timothy because she did not want to rile Corey up and make him feel guilty.

Back then, she told a white lie to comfort him, saying that although her marriage to Timothy was unorthodox, she had rekindled their old relationship and were a loving couple.

She was no different from Timothy when he put on a facade in front of Old Madam Barker. They did it for the sake of the people they loved.

Corey probably already noticed why she went to the hospital so often and surmised that she had some conflict with Timothy. At that moment, he would then become the mediator to help them reconcile.

Samantha could not just end the call right in front of him because the call was already connected. She could only force a smile and hold her phone before getting up and walking out.

When she left the ward, her first word was a cold 'Hello'.

Ronald's polite voice came from the other end. "Ms. Larsson, it's me, Ronald."

"Yes, what is it?"

Ronald was a little bit frustrated when she heard her indifferent tone, but if he could not convince Samantha, he would have to deal with his boss... He had no choice but to bite the bullet.

"Ahem." Ronald cleared his voice and said, "Well, this is the situation, Ms. Larsson. I have an urgent matter to deal with and I have to go on a business trip for a few days. No one else is available to take care of Mr. Barker. Can you spare a few days to take care of him?"

Samantha listened to Ronald's blatant tomfoolery and found it extremely ridiculous! She was extremely angry.

What did he mean by 'no one else is available to take care of Mr. Barker'? What about those close female friends? All he had to do was make a come-hither movement and women would arrive by the droves!

To top it off, that sweet-sounding woman had probably been taking care of Timothy since that day!

Although she had no idea why that good-for-nothing Timothy ordered Ronald to call her over again, it was definitely not for anything pleasant.

Only fools would show up just to be humiliated!

Samantha replied in an even colder tone, "Why would Mr. Barker need to worry about having no one take care of him? There are plenty of women around him and you're free to have your pick of them, Ronald. They'll definitely do their best to take good care of Mr. Barker!"

Samantha started to regret it as soon as she ended her sentence.

She should have just ended the call. Why did she have to be all bitter about it?

Samantha did not wait for Ronald to say anything and immediately hung up. Then she immediately switched the phone off.

She closed her eyes, calmed down for a bit, then walked back to the ward again.

...

Ronald was bewildered when he heard the call ended with a toot.

What was Samantha trying to say? What did she mean by 'there are plenty of women around' and 'you're free to have your pick of them'?

He was the only one who had been around Timothy those few days, and he was a straight man no less!

How and why in the world would Samantha misunderstand his relationship with Timothy?

All of a sudden, Ronald felt a strong gust of wind from behind. He turned his head abruptly and saw his boss, just as he expected. He was unsure when Timothy had gotten out of bed and stood at the room door, but the man's dark eyes were staring gloomily at him.

Ronald gulped unconsciously. Could Timothy's expression be a consequence of what Samantha had said...

Timothy was pulling a long face, but just as Ronald was fretting over how he should explain himself, Timothy's thin lips parted slightly and he asked coldly, "Who else came here during the past few days besides you?"

The sudden question made Ronald stunned. He was about to answer and say that he was the only one, but he received a notification on his cell phone before he could speak.

He glanced at it. It was a WeTalk message that Tiana sent to express her concern about how Timothy's recovery progress was.

Tiana had sent him more than a dozen WeTalk messages every day, all of which were just fancy ways to show that she was worried about Timothy.

He stared at the message for a few seconds and suddenly remembered that Tiana had been here that day. To make things worse, he remembered walking out and seeing her placing a phone down.

That phone was probably Timothy's!

He has been so busy those couple of days that he did not even think much about it. In hindsight, he realized that her actions were rather strange.

Afraid to hide it from Timothy, he answered truthfully, "Tiana the secretary came here once, and I don't know if she touched your cell phone. Maybe that was what caused the misunderstanding with Ms. Larsson?"

Ronald immediately held up his phone and said, "Mr. Barker, I'll call Ms. Larsson right now and explain everything clearly!"

Timothy's black eyes narrowed just as Ronald was about to dial. Despite the former's thoughts being shrouded in mystery, he blurted out, "Forget about it!"

Chapter 49: Hubby

'Forget about it?'

Ronald was almost convinced that he had misheard Timothy and unknowingly asked, "Are you telling me not to, Mr. Barker?"

Although Timothy never admitted anything, Ronald could clearly see that he cared deeply about Samantha. It was completely different compared to other women!

Penelope might have been by Timothy's side for the past two years, but he always treated her in a lukewarm manner even though he gave her whatever she wanted. As

for those women who took the initiative to court him, he would not even think twice to look at them.

Samantha was the only one who had a repeated effect on his emotions and made him look like any ordinary man.

That was why he could never understand Timothy's lack of desire to pull himself through a tricky situation.

Ronald was hesitating whether or not to speak up and remind Timothy about the undesirable qualities of such behavior, but then heard Timothy's charming voice. "You said that Tiana had been showing concern about me these past couple of days? Did she constantly ask about my recovery progress?"

Ronald swallowed back all the advice that he was prepared to give Timothy. Although he could not wrap his head around why Timothy would care so much about Tiana, he replied nevertheless, "Yes. She asks about you every day, and says that she can take care of you at any time if needed."

"Really?" Timothy's lips curled into a smile. "If that's the case, let her have this opportunity then."

That last sentence startled Ronald, after which he was given a shock!

Timothy was a clean freak who loathed it when strangers touched him. As far as Ronald knew, Timothy had only a rough idea of who Tiana was based on their daily interactions. Did he just appoint her to take care of him?

Could Timothy have been moved by Tiana's daily greetings? Or was he simply angry because of Samantha's refusal?

Ronald could never figure out Timothy's train of thought, but he did not dare to ask further and merely sought confirmation quietly.

"Mr. Barker, are you telling me that you want Tiana to come here and accompany you?"

Timothy had already turned around. As he walked into the room, he said, "No."

"No?"

The man kept on walking and uttered a couple of words lazily.

Ronald was completely taken aback by what Timothy said and froze as his mind turned blank.

As it turned out, Timothy not only lacked the desire to extirpate himself from thorny circumstances, he also loved playing with fire!

...

At the villa.

Old Madam Barker had lived a long life and her judgment of character was quite accurate. Although Samantha feigned nonchalance before her in the past few days, she was unable to hide it all from the old lady's eagle eyes.

Adding to that was the fact that Timothy had not come back for several days and there was no news about him. The old lady knew right then that the young couple was facing problems yet again.

She felt saddened.

Since she was already very old, there was no telling when she would be kicking the bucket. For that reason, she wanted to help Timothy and Samantha get together while she still had the mental strength to do so.

Once the young couple's relationship stabilized, little Timmys and little Sammys would come into the world and she no longer needed to worry that much. By the time she went to heaven to meet her husband, she would not have to feel ashamed.

She held her husband's photograph and spoke to him for some time, but soon heard Aunt Julia announce Samantha's return. After putting away the photograph, she stood up and went downstairs.

"Grandma." Samantha walked over with the fruits she bought. "These are huge and really sweet. I bought you some to try."

"That's nice of you." Old Madam Barker patted Samantha's head and led the girl to the living room, where they sat down on the sofa. She asked softly, "How's Corey doing? Is he alright?"

Samantha picked up the fruit while answering, "He's recovering slowly. If he can keep that up, he might be discharged from the hospital and allowed to stay at home."

"That's good to hear. I'm glad." Old Madam Barker was someone who showed concern for everyone around the people she cared for. She sympathized with Corey as well because he had been ill since childhood. "You can always talk to me if you need anything."

"Thanks, Grandma," Samantha replied appreciatively and smiled sweetly.

She then chose a few fruits and said to the old lady, "I'll go and cut these up for you."

"Let Julia cut them. I have something to tell you." Aunt Julia had been waiting at one side and Old Madam Barker gave her a look.

Aunt Julia understood at once. She stepped forward and took the fruit in Samantha's hand, "I'll slice them for you, Mrs. Barker."

Old Madam Barker held Samantha's hand and pretended to ask casually, "What's Tim up to these days? How can he leave you alone all the time when the two of you are newlyweds!"

Samantha had a hunch that Old Madam Barker would mention that, but it still came as a shock that her sixth sense would be so accurate.

Then again, it should not have come as a surprise, for Old Madam Barker stayed there because she wanted to monitor Samantha and Timothy.

Samantha was, fortunately, able to respond promptly. Her expression remained unchanged and her tone was calm as she replied naturally, "You know that Timot— Tim has plenty of work to do at the company. Business matters are urgent and I can understand that."

After a pause, she added, "We still call every night though."

It was not as though Old Madam Barker would check her cell phone just to see if she called Timothy every night. That was why Samantha could say that without any burden.

However, the elder generation was always wiser than the younger ones. Old Madam Barker put on an extremely kind smile, but she then said, "That would mean you haven't made any calls yet today, right? He can't be so busy that he has no time for dinner. Give Tim a call and tell him to come back for dinner tonight."

In order to prevent Samantha from making further excuses, Old Madam Barker immediately added, "The Barker Group won't just collapse if he isn't there for a couple of hours!"

Samantha was no longer able to refute her.

Sure enough, Old Madam Barker was not to be underestimated! It was no surprise then that Timothy looked for Samantha to put on an act!

From the looks of it, that call had to be made!

Samantha took out her cell phone slowly and entered his number at a snail's pace. Finally, she pressed the dial button under Old Madam Barker's watchful gaze.

'That sweet-voiced woman better not pick up again, otherwise, I'd have to lie for that b*tard Timothy!'

Luckily for her, Timothy was the one who answered the call. His low and deep voice said, "Hey."

Samantha secretly breathed a sigh of relief. She opened her mouth and was about to speak, but then stopped herself again.

Timothy did not know that Old Madam Barker was listening just beside her. If he put on a bad attitude, then the image of a loving married couple would shatter right away.

How could she surreptitiously remind Timothy that she was acting?

Samantha frowned in thought but an idea popped into her mind amidst her anxiety. She coughed slightly, and spoke softly, "Hubby..."

As soon as she said that, her heart skipped a beat and she got goosebumps all over her body.

There was a sudden silence on the other end of the line. Had it not been for Timothy's breathing, she thought that he had hung up.

Samantha's heartbeat quickened unknowingly.. Timothy ought to pick up on her hints and realize that there was a reason for her to act all weird. She could only hope that his first words would not be the likes of, 'Are you sick or something?'

Chapter 50: My Little Princess

As Samantha's anxiety was about to shoot through the roof, she finally heard a response from the other end. The man's voice seemed to lower slightly, revealing traces of charm as he greeted her, "Yes, darling."

Even though Timothy's voice was on the other side of the phone, Samantha's earlobe became inexplicably hot and she immediately blushed.

Scumbags really did have an irresistible charm when they teased others on purpose.

Although she was aware that Timothy understood her intentions and merely cooperated with her theatrics, her heartstrings were still tugged on like a piano's strings.

Hearing them calling each other so sweetly elicited a beaming expression on the old lady's face. She teasingly waggled her eyebrows at Samantha and smiled so wide that teeth were in full view.

Samantha's face turned red after being teased.

She cleared her throat slightly and said, "Are you busy tonight? If you aren't... Can you come back for dinner? Grandma misses you."

Upon seeing the expectant look in the old lady's eyes, Samantha bit her lower lip and added another sentence, albeit really softly, "I...miss you too."

Sure enough, Old Madam Barker nodded and was immensely pleased.

Then came more silence. Was Timothy disgusted by her words?

Samantha was not as worried as before. Since Timothy already knew that Old Madam Barker was there, he would definitely find an excuse not to come back. Everything would be settled just like that!

As much as she did not want to lie to the old lady, she was married to Timothy in name only.

Before she could finally breathe a sigh of relief, Timothy immediately replied, "Alright. I'll be back for dinner tonight."

Samantha's eyes widened in disbelief. She hurriedly sought to make up his words, "Aren't you...busy?"

Timothy seemed to chuckle on the other end and his voice became much gentler, "No matter how busy I am, I will always have time...to keep my wife company."

The word 'wife' seemed to roll off his tongue and sounded extremely ambiguous.

Samantha was completely stunned.

She did not expect Timothy's acting skills to be so top-class, to the point where she...was nearly smitten by his sweet words!

Samantha was still finding it hard to snap back to her senses even after the call ended.

Old Madam Barker was obviously ecstatic after hearing how sweet the couple's conversation was. She grabbed her and said, "Sammy, you have no idea how happy I am after seeing the two of you being so sweet with each other!

"Don't worry, I'm a considerate person. All Souls Day is just a few days away, and I have to go back to the old mansion for a few days to burn some incense for my late husband. I'll leave with Aunt Julia later tonight. Have a nice candlelight dinner with Tim later and spend the next few days in your own little bubble with each other. Most

importantly, you have to put in some work! Make sure that you'll have a little Timmy or a little Sammy in your stomach by the time we come back!"

Samantha forced out an awkward smile. She had no choice but to get in on the act with the old lady. "Okay, we... We'll work hard."

"Do your best! Good luck!"

Old Madam Barker made a cheering gesture, then got up all prim and proper before yelling for Aunt Julia, "Julia, get the car ready! We're going back to the old mansion!"

...

Samantha stood at the door and watched as the car ferrying Old Madam Barker and Aunt Julia disappeared into the road. She could not help but shake her head and laugh.

The one constant character about Old Madam Barker that never changed over the years was her impulsive character.

Samantha and Timothy's charade had achieved the initial result—at the very least, Old Madam Barker no longer suspected them to be incompatible.

She took out her cell phone and called Timothy again.

Since the old lady had returned to the mansion, Timothy had no reason to come back and put on an act. That would save both of them the trouble of disagreeing with each other in the house.

The phone rang until the dial tone was cut off, but no one answered it at all.

Samantha frowned. Was he busy?

After a moment's thought, she drafted a text to explain the situation and sent it to Timothy.

At least she did her part to notify him!

When she was about to put away the phone, she unknowingly glanced at the date on the phone and suddenly remembered something... The date was that of her birth date on the lunar calendar.

She usually celebrated her birthday based on the dates of the Gregorian calendar, while her birthday date on the lunar calendar was exclusively for her celebration with Timothy.

So many things had happened recently that she had forgotten all about that. After standing motionlessly on the spot, Samantha turned and went back into the house.

Old Madam Barker and Aunt Julia used to be there all the time, and Timothy only came back on occasion. Back then, Samantha never really experienced just how big and empty the villa was. Now that there was no one around, she felt that the size of the villa was somewhat daunting.

She seemed to be much sadder that day, perhaps because it was her birthday on the lunar calendar.

It seemed as though she still longed to have a home with a real family... The house did not need to be big or luxurious. All she needed was for her family to love her and for her to love them...

At least there would be people who remembered her birthday and spent it with her.

Samantha exhaled slightly, tried her best to put on a smile, then walked toward the kitchen.

She might be alone, but she insisted on living a good life and would never treat herself badly.

Who said that birthdays had to be celebrated with a huge group of people? She could always have a good time all by herself!

Aunt Julia had stuffed the refrigerator with raw ingredients, and there was plenty of wine that Timothy had collected from all over the world. Samantha chose the finest cut of steak and grilled it expertly. She then showed no hesitation in opening the most expensive bottle of wine from the bar.

She found a candlestick meant for candlelight dinners, placed it on the table, and lit the candle.

Two plates of steak were set down along with two glasses of red wine. The main lights were turned off and she put on some music, after which she went upstairs to change into a beautiful little dress.

As Samantha came down from upstairs, she looked at her arrangement with satisfaction. It was important to have a sense of celebration in life, and it was not that difficult to make oneself happy!

She walked over, pulled the chair, and sat down.

Her gaze subconsciously landed on the steak opposite her and her long curly lashes trembled slightly.

She had no clue why she prepared two portions, but by the time she came to her senses, she had already plated them up. Letting that food go to waste was out of the question, though.

Worse comes to worst, she would just eat both of them!

Samantha gracefully picked up her wine glass and raised it to the other wine glass. "Cheers."

She swore that there was nothing on her mind at the time, but during that split second, it was as if a man had sat down opposite her. His facial features were charmingly handsome, while his eyes looked at her in a gentle and affectionate manner. There seemed to be no end to the warmth in his gaze.

He raised his glass gracefully and clinked against hers. "Cheers, my little princess."

Samantha suddenly tightened her grip on the red wine glass.

It used to be a day that was exclusively for her and Timothy, but he must have forgotten all about it already.

Little princess? How ridiculous.

Samantha shook her head vigorously and dispelled the apparition in front of her. She took a deep breath and was ready to taste the meal she prepared for herself.

Suddenly, there came the sound of a car engine from the entrance.

Samantha was stunned.. Did Timothy come back? Did he not see the text message she sent or did he come back for some other reason? She could not help herself from getting up and walking to the door to have a look.

Chapter 51: Win His Heart

The black car came to a steady stop at the lawn in front of the entrance. The rear door opened and a man's long legs were the first to appear.

Samantha's gaze trailed up from those legs. When she saw Timothy's slender body and handsome face, she could not control her heart from beating even faster.

He wore a simple white shirt and a pair of trousers, but like a masterful painting, he drew attention to himself and made it difficult for people to look away.

It was not until the car door on the other side opened up and another figure walked over, catching Samantha's eyes instantly.

The figure belonged to a woman and a very pretty one at that. Her big wavy hair draped behind her nape, giving off an amorous air. Her tight-fitting skirt accentuated her curves, while her makeup was thick and her lips were red. The shade of lipstick she used could capture the heart of any man, and she walked gracefully to Timothy's side while glancing at him.

Despite being some distance away from them, Samantha could clearly see the amount of reverence and adoration in that woman's eyes.

Samantha held her breath slightly. She never expected Timothy to come back, much less bring another woman with him.

Who was that woman? Was it the same woman with that sweet-sounding voice who picked up the phone the other day?

Did Timothy decide to let himself loose after seeing the text message she sent him about his grandma being away for a couple of days?

Samantha clenched her fists slightly as her hands hung beside her thighs.

Timothy and Tiana walked over together, but before Samantha had time to leave, the two of them met head-on.

The man's gaze landed on Samantha's face. Her expression was dark and uncertain at that moment, making it difficult for him to discern her emotions.

Timothy did not speak and neither did Samantha. Tiana, on the other hand, seemed slightly surprised when she saw Samantha.

Samantha had made the headlines and trending searches a few days ago. She used to be Timothy's former fiancée too and nearly married into the Barkers. It was only natural that Tiana would recognize her.

What surprised Tiana was Samantha's presence there. Why would she be at Timothy's private villa when she ought to have nothing to do with him?

Tiana looked back and forth between Timothy and Samantha. She saw that Timothy did not seem too surprised about Samantha's presence. Could it be that Samantha lived there?

Tiana was quite taken aback when she thought of that. At the same time, she raised her guard and became even more vigilant.

For the record, Penelope had been with Timothy for two years but had never successfully managed to set foot into Timothy's private villa. The fact that Timothy's former fiancée Samantha could be there was enough cause for worry.

Tiana made sure not to let her emotions show on her face. She put on a decent smile, pretended to not recognize Samantha, and broke the silence by asking softly, "Mr. Barker, who is this lady?"

Her first mission was to figure out who Samantha was to Timothy.

Samantha's gaze finally turned to Tiana's face.

Although Tiana had tried her best to act dumb, she could not escape Samantha's discerning gaze. Tiana clearly knew who she was but still pretended not to know.

Timothy's answer was not going to be a pleasant one, and Samantha was not about to give him such an opportunity. She smiled and retorted emotionlessly, "I...was invited by Old Madam Barker. I'm staying here as a guest."

A dark glimmer flashed across Timothy's eyes after he heard her words. The corners of his lips curled up slightly, almost like a smile, but he continued to keep quiet.

"Is that so?" Tiana was starting to find it difficult to hide her emotions under a smile.

In her mind, she believed that Samantha merely self-declared herself as a guest. The woman probably could not get over Timothy and relied on the old lady's affection for her to insist on living there—she was simply using the old lady to get close to Timothy!

How shameless!

Deep down, Tiana poured scorn on Samantha and raised her chin slightly. She opened her mouth and spoke condescendingly, "Let me introduce myself, Ms. Larsson. I'm Tiana Reece, Mr. Barker's...secretary."

Before uttering the word 'secretary', Tiana deliberately slowed her tone, adding a layer of ambiguity.

One would easily get the wrong idea.

At that moment, Samantha was 100% sure that Tiana was the same woman who answered Timothy's call that day!

She knew that the scumbag had plenty of close female acquaintances, but she could not understand why he had to bring Tiana back.

It was obvious that Samantha could not ask Timothy right in front of Tiana. She curled her lips ever so slightly and merely replied, “Oh,” without making much ado about it. She no longer looked at that eyesore of a scumbag and turned around to go back to the house.

Tiana was baffled that Samantha did not take the bait.

What was the meaning of that? Did Samantha look down on her? Or did Samantha feel that there was still a chance of one-upping her? What was going on!

Tiana turned to look at Timothy and pretended to joke around as she spoke, “Mr. Barker, this Ms. Larsson...really is a laid-back person... It’s like she really does treat this place as her home.”

She was trying to imply that Samantha—aside from being rude—was acting like the owner of the house despite being a mere guest.

Tiana knew that Timothy was extremely repulsed toward such women!

Timothy looked askance at her. The dark glow under his eyes became more intense, making it impossible for anyone to peek into the workings of his mind. His lips opened slightly and he asked, “Really?”

Tiana could not figure out whether he sounded happy or angry. The man’s mood had always eluded comprehension, and there were times she did not know how to continue the conversation due to moments of apprehension.

Fortunately, Timothy did not seem to care much about Samantha. That topic no longer continued, and his long legs stepped foot into the house as he strode in.

Tiana was thoroughly relieved because Samantha did not seem worth mentioning at all!

It was important for her to win Timothy’s heart while taking care of him. That was the only way she could become his woman fair and square!

Tiana started walking and followed Timothy in.

...

Inside the dining hall.

Samantha sat down again and looked at the wonderfully arranged candlelight dinner. Her appetite had long disappeared and she could not bear to stomach the food anymore.

The anger and sadness she felt were indescribable, and it was all because she was reminiscing about that scumbag Timothy.

She was the only one who remembered the beautiful memories she had on her lunar calendar birthday. Those used to be the days that were exclusive to her and Timothy.

It was not that big of a problem if Timothy forgot about it, but to make things worse, he brought another woman home that day!

Unfortunately, Timothy was the owner of that villa and Samantha was in no position to stop him from bringing other people back. She did not even have the right to object to it.

Why should she let him affect her birthday mood? She was not going to let that happen!

Samantha took a deep breath, held the knife and fork in both hands, and started slicing the steak. The force she used was so great that it was as though she was cutting Timothy up instead of the steak!

Footsteps were then heard, followed by the sound of the chair being pulled back. Timothy had taken his seat opposite Samantha.

Samantha did not look up and continued to eat her steak.

Soon after, she sensed Timothy's gaze on her. The man opened his lips and spoke in a melodiously sonorous voice, "I'll be staying here for the next few days to recuperate."

After a few seconds' pause, he did not hesitate to add, "So will Tiana."