

Read Once Bitten, Twice Shy online free

Chapter 62: Might as Well Disappear Completely

Coldness manifested in Samantha's eyes as soon as Simon finished his sentence.

Although she had already guessed that her parents had ill intentions when they took Corey away, she still got angry at their shamelessness when she heard it from the horses' mouths.

It was bad enough for them to do that to her, but her younger brother was still an underage child! How could they even come up with that kind of idea when his life was in constant danger due to his heart condition!

Simon smiled triumphantly when he saw the change in Samantha's expression.

"Sammy, your mom and I treat our children equally. Since we've found a good man for your marriage, it's only right that we do the same for Corey. Relax, we won't treat Corey badly!"

Samantha clenched her fists tightly in an attempt to restrain herself. At that juncture, anger was not the solution to the problem.

She gulped a few mouthfuls of saliva and said calmly while making eye contact with Simon, "Corey is sick. He can have a heart attack at any time. I don't know how long he'll be able to live and he might even be gone tomorrow. Which woman would be willing to marry him? Won't they be scared of being a widow?"

Cynthia seemed to have predicted that Samantha would say something like that, so after taking a sip of some scented tea, she answered slowly, "Sammy, why must you ask such a naive question? It's almost certain that any normal lady wouldn't want to marry someone as ill as Corey, but you know..."

She paused and did not continue her sentence, but her eyes looked at Samantha greedily.

Samantha could not have been less oblivious to Cynthia's implication, but she patiently forced out a smile and continued, "But what, Mom?"

Cynthia seemed to have regained her motherly dignity and said with satisfaction, "Their daughter is just so pitiful. She had been in a car accident as soon as she came of age and passed away last month."

Passed away...

Samantha frowned sharply.

“Their daughter was all they had, and they loved her so dearly that they couldn’t bear to let her be alone in heaven. That is why they want to give their daughter a marriage, so their son-in-law can be with their daughter.

“Corey meets all their requirements. They’re willing to pay a very high price as a dowry, and of course, we have no choice but to accept it. Corey isn’t going to live long anyway, and when it’s time, he’ll be in the company of that girl. It’s a win-win situation.”

A ghost bride!

Samantha knew that Simon and Cynthia were horrible people who, despite not being fit to be parents, would never do anything to hurt their children. It had never occurred to her that they were willing to sacrifice anything for money, even the life of their own son.

They were worse than animals!

Samantha’s eyes were bloodshot and she stared at her two parents. Her words were practically squeezed out from the gaps of her teeth when said, “Dad, Mom, Corey is your son! Your own flesh and blood! Is that how you should treat your own son?”

She then turned to Cynthia and her voice was trembling uncontrollably, “Mom, you’ve carried Corey for nine months. Don’t you feel any pity for him?”

Although she never expected them to feel anything for her, she wondered if they similarly felt nothing for Corey.

Samantha’s expression was too penetrating and sorrowful, causing Cynthia to feel a little flustered when she saw that. In a flash however, she lowered her eyes, avoided Samantha’s gaze, and said loudly, “You’re right. I did give birth to you, both of you. I suffered during pregnancy and childbirth. I’m the reason you’re in the world, so you should repay me by doing what I ask you to do!”

As she said that, she reached for Simon’s hand and said, “Isn’t that right, Dear.”

Simon slammed the table immediately and yelled at Samantha, “Who are you to question us? You disrespectful girl. I’ll be frank with you right now. Give us money if you don’t want your brother to be married off to a ghost!”

Money.

In their eyes, money was the be-all-and-end-all!

Samantha knew that it was useless for her to say anything. Their goal was clear—they simply wanted money. Their son and daughter were Money and Wealth. She and Corey were mere commodities.

Seeing Samantha's silence, Simon hurriedly threatened her again, "I'm telling you Samantha, Corey's wedding will be held in three days. If you don't give us any money within that time, Corey will become someone else's son-in-law. We have no control over whether he's alive or dead."

Cynthia immediately added, "We know that you've learned a thing or two during your years abroad, but don't expect to find Corey's location and save him secretly. You know his body is weak and he can't stand the slightest stimulus. He'll die even faster if you act rashly!"

...

Samantha walked out of the house.

The weather was still clear earlier, but dense dark clouds had already covered the sky. The wind was blowing and a storm was imminent.

Rather than calling a cab, she turned her back to the house and began walking away.

The only trace of feelings she had toward the home had disappeared completely after what her parents said to her.

After walking for some time, the roar of thunder and the flash of lightning appeared on the horizon, forming the prelude to the pitter-patter of rain.

Raindrops landed on Samantha's hair, eyebrows, and clothes. Her body was getting wet little by little, but she did not seem to have felt anything.

When she finally reached the main road, she looked at the myriad of characters by the roadside.

There was a mother with her child. The mother placed the umbrella over the child's head despite half her shoulder being wet.

Then there was a father and his daughter. The daughter was wearing a beautiful little skirt and pretty shoes. She was reluctant to step on the wet ground and threw a tantrum with her dad, who picked her up and smiled. "Alright, I'll carry you."

He picked up his daughter, took her into his firm embrace, and blocked her from the heavy rain.

Happiness was so simple...

She was just not lucky enough to experience such moments.

Samantha stared blankly as her eyes reddened. There were water drops on the corners of his eyes, though she could not tell whether they were raindrops or tears.

...

At the villa.

Timothy heard the rolling thunder outside as he sat on the sofa in the living room. He looked up and glanced at the antique clock on the wall.

It was already past 10 at night.

Samantha went out early in the morning and still had not returned yet. Was she really busy with something or was she avoiding him on purpose? Perhaps she went out to meet that rowdy man she liked so much?

Timothy took out his cell phone and dialed her number, but the call went unanswered.

He could not help but lean more toward the latter of his two guesses. An uncontrollable surge of anger soon ensued, which spread rapidly to his limbs.

All of a sudden, there was a sound from the door.. Timothy got up, strode over, and seemed to have waves of emotions under his eyes. His tone was cold and bitter, "Is this how you're supposed to act as a caregiver, Samantha? Disappearing for the entire day? Why do you even need to come back? Might as well just get lost and never show up again!"

Chapter 63: Will You Help Her?

'Might as well just get lost and never show up again...'

Samantha, who was bending over to change her footwear, stiffened in an almost imperceptible manner. She remained frozen in that posture for some time.

She thought about how she was probably a wicked person in her past life, which was why God punished her in her present life by depriving her of everything—her parents, her younger brother, and her lover.

Even more laughable was how she unknowingly walked back to the villa after roaming around in such a sad and desperate situation.

It was as if she went back there because she knew that Timothy was there.

Unfortunately, the man in front of her was not the Timothy she had once loved so dearly, but a demon who wanted nothing more than for her to disappear forever.

Samantha was physically and mentally exhausted. She did not have the energy to go against Timothy anymore. After changing into her house shoes, she looked up and met his gaze.

It was only when she straightened her body that Timothy noticed how miserable she looked.

Her hair and clothes were completely drenched, just like a drowned rat. Her face had turned pale and her eyes were lackluster, with her entire body looking as though she was drained of all energy after suffering a huge mental blow.

Timothy frowned and the expressions within his eyes sank deeper. The anger boiling within his chest froze up and whatever words he was about to say perished.

Ever since Samantha had returned, she had never displayed such a dejected appearance in front of him, even when she was at her weakest. What could possibly have happened to her?

“You—” He could barely even ask his question when Samantha spoke ahead of him.

Her voice was as cold and emotionless as a robot and she said, “Let me know if there’s anything you want me to do, Mr. Barker. I’ll do it immediately.”

That would probably be enough to shut his mouth and prevent him from saying anything hurtful.

Timothy knew exactly why she said that and his expression darkened as a result. He stared at her stubbornly, pursed his thin lips tightly, and took a couple of seconds before stiffly remarking, “First thing you should do is clean up this ghostly appearance of yours. I don’t want you to get sick and infect me!”

Samantha did not continue interacting with him and simply responded, “Okay.”

She lifted her feet and walked in. When she passed by him to head upstairs, she did so without even looking at him.

Timothy was rooted on the spot and watched as she straightened her back stubbornly and took the stairs one step at a time. Although she had concealed her emotions well enough, he could still notice her hand trembling slightly as it grabbed the staircase railing.

She had disappeared for an entire day and came back in such a state...

A severe frown made Timothy's forehead very wrinkled, and a trace of uncontrollable distress flashed through his eyes.

...

After Samantha returned to the master bedroom, her strength seemed to have been taken away in an instant. She fell limply on the ground before she could get to the bed and sit down.

She hugged her knees and curled up slowly.

A notification came from her cell phone. Her eyes moved stiffly as she took out the phone and glanced at the screen.

It was a text message from Simon. [Remember, one million and not a dollar less!]

Corey's photo was attached along with it.

Samantha looked at the photo and saw Corey lying on the hospital bed. With a pale-looking face and weak breathing, he slept uncomfortably and his forehead was full of sweat.

It was immediately clear that he was stressed out.

Samantha's hand clenched her phone tightly and the sadness in her eyes disappeared.

It was not the time for her to be a coward and wallow in sadness, not when her brother needed her!

Samantha closed her eyes, adjusted her emotions in no time, and used the bed to support her as she stood up.

Having been in the rain for several hours already, her body was a little cold and her head was a little dizzy. She thus hurried to the bathroom and turned on the hot water.

Although Timothy's words were harsh, getting sick was absolutely out of the question. If she collapsed, no one else would be able to save Corey.

Samantha soaked herself in the hot water, waited until the coldness in her body was gradually replaced by warmth, then allowed herself to finally delve into her chaotic thoughts.

Corey would be fine for the next three days and she would not need to worry about him for the time being. After all, her parents would most certainly do their best to safeguard their cash cow up until they saw the money.

Cynthia had also reminded her not to try and search for Corey, which was further proof that they were hiding him very well and was not afraid that she would check it. Moreover, she could not take the risk because they would almost certainly mistreat Corey if they found out that she was up to some funny business.

After mulling over it for a long time, she felt that there was only one solution—gather one million in three days!

Money can cause problems even for the smartest of men, much less someone like Samantha. She did not even have 10,000 in her bank account, let alone one million.

There was nothing valuable she could use to pawn either.

When it came to borrowing money, the first thought that came to Samantha's mind was Rochelle.

The next second, however, she shook her head and dispelled those thoughts.

Rochelle could not get any money from her family since her grandfather was not much better than Samantha's parents. Although she was married to a wealthy family, she and Samantha were both in similarly difficult situations. Samantha was poor, and Rochelle had no money either.

She knew that Rochelle would definitely give her the money as long as she made that request, but Rochelle would then have to deal with her husband Jonathan, and Samantha did not want Rochelle to have to go through that.

In that case, only one other person she knew seemed capable of coughing up that sum of money—Timothy.

Samantha's brows were knit in a tight frown and she could not help but feel upset.

...

In the study.

The phone rang and Timothy immediately answered, "Yes."

Ronald's respectful voice came from the other end, "Mr. Barker, I found out what happened. Ms. Larsson went to the hospital to visit Corey, but he had already been picked up by his parents two days ago, so Ms. Larsson then paid the Larssons a visit..."

The glow within Timothy's eyes turned colder by the second as he finally comprehended what happened. When Ronald finished explaining everything, his eyebrows seemed to emanate a maliciously dark aura.

Those greedy Larssons.

Timothy had misunderstood Samantha again... He assumed that she went out to meet some rowdy man, but that was not what happened at all...

He even said all those nasty things to her earlier.

Timothy's hand clenched abruptly into a tight fist and the blue veins on the back of his hand started to pop out slightly.

Ronald's meek voice sounded from the other end, "Mr. Barker, I have a question but I'm not sure whether I should be asking it or not."

"Ask."

"Um... I think it's really unfortunate that Ms. Larsson has parents like that. There's probably a lot of things that she doesn't do out of her own volition. If... If she asks to borrow money from you, will you help her?"

Timothy did not speak.

Ronald also knew that he had overstepped his boundaries. Afraid to say another word, she proceeded to hang up the phone quietly.

Timothy put down the phone and leaned against the revolving chair as Ronald's question echoed in his ears.

Ten seconds later, he heard footsteps approaching and finally stopping outside the door.

Chapter 64: Unable to Refuse Her Request

Timothy looked up and stared at the door panel as if his gaze could pierce through it and see Samantha standing at the door.

Was she looking for him to borrow money?

His slender fingers, which were resting on the desk, started tapping unconsciously.

He had always loathed Samantha's unscrupulous desire for money and profit, but if she really did make her request on that occasion...

Timothy closed his eyes gently.

Perhaps even if it was not limited to that one time... Even if she asked for it countless times; even if she was not doing it against her will; even if her intention was to swindle him, as long as she willingly spoke up, he probably would not be able to refuse her.

...

Samantha had, in fact, walked up to the door of the study. She raised her hand several times to knock on the door, but then retracted her hands at the very last moment every single one of those times.

She and Timothy were a fake couple. In light of the numerous times Timothy had misunderstood her, he must surely hate her deeply and would not believe what she said. Who knows whether he might assume that she was lying and swindling his money again?

She could not help but remember the words Timothy once said to her before, "Money isn't that easy to earn. Your brother's medical will be paid when you learn how to properly serve a person!"

If she had made that request to Timothy that day, she would definitely have to give him physical satisfaction in exchange for money. After all, what else did he enjoy more than using money to humiliate her?

Samantha stepped back unconsciously.

That little self-esteem everyone had could be thrown to the wind when it came to insignificant people, but they would rather hold on stubbornly to that laughable little self-esteem when it came to people that they once loved and cared for deeply. It was ridiculous when she thought about it.

She hesitated time and time again, then finally lifted her feet to turn around.

After returning to the master bedroom, Samantha picked up the phone and sent a round of messages to everyone she knew, asking them if they had any jobs that offered quick money and high pay.

She could still find other opportunities in those three days!

Even though Samantha was very tired that night, she tossed about in bed and could not fall asleep.

Luckily for her, she could breathe a sigh of relief because Timothy seemed to be busy with something in the study and never came back to the room.

Samantha's eyelids gradually became heavier and she only fell asleep when the sun started peeking out of the horizon.

She had no idea how much time had passed, but she soon received a notification on her phone.

Samantha was roused from her sleep at once and she opened her eyes abruptly. She had slept while holding her cell phone, so she immediately picked it up and looked at the screen.

A friend had replied to her. [There's a private party. A 2-day 1-night sea cruise. We urgently need a pole dancer. The pay is high, and it's a daily payout. The guests are all rich so the tips will be pretty good too! One of my girls was supposed to go, but she sprained her feet at the last minute. Would you like to try?]

She had met that friend when working abroad. They were on quite good terms with each other, so the information provided was likely genuine and reliable.

Samantha also had a rough idea of how wild those rich kids were in their social circle. Such parties were commonplace and were held from time to time to broaden their connections and further consolidate their contacts. In order to liven the atmosphere, they usually sourced high-priced beauties who could sing and dance to add more excitement. If they could satisfy their guests and make them happy, the remuneration would be very generous indeed.

The opportunity was a rare one and Samantha hurriedly dialed the phone to finalize the time and place with that friend.

"Thanks, I'll treat you to dinner next time around." After hanging up the phone, Samantha's heart calmed down slightly after a whole night of anxiousness.

The party was slated to begin at eight o'clock that evening. She had to hurry and catch up on some sleep to make sure she had some energy before she left later.

Samantha did not manage to sleep for long but she forced herself to sleep for at least a couple of hours. After she woke up, she brushed her teeth, washed her face, then grabbed two sets of whatever clothes she could get before picking up her bag and going out.

...

Timothy waited for Samantha the entire night but she never came to look for him. In the end, he could no longer sit still and decided to go to the master bedroom.

However, all he saw was an empty bedroom. The neatly folded blankets on the bed were a sign that Samantha had already woken up.

He went out immediately and headed downstairs.

Samantha was nowhere to be seen, be it in the living room or in the kitchen. When he walked to the entrance, he saw that Samantha's shoes were not there.

Did she head out again?

At that juncture, Samantha sole thought was to save Corey and therefore she could not possibly be in the mood to do anything else. In that case, did she go out to try and earn money?

How was she supposed to raise a million in three days if she did not ask for help from her husband, who was right in front of her?

Something seemed to cross Timothy's mind as his gaze sank little by little and his eyes had turned cold.

...

Samantha arrived at the dock by car and met her friend Wendy Woolworth.

Wendy was responsible for organizing the performers and could be likened to a team leader. She was the one who brought them to perform on the cruise ship and was also the one who paid their salaries once the party was over.

At six o'clock, Samantha followed Wendy on the cruise ship and went to a special dressing room to do her make-up.

Many of the rich kids in that circle knew Samantha, not because she was famous, but because she was Timothy's former fiancée.

In order to avoid any unnecessary problems, Samantha discussed with Wendy the possibility of putting on a mask when dancing.

When eight o'clock came, it was officially announced that the party would be starting. Wendy took the dance costume and handed it to Samantha, "Put on your clothes, Sammy, you're up soon."

Knowing that such dance costumes would definitely be on the sexy side, Samantha had prepared herself mentally ahead of time. However, the costume...turned out to be much sexier than she initially thought.

She did not immediately take it.

Wendy urged, "Think about the pay, Sammy!"

Indeed... Corey's life depended on the money. Why did she have to make such a fuss over it? It was much better to make money from dancing rather than by sleeping with someone!

Samantha took the costume, changed into it right away, and walked out with a red face.

Wendy could not help her surprise when she looked at Samantha's slender waist, as well as that pair of slender legs that were exposed due to the skirt covering only the base of Samantha's thighs.

It was only by chance that she saw Samantha doing a pole dance in a bar when they were abroad. The scene was an unforgettable one, and it was also the reason why Wendy thought of her at that time.

Wendy fist-pumped the air and encouraged her. "Good luck, Sammy!"

"Thank you." Samantha smiled in return.

She took a deep breath, put on a mask, and strutted gracefully onto the stage.

When the music sounded, Samantha grabbed the steel pipe in her hand and danced elegantly. Her long legs hooked the steel pipe and her beautiful body circled around it beautifully.

She used just enough strength and every action seemed as though she was dancing right in the palm of their hands. Her movements were enchantingly gorgeous and not overly sultry, but instead contained a certain ethereal quality that drew everyone's attention onto her.

Once she finished her dance routine, the audience applauded loudly.

Samantha panted lightly as she went backstage. Wendy welcomed her back and said, "You were amazing, Sammy!"

After a brief pause, Wendy asked somewhat awkwardly, "There's good news and bad news. Which one would you like to hear first?"

Chapter 65: You Look Familiar

Samantha saw Wendy's expression and had a rough idea what was in store for her. She pursed her lips a little and said, "Let's have the good news first."

“The good news is that you’ve danced so well earlier that Mr. Felix Quimby rewarded you with this much.” Wendy stretched out five fingers at Samantha and sounded pretty excited. “Five hundred thousand.”

She knew that Samantha’s goal there was to make one million, and with half the target already being reached at such a short amount of time, it was only natural for her to be happy for Samantha.

Money was the one thing that none of the guests lacked, so they were very generous in their tipping. Samantha was not that surprised and remained quite calm, but she continued to ask, “And the bad news?”

Speaking of that, Wendy could not help but sigh. “The bad news is... Mr. Quimby wants to have a drink with you in the VIP room.”

Other girls might have gone there with the intention of getting acquainted with the rich kids and cozy up to the men in particular. They were more than willing to be invited for a drink in the private room, but Samantha was not there to hunt for those guys.

When Wendy first got to know Samantha, she felt that the latter was the kind of woman who could do anything for money. Upon getting to know each other better, she came to know that Samantha—despite having a love for money—was a principled person who had her own limits.

Indeed, Samantha was that kind of person.

She frowned slightly. “And what if I don’t go?”

“Sammy, I know you don’t like socializing in such a way, but...” Wendy frowned even more severely than Samantha. “Mr. Quimby is the host of this party. I can help you to refuse a request from someone else, but it won’t be easy to reject him.

“If you don’t go, the least that’ll happen is that you won’t get the money. I’m just worried that something else might happen...”

Those rich young men grew up with a silver spoon. They were accustomed to getting their way and would never allow anyone else to disobey them. Samantha was raised in that social circle and understood that side of them very well.

Moreover, Wendy had been helping her to get good opportunities. She did not want to ruin Wendy’s reputation because then those rich kids would not be willing to seek her services in organizing such activities in the future.

Samantha raised a smile and patted Wendy’s hand as a form of comfort. “Alright then, I’ll go over and have a drink.”

Rather than breathing a sigh of relief, Wendy's eyebrows belied her worried look. "Are you sure you can handle it, Sammy? If you really don't want to, I...I can think of a way."

"It's fine, don't worry."

It was actually easy to deal with that group of men. Simply pretending to be submissive would suffice, since they had already seen plenty of beautiful women. They were very conscious of their own image and would not give her a hard time as long as she did not offend them.

Samantha wore a coat, put her mask back on, and followed Wendy to the door of the biggest VIP room on the cruise ship.

Wendy stopped and looked at her. "This is as far as I can go, Sammy. I'll wait outside. Just call me if you need anything."

Samantha felt a warm current course through her heart. "I'm going in then."

She opened the door and walked in.

The room was huge and almost all the renowned young men from various social circles were present there. Some sang with beautiful women while others enjoyed some drinks with their arms around the women. A few were playing pool while some were having a game of poker. The chips were stacked really high on the table, and any one of those chips amounted to a huge sum of money.

Such was the extravagance of a rich man's life.

At that time, Samantha admitted that she was feeling very spiteful toward the rich!

"There she is! The goddess of tonight's party is in the house." Felix sat on the sofa and ogled Samantha unabashedly.

Her graceful figure and dance moves were enough to make his eyes light up when he watched her dancing up on stage earlier. Seeing her up close was even more breathtaking than he expected.

It was quite a pity that she wore a mask that concealed her face. She wore a coat on her upper body to cover her slender waist, but those slender legs of hers that were exposed sufficed to entice him.

Those legs could take his breath away if they hooked around his waist.

Felix did not hide his desire. He made a come-hither movement toward Samantha and said in a flirty voice. "Come here and have a seat."

Samantha abhorred the way he looked at her, but she kept a straight face and did not show the slightest emotion.

She had heard rumors about Felix before. He was a playboy to the extreme and had many beautiful women around him because he was handsome on top of being rich. Since he could get them so easily, he did not like women when they came cheap and hated it when they were overly clingy.

With that knowledge in hand, Samantha walked boldly over and sat down beside Felix.

She picked up a bottle of wine, poured it into two glasses, and held one as she handed the other to Felix. In a soft voice, she said, "Thank you for your admiration. I'm happy to raise a toast to you."

Felix cocked an eyebrow. "You're very courteous, beautiful!"

He stretched out his hand to pick up the glass of wine and deliberately brushed his fingers against the back of Samantha's hand as he received the glass from her.

Samantha held in her disgust and smiled even more charmingly. "Cheers."

After clinking glasses with Felix, she raised her head and chugged the wine in one gulp.

She glanced at Felix from the corner of her eyes and saw him only drinking a small sip. There were already some hints suggesting that his interest was coming to an end.

Success seemed to be within her grasp.

Samantha put down her empty wine glass, looked at Felix, and pretended to put on an eager expression. She hinted and said, "Shall we play something else, Mr. Quimby?"

Sure enough, the interest in Felix's eyes disappeared completely when she said that. Instead of looking at Samantha, he turned his head and told his men, "Give her a check."

He was implying for her to take the money and go.

Samantha suppressed her inner happiness. On the surface however, she put on an extremely disappointed expression and looked at Felix with some resentment.

Felix immediately greeted another beautiful woman and put her arms around her before enjoying his drink.

His subordinate walked toward Samantha and handed her a check for 500,000.

Samantha stretched out her hand and was about to take that check, but another hand stretched out from beside her and snatched the check before she could.

The man's voice sounded from beside. "You're smokin' hot but no one knows what you look like. Wouldn't it be such a pity if you leave without revealing that mysterious face behind the mask?"

That voice elicited an almost imperceptible frown from Samantha.

She subconsciously followed the voice and looked over. Upon seeing the man's familiar face, her heart leaped up to her throat all of a sudden.

It really was someone she knew, and someone she very much did not wish to meet—the man was none other than Timothy's good friend, Zachary.

Zachary seemed quite interested in her. His black pupils were fixated on her as he said, "Here there, Beautiful. You look kinda familiar."

Samantha's long eyelashes trembled unconsciously.

If Zachary ended up recognizing her, he would almost certainly tell Timothy. Should Timothy find out that she was dancing and drinking with other men, whatever reasons she had would not matter anymore and he would definitely get angry.. Should that happen, all her hard work that night would be in vain.

Chapter 66: Danger

Fortunately for Samantha, Zachary was not a very attentive person. She could handle the situation as long as she was cautious.

Samantha raised her hand and tucked her hair behind her ear. She lowered her voice and pretended to giggle softly, "You're hilarious, Mr. Summer. How could I have met you when this is the first time I attended such a large party?"

As she spoke, she lowered her eyes slightly and avoided Zachary's eyes smoothly.

The lights in the room were dim and she donned a mask in addition to changing her voice deliberately. As long as Zachary was not serious, she would probably be able to hide her identity from him.

Zachary squinted at her for ten seconds and his reply was just as she expected, "You're right. How could a little dancer like you ever cross paths with someone like me?"

Samantha was about to breathe a sigh of relief when he heard Zachary continuing in an intrigued voice, "Still, I'm very interested in your appearance. If you were able to pole dance in such a seductive manner, I wonder if your face is just as extraordinary."

As soon as he spoke, his hand reached for the mask on her face.

His movements were too sudden, but Samantha was lucky to have kept her guard up. She pretended to turn her face sideways by accident.

Zachary's fingers could only grasp thin air.

Rather than feeling annoyed, his interest was piqued even more. He touched his chin, "Why don't you take it off yourself, Beautiful. I'm really looking forward to seeing what you look like under that mask."

On the other side, Felix's attention was drawn to her again despite earlier losing his interest in her. He pushed away the woman in his arms and pointed at Samantha, "Come on, Beautiful. Since Mr. Summer here wants to see your face, you might as well take that mask off. If he likes you, you stand the chance of sampling gourmet food and fancy wines if you stay by his side."

The others chuckled ambiguously as soon as he said that.

Samantha's eyes narrowed slightly. If it were any other person, she would not really mind taking off the mask for the sake of getting it over with. Unfortunately, the man in front of her was Zachary, and there was no way she could take off that mask.

She had not forgotten the time Timothy thought she was with other men at the club. The horrible things that happened to her after that caused her to come down with a sickness that nearly took her life.

If Timothy caught him yet again, whatever punishment she would receive from him was beside the point. If he interfered with her attempt to save Corey, she would never be able to forgive herself.

When Felix saw her staying silent and keeping still for a long time, he immediately became unhappy. His face sank and he asked coldly, "What? Do you have to continue being that pretentious just because you were told to take off your mask?"

The Summers was one of three powerful families. Felix—as the host—could not afford to upset Zachary simply for the sake of an insignificant dancer.

He snorted again. "You should be honored that Mr. Summer wants to look at you, although you don't seem to appreciate his courtesy. If you're not going to take it off, I'll have someone take it off for you!"

Felix lifted his chin and gestured to his men.

They nodded at once and immediately walked toward Samantha in an intimidating manner.

Samantha clenched her fists all of a sudden and scanned her surroundings rapidly. Once she ascertained the position of the room door, she got ready to run at any time.

As the subordinate's hands reached over to grab Samantha, Zachary unexpectedly grabbed his hand and stopped him. "Come on, can't you be gentle? How can you be so rough to a beautiful lady? It's important to be delicate to members of the fairer sex. Capiche?"

His words were directed at Felix.

Those words were muted but possessed an individualistic aura. Felix's fierce expression froze and he immediately put on a flattering smile. "You're absolutely right, Mr. Summer."

After reprimanding Felix, Zachary returned his gaze to Samantha's face. He groaned and said, "It's rather boring to have you just take off your mask like that. Let's play a game, shall we?"

He pointed his finger at the pool table placed on the other side of the room. "Do you play pool? Let's have a little match. Pot five balls and you win the game."

"You'll get five chips for each pot you make, but for every pot I make..."

Zachary glanced over Samantha's long legs and smiled like a fox. "...you'll take off one item of clothing."

Samantha's face changed slightly as soon as he said this.

The other men in the room immediately started whistling and shouting, "If it comes to playing pool, Mr. Summer is an expert!"

"How about it, Beautiful?" Zachary looked at Samantha.

Samantha clenched her jaw slightly. She was starting to suspect that Zachary was making things difficult for her because he had recognized her.

Judging from the situation, she might have no choice but to turn him down.

Then again, it was pool...

In the past, Timothy had brought Samantha out to play with Jonathan and Zachary. She had seen Zachary play before and he had quite the skill. However, her abilities were not that far off either.

She surmised that their skill was probably on par with each other, so much so that she might be able to beat him if she put on a stellar performance.

Should that happen, she could stand to earn even more money without having to take off her mask.

Samantha curled her lips and responded softly, "I can't possibly refuse your kind invitation, Mr. Summer. I'll agree to your conditions."

"Sweet." Zachary patted his palms. "Come on, Beautiful. Let's head over there."

Samantha and Zachary walked to the pool table. The rest of the men could not resist following along, as they too were interested to see what would happen.

After all, Samantha has to take off one article of clothing with every pot she failed to make. With only two pieces of clothing on her body, she would already be naked if she could not pot two balls.

Their game seemed to be much more interesting than everything else.

Samantha and Zachary stood at opposite ends of the pool table. Samantha picked a random cue and held it in her hands to get the feel of it.

Zachary looked at her for a few seconds, then suddenly said, "Judging from my horoscope today, my luck will be pretty bad if I gamble so I won't be playing. I'll let..."

He raised his hand, swept his finger across the numerous young men there, and finally pointed to a booth in the corner before continuing, "...one of best bros take my place!"

Zachary's 'best bro'?

Samantha's grip tightened around the cue and she raised her eyes abruptly to look at the booth.

A man was sitting quietly there. Half his body was hidden in the dark, and he had escaped Samantha's attention earlier because no one dared to come over and disturb him.

At that moment, she looked right into the man's dark eyes and recognized his familiar facial features despite the dim light.

His long legs were gracefully crossed as he leaned lazily against the sofa. A cigarette was held between his fingertips and a slight flame lit the tip of the cigarette.

Despite not saying anything, the sight of him was enough to make one shudder.

To her marked surprise, Timothy had been inside the room all along! He even saw what she had done that day!

Samantha's black pupils contracted all of a sudden and she somehow stopped breathing too.

Timothy was in no hurry as he took the last puff of his cigarette and exhaled the smoke.. After putting out the cigarette in the ashtray, he uncrossed his legs, got up, and took slow steps over to her.

Chapter 67: She Lost

The man walked out of the dark. His tall, slender figure and chiseled facial features made him look as handsome as a god. However, his entire body was exuding a cold aura that prevented anyone from approaching, making the girls afraid of even looking directly at him.

As he came closer, Samantha's gaze darted away sharply and her hands turned pale as they gripped the cue.

She instinctively lowered her head to try and cover her face with her long hair.

The only reason she learned pole dancing was to survive in a foreign country. Timothy did not know that she could dance and she had also deliberately altered her voice earlier, so it was unlikely that he was able to recognize her!

In addition, if Timothy did recognize her, he would have grabbed her on the spot instead of remaining so calm.

Samantha secretly breathed a sigh of relief. She should not be scaring herself and letting the cat out of the bag!

With that thought in mind, she looked up again and stared straight ahead, directing her gaze to Timothy's...lips.

Timothy walked to the opposite end of the table from Samantha, with only the pool table separating the two of them. As his black pupils looked up and stared lazily at her, there seemed to be no discernable emotion from his expression.

Zachary glanced at Timothy, then at Samantha, and curled his lips in a wicked smile. “Friendly reminder, my friend Timmy here always mops the floor with his opponents and never suffered any routs before. If I were you, I would concede defeat, do a striptease for him, and be done with it.”

Had she not been in that tricky predicament, Samantha would have wanted nothing more than to put a burlap bag over Zachary’s head and give him a good beating!

What a blabbermouth!

As harsh as those words were, Samantha unfortunately had to acknowledge that Zachary was merely stating the facts.

Timothy was the one who once held Samantha by the hand and taught her how to play. As the Barkers’ heir, he not only had knowledge about many things, but was also proficient in each one of them!

Take pool as an example—he played against a world champion at the age of 16 and won!

Samantha could still win against Zachary if she was lucky, but if she was up against Timothy, she could never win unless he wanted her to!

Caught between a rock and a hard place, she would have to do a striptease if she conceded defeat. Timothy would definitely recognize her if that happened, and there might still be the possibility that her little life would not be spared there.

Therefore, she had to create her own chances even if there were none!

Samantha smiled, “Losing without a fight is a disrespect to the game and my opponent. Shall we, Mr. Barker?”

“So heroic!” Zachary’s tone became more and more teasing. “Alright, let’s start the game then.”

Samantha feigned coyness and blinked a couple of times before asking softly, “Can the lady go first?”

If she started first, all she had to do was pot five balls in a row. That would prevent Timothy from having a shot, thus securing victory for her!

Timothy’s handsome face seemed to have a half-smile, as if he could see through her thoughts. He nevertheless did not refuse and merely nodded slightly.

Samantha took two deep breaths and gave herself a little pep talk. She then walked to the pool table, bent down, then struck a pose. She used the cue to hit the white ball as hard as she could, causing the other balls to scatter in all directions.

She did not dive right into the game, but instead carefully observed the situation of the balls on the table. Only after choosing the five balls that she wanted to pot did she begin her play.

The first ball went into the pocket with ease.

Zachary touched his chin and commented, "Mm, that's a good opener. Go on, Beautiful! Good luck!"

Timothy sat on one side at the one-seater sofa, crossing his slender legs elegantly. His fingertips were tapping gently on his knees while his handsome face seemed to be as indifferent as ice.

Samantha went around to the other side, bent down, and struck another ball.

The second ball went into the pocket.

She entered her zone bit by bit, potting both the third and fourth balls as well.

"Oh." Zachary seemed to get a little more excited and it was starting to show from his high-pitched voice. "This pretty lady has got some skill. She potted four balls in a row now and the game is hers if she pots one more."

He glanced at Timothy, whose expression remained indifferent while he was seated, and teased, "What do you think, Timmy? Do you think your winning streak will finally come to an end today? Are you going to lose by this beautiful woman's hands?"

The corners of Timothy's lips twitched, but he still did not speak.

The other onlookers were buzzing with excitement as they discussed whether that dainty pretty woman could pot another ball and clinch victory over Timothy!

Even Felix started his own betting pool. The odds were one-to-a-hundred if Samantha won and one-to-one if Timothy won.

Samantha could not hold back her resentment when she heard those odds.

Was it because she already had victory in her sight? Be that as it may, her odds and Timothy's odds were just worlds apart.

Were they serious when they said the odds of her winning were one to a hundred?

Samantha was down to her last ball and she was not about to take it lightly. She immediately focused her attention to analyze the situation on the table.

The previous four balls basically traveled in a straight line so it was not difficult to score. Since then, the easy balls had become scarce.

She pondered for a moment before ascertaining her target.

It was a little difficult to pocket that ball because it was obstructed. Therefore, a slight curve was needed when striking the ball.

Samantha stretched her arms and tried several positions before finding the most suitable one. She bent down once more and struck her pose.

She turned her face to one side, exhaled, and immediately faced forward once again. With a thrust of her arm, the cue struck the white ball.

Everyone's eyes were subconsciously glued to the ball and everyone was on the edge of their seats as they followed the ball's trajectory.

The white ball struck her ball of choice and slid toward the pocket on her far left. It was able to successfully circumvent the obstacle it encountered and looked set to fall into the pocket.

Sadly, the ball ended up stopping just right in front of the pocket.

Samantha could not help herself from feeling irritated. It was such a tiny distance between the ball and the pocket! It just had to move a little bit forward and she could have won!

The young men present there exchanged glances before the room exploded into cheers. "It's such a pity that you didn't score!"

There was little, if any, pity in their voices. They all yelled, "Undress! Undress!"

Everyone had watched her pole dancing performance earlier. That smoking hot figure, slender waist, and fair skin was set to give them a feast for their eyes.

Zachary turned to Samantha and said, "You lose one, you take one piece of clothing off. I can choose for you. Would you like to take off your mask or your clothes?"

Samantha bit her lower lip vigorously.

Having lost the game, there was no way for her to renege on the bet. Since she could not take off her mask, the only thing she could take off was her clothes.

Samantha did not say anything and took off her coat right away.

Upon seeing that, Zachary snorted and laughed, “Are you still hoping to make a comeback? You might be fine if he doesn’t play, but once he does, you won’t even get any balls left.

“Why not use your good looks to swoon him or maybe even give him a kiss? Who knows? He might be willing to go easy on you...”

Chapter 68: She Was Done For

Samantha’s lips tightened and she unconsciously looked at Timothy.

Timothy happened to raise his dark eyes to look at her. Their gazes crashed into each other in midair and his eyes were so cold that she could not help herself from feeling a chill down her spine.

For a moment, she wondered if Timothy looked at her so coldly because he had already recognized her.

“I think you’re wrong, Mr. Summer.” Felix could not help but speak up. “Mr. Barker isn’t any better than us. He’s well-known for being ruthless, and he especially hates those who blindly cozy up to him.”

With that, he offered a suggestion to Samantha. “In my opinion, it’d be more useful for you to kneel down and beg Mr. Barker!”

The others burst into laughter.

Timothy stood up from the sofa, stretched out his hand, and took the cue that an attendant passed to him. He held it in his hand and swung it casually, as if he was doing a warm-up.

The red wine that had just been opened on the coffee table was immediately swept to the ground.

The glass bottle fell onto the ground with a shatter. Pin-drop silence immediately befell the once boisterous room.

Timothy then swiped the cue again, pointing it toward Felix’s face.

A strong gust of wind blew at Felix, causing his eyes to widen in shock. He instinctively lowered his head and bent over, barely managing to avoid the stick.

His knees turned limp, and he fell to the ground.

Zachary looked down condescendingly at Felix's pitiful expression and said with a sneer, "I told you to be gentle to beautiful women."

Felix finally realized what was going on.

No wonder Zachary was so interested in that little dancer and was so verbally protective of her. It turned out not to be Zachary who was interested in her, but...Timothy!

After finally figuring it out, he broke into a cold sweat after remembering what he had done and said earlier. At that moment, he closed his mouth immediately and was afraid to say anything else.

Even if Felix had the courage of a hundred men, he would never dare to touch someone that Timothy fancied.

However, he wondered just who on earth that woman could be, and why she managed to capture Timothy's eye!

"My buddy Timmy will have his time to shine now!" Zachary turned into Timothy's little fanboy and shouted, "Good luck, Timmy. Wooooo! You can do it!"

Timothy was disgusted by Zachary's actions and shot a cold look at the latter. "Shut up."

After uttering those two words, Timothy walked to the pool table. His play was much different from Samantha's in that he struck the balls in a very casual manner instead of having to mull over it a couple of times as Samantha did.

Before everyone could get a proper look at his movements, he had pocketed one ball, then another, and two more after that. All of them landed perfectly into the pocket.

Samantha was not at all surprised to see that. She knew his abilities all too well.

He could most definitely pocket the fifth ball too.

Samantha's palms were already sweating slightly and she was having difficulty holding onto the cue. She seemed capable of anticipating the miserable situation she would have to face after she lost.

Perhaps she should take a page from Zachary's suggestion and act coyly or offer a kiss in exchange for him going easy on her?

As soon as that idea came to mind, she felt slightly disgusted at the thought of being all flirty with Timothy and offering him a kiss.

It was not a big deal to do that during their sweet time together, but after knowing how horrible his true nature was, she would never be willing to do something so humiliating.

She considered Felix's suggestion to kneel down and beg Timothy.

Whether or not it was useful to kneel down and beg him was beside the point. Although she had learned to go with the flow in the past two years, there was no way in hell she could do so in front of Timothy.

Compared to that bit of self-esteem she had, nothing ought to be more important than her life, right?

Samantha was feeling so conflicted that her eyebrows were knit in a very tight frown. Her lips were closed and words remained trapped in her throat with no signs of coming out.

She was so entangled in her own thoughts that she did not notice the way in which Timothy was looking at her. A dim light surfaced from the bottom of his eyes, revealing a slightly eager expectation.

After about ten seconds, Samantha's face became slightly pale but she never once spoke a single word.

Timothy grinned coldly. He presented her with opportunities time and time again, but she was reluctant to even open her mouth. Rather than speak up and try to come to terms with him, she seemed more willing to go to that kind of venue and wear sultry clothes to dance, please, accompany, and drink with other men!

She frequently said that he hated her, but the truth was that she probably hated him more. After knowing that she could not get any benefits from him, she shunned him, avoided eye contact, and was not even willing to meet him halfway!

'You're good, Samantha. What a great person you are!'

If that was the case, why should Timothy be gentle to her!

Coldness emanated all over Timothy's handsome face. He bent down, adjusted the angle and strength of the cue, then aimed at the ball and struck it.

The white ball collided with his target ball, which traveled in a perfect arc, avoiding numerous obstacles and rolling toward the pocket on his far right.

That the ball would fall into the pocket seemed to be confirmed by its trajectory. Some of the young men have already started cheering in advance.

Samantha even closed her eyes subconsciously and was unwilling to face the result when she saw that the target ball was about to land into the pocket.

She was done for.

That day would probably be her last on earth and she would not be able to save Corey either...

The two siblings would probably only meet in heaven.

Perhaps that was alright.

If there was life after death, she hoped that she and Corey could be reborn in a good family, where they could be siblings with each other yet again.

To her surprise, the cheering she had been anticipating was nowhere to be heard. The next second, everything had become quiet.

It was incredibly silent.

Samantha could not help but feel confused. What was going on? What happened?

She opened one eye quietly and was stunned when she looked at the table. Her other eye opened right away and she looked at the table in disbelief.

Timothy's fifth ball...did not go in!

Its fate was similar to her last ball, as it had stopped just centimeters in front of the pocket.

No wonder everyone was stunned and fell silent.

Samantha thought to herself that God was probably looking favorably on her and Corey!

Time and tide waited for no man. Samantha immediately grasped her cue again and said, "My turn!"

She stepped forward and pocketed Timothy's ball with ease.

With five balls pocketed, she emerged the victor!

Samantha suppressed her excitement and said softly to Timothy, "Thanks for letting me win, Mr. Barker."

Timothy stood there and made no secret of the cold expression on his face. Even his eyes were looking at her with intense hostility, as if blowing a huge gust of cold wind toward her.

Samantha understood his expression all too well—it was a sign that he was going to get pissed! He must have wanted to set her straight after losing his dignity to an unknown woman in front of everyone else!

Her heart sank involuntarily, and she realized she should not be staying there for a second longer. She gulped, maintained her composure, and immediately said, “I should leave now that I’ve won, Mr. Barker.”

She started walking as soon as she said that.

Barely one step later, Timothy’s cold voice rang out, “Stop!”

Chapter 69: Coincidence or Intentional?

Samantha’s heart skipped a beat and beads of cold sweat began forming all over her body.

She did not want to stop, but it would definitely arouse suspicion if she just continued walking...

In the end, she did her best to restrain her urge to charge through the door. She stayed right where she stood, but her back stiffened beyond her control.

She waited for a few seconds but did not hear Timothy’s voice. However, she could sense his cold and sullen gaze falling on her, and that look of his came piercing through her like a sharp blade.

His gaze nearly broke Samantha’s apparent composure. She forced out a stiff smile and spoke weakly to break the silence. “Is something the matter, Mr. Barker?”

Timothy’s dark eyes narrowed slightly. He stared at Samantha’s masked face for a few seconds before moving his thin lips and uttered, “Bring along the chips you won.”

‘Chips?’

Samantha’s mind went blank and she could not react for a moment.

Timothy seemed to be in an extremely petulant mood and had little patience. Seeing her frozen still there, he mocked fiercely, “What’s wrong? Do you want me to deliver it to you personally?”

She could not dare to trouble him with something like that!

Samantha had a sudden realization and came back to her senses abruptly. She took a couple of steps forward and reached out to take the 25 chips she won.

“Thank you, Mr. Barker!” After expressing her appreciation in a very ‘grateful’ tone, she walked out of the room right away.

Waiting at the door was Wendy, who immediately went up to greet Samantha as soon she came out. Wendy checked Samantha carefully all over and uncovered the mask to have a look. It was only after she made sure that Samantha was safe and sound that her anxious heart finally calmed down.

She could not help saying, “I’m glad you’re fine, Sammy. I heard that crash in the room earlier and thought that something happened to you! You don’t know how scared I was!”

Samantha did not say anything after Wendy finished speaking. As a result, Wendy looked up in confusion and realized that Samantha had a startled expression. Wendy’s calm heart became anxious again and she asked, “What happened to you, Sammy? Could they have done something to you?”

Did they spike her wine? Or gave her some drugs?

As she spoke, she raised her hand and waved it in front of Samantha’s eyes, trying to snap Samantha out of it.

Samantha’s long curly eyelashes trembled and she finally came to her senses. She opened her mouth to try and say something, but felt that it was too improbable and so decided not to say what she wanted to.

She smiled at Wendy, “I’m fine. Let’s go.”

“Are you really fine?” Wendy had a skeptical look. Samantha’s actions earlier had clearly shown that she had something to say.

“Yeah!”

Samantha was not willing to talk too much about it and immediately raised the chips in her hand. “I’m just thinking about how much money I can exchange for the twenty-five chips I won.”

Wendy’s attention was drawn toward the chips.

To her surprise, Samantha not only managed to escape the hands of those men, but even won money from them. She really lived up to being Samantha Larsson!

"You're amazing, Sammy!" Wendy was full of genuine admiration for her. "Come on, I'll bring you to the cashier booth."

There, Samantha handed the 25 chips to the staff, who said with a smile, "Please write down your bank account number, and we'll transfer the money right away."

Samantha wrote down her bank account.

A few minutes later, Samantha's cell phone received a notification. She reached for it and clicked on the new text message.

[You have received 500,000 in your bank account.]

She already had a check for half a million from Felix, which meant that she was only half a million short of the one million she needed. Lo and behold, those 25 chips just so happened to amount to half a million!

A look of profound surprise appeared in Samantha's eyes and she took quite some time to return to her senses.

...

Inside the VIP room on the second floor.

Timothy stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows with a cigarette held in his slender fingers. His black eyes were gazing downward, directed at a certain location on the first-floor lobby.

Zachary came over with a glass of wine and followed Timothy's gaze, only to see Samantha standing at the cashier counter. He could not help but smile. "Timmy, what do you call this kind of behavior? You're willingly giving out money."

In reality, Zachary would never have accepted an invitation from a person of Felix's stature, much less Timothy.

It was Timothy who called Zachary out of nowhere that night. He invited Zachary to accompany him to a party. Zachary initially thought the party was hosted by some important figure, but it turned out to be...just for that?

During that split second, Zachary was starting to suspect whether the Barker Group was going bankrupt. Why else would a man of Timothy's reputation attend that party?

He realized their purpose there as soon as he saw Samantha dancing on stage.

Once again, it was all because of Samantha...

Other than her, was there anyone else who could make Timothy do something so self-contradictory that even he would look down on his own actions?

Although Zachary did not like Samantha and even resented her, he had to admit that Timothy regained some human qualities only for Samantha.

During the past two years, Timothy was in such a terrible state that Zachary did not dare to even think about it.

Since Timothy was still interested in Samantha, Zachary—in true brotherly spirit—had no choice but to help.

With that in mind, Zachary then said, “Listen to me, Timmy. If you want to get to her heart, there’s no use for you to do all those good deeds in silence. It’s always the second male lead who does good deeds behind the scenes, and they never get the woman.”

Timothy narrowed his eyes at Zachary.

Zachary, whose survival instincts were strong, quickly explained himself, “Timmy, I’m in no way saying that you’re the second male lead here. What I’m saying is...you should let her know that you helped her. How do you expect her to be grateful to you, change her view of you, and develop feelings for you if she doesn’t know a thing?”

Timothy sneered coldly.

Would Samantha be grateful if she knew? Would she view him differently? Would she love again?

Would such a heartless woman do any of that?

Or would she be smug because he helped her without her needing to speak at all?

Zachary seemed to be able to read through Timothy’s thoughts and organized his sentence before saying, “Timmy, I think...your actions were actually quite obvious. Samantha’s not a fool. She must have guessed that you were deliberately helping her.

“If you go back to the villa right now, you’ll definitely hear her express her gratitude to you. Take the hint she gives you. Isn’t that how your relationship with each other would start warming up bit by bit? The both of you are adults and you happen to be alone in the villa right now. There’s still a chance that a spark could be lit. If that spark ignites a roaring flame, who knows whether this fake husband-and-wife relationship can turn into a real one?”

Timothy’s black eyes narrowed and he declined to comment.

...

Samantha did not immediately get off the taxi when she arrived at the villa.

Her mind was still ruminating over whether the 500,000 were a coincidence or whether Timothy already recognized her and gave her that money intentionally?

Unable to figure it out that quickly, she had no choice but to pay the fare and get out of the car.

Another car—a black one—had driven over at about the same time. Timothy soon got out of that black car.

Samantha's heartbeat quickened as soon as she laid eyes on Timothy.

Chapter 70: Unacceptable to Read Too Much into A Situation

Samantha had just returned from the dock and Timothy happened to return too. Could he have gotten off the cruise ship just moments after she did?

In that case, Timothy had recognized her from the beginning and deliberately gave her that money? Was that why he followed her back as soon as he gave the money?

Could it have been a coincidence instead, and Timothy came back from the party because he was pissed at having lost?

Samantha was initially not the hesitant kind of person who allowed her thoughts to run all over the place. Her character leaned more toward decisiveness, but when it came to Timothy, she had no choice but to be cautious because there were too many uncertainties about him.

She thought that Timothy loved her very much when they were together two years ago. Unfortunately, what she eventually received from him was utter embarrassment and a tremendous amount of hurt.

Doubts over her own feelings had surfaced from then onward. She could never be certain whether Timothy's every move was what she expected it to be.

While Samantha was having all sorts of thoughts, Timothy had already stretched his legs and walked up to her.

He lowered his eyes and looked at her. She had completely removed her makeup, leaving her face in all its naturalness. It was much better that way compared to all that glamorous and heavy makeup she deliberately put on earlier.

He saw the slight frown in her delicate brows and the overflowing emotions in her beautiful eyes. Zachary's words unknowingly started ringing in his ears.

...

"Your actions were actually quite obvious. Samantha's not a fool—she must have guessed that you were deliberately helping her.

"If you go back to the villa right now, you'll definitely hear her express her gratitude to you.

"Take the hint she gives you..."

...

Although he did not hold any hope for that woman, it was not as though he would not be magnanimous if she knew to thank him.

However, he waited for about half a minute and still did not hear Samantha speak. Some traces of dissatisfaction appeared in his eyes.

He pursed his thin lips and was the first to speak. He kept his voice low and asked, "Is there anything you'd like to say?"

'Sigh...'

Timothy's words snapped Samantha back to her senses. Timothy usually ignored her, and the number of times he initiated a conversation with her could probably be counted on one hand.

It was surprising that he took the initiative to ask such a sentence...

Samantha did not reveal any emotion. She opened her mouth to speak, but she did not answer the question. "Why are you asking me that, Mr. Barker?"

He was the one who gave her a hint first and yet she still played the fool?

Timothy's handsome face was devoid of emotion and his voice was extremely cold. "You've been staring at me all this time. Isn't that because you have something to say?"

It turned out that she had been staring unconsciously at Timothy when she was in deep thought. She thought Timothy initiated the question as a means to guide her into talking about the cruise ship.

Sure enough, she misunderstood his intentions again, but fortunately she was clever enough not to let herself be mocked again.

Reading too much into a given situation was something Timothy found intolerable.

Samantha noticed that Timothy's black eyes had been staring at her, seemingly to try and probe into her thoughts. She could not help but feel a little flustered because of that.

From the looks of it, her guess that Timothy deliberately gave her money probably did not hold water. It must have been nothing more than a coincidence. Since that was the case, she must not let Timothy notice anything strange about her, lest he decide on the spur of the moment to find out what she had been doing and expose all her antics that day.

"Ahem." Samantha cleared her throat as her eyes rolled around inside her eye sockets. She then said, "Yes, I have something to say to you."

Timothy's icy face softened almost imperceptibly.

Samantha seemed to have a bit of conscience, it seemed.

The night breeze blew over suddenly, and because the villa was located in a rather empty area of the suburbs, a burst of coldness shrouded them. Samantha trembled subconsciously because her clothes were rather thin.

Timothy glanced at her, but before Samantha could say anything else, he said, "Let's go in and talk."

After saying that, he stretched his long legs and walked toward the villa.

Samantha could only carry her luggage bag and walk in.

...

In the living room.

Timothy sat on the sofa and folded his long legs gracefully. His slender fingers unbuttoned the top two buttons of his shirt as he leaned back lazily.

Looking up and directing his black pupils toward Samantha, his thin lips opened slightly and he spoke in a slightly low voice that seemed to conceal a touch of gentleness. "Go ahead."

Samantha did not speak, but merely stood in front of him and bowed sincerely to him at a 45-degree angle.

Timothy cocked his eyebrow.

That woman seemed to be quite formal in expressing her gratitude. She seemed capable of doing anything if it was for her little brother.

He waited some time for her to speak.

After Samantha straightened her body, she said in a low voice. "I'm sorry, Timothy. I promised to be your caregiver and take care of you, but I went out early and came home late during the past two days due to my personal affairs. I did not do my duty and take care of you as much as I could. I regret it deeply and I wish to apologize."

Timothy was speechless. He gritted his teeth forcefully and his breath became heavier, but he still maintained his calm tone. "Is that all you want to say?"

Timothy was angry at her for coming back late the day before. A day later, she was tactful enough to apologize out of her own will, but why did it feel as though he was even angrier than the day before?

She had once been with Timothy for many years, and although she could not understand his line of thought, she could still boast about having some understanding of his temper.

Why then, did she seem unable to understand him at all?

It was not too surprising because if she really understood him, she would not have experienced abandonment, bullying, and suffered from being shaken numerous times by his actions.

However, Samantha still had something to say. She took a deep breath and continued, "No, I'm not done..."

Timothy closed his eyes and quickly dispelled the turbulence in his eyes. He leaned back on the sofa and uttered a concise reply, "Proceed."

"I..." Samantha hesitated because she found it difficult to say what she wanted.

Timothy was extremely patient on that occasion. His black eyes stared fixedly at her, but he did not urge her along and simply waited for her to continue her sentence.

Samantha gulped twice. She finally mustered the courage and said in one breath, "I want to take a day off tomorrow to deal with my affairs!"

There was a deathly silence throughout the room.

Samantha could feel Timothy's eyes staring at her like a sharp knife stabbing into her flesh.

If looks could kill, Timothy would have murdered her a thousand times over!

She had to go to her parents' place the next day in order to save Corey. There was no other way aside from asking for a day off.

Samantha resisted the urge to retreat and cower. She clenched her fists tightly as her arms hung on both sides of her body and she opened her lips stubbornly, "Mr. Barker, I swear to you, it'll only be one day. You don't have to wait. It'll only be a few hours tomorrow.. Once I'm done handling the matter, I'll come back as soon as possible and take care of you. Is that alright?"

Chapter 71: Lowly

Samantha's words elicited no response.

Timothy pursed his thin lips tightly and his body was extremely cold, causing the temperature around him to drop rapidly.

Samantha's body shuddered uncontrollably and she felt much colder than when she was standing at the entrance of the villa earlier.

She thought for a while and hurriedly promised, "Mr. Barker, I admit that I haven't been doing a good enough job when I've promised to be your caregiver before, but as long as you agree to let me have a day off tomorrow, I'll give you my all when I come back. I will do whatever you ask me to— Ahhh—"

Before she could finish speaking, her wrist had been grabbed all of a sudden and the man's strength was so great that it could probably crush her bones.

Samantha could not help but frown and cry out in pain.

Her first instinct was to shake off Timothy's hand, but as soon as she looked up, she gazed into Timothy's almost murderous gaze and immediately stopped moving.

Past experiences had taught her not to anger the man when his tempers were raging.

Nevertheless, she wondered when did Timothy start fussing over minor matters. She had only asked for a couple of hours off and all that he stood to lose was a couple of hours of enslaving her. Did that necessitate the anger?

Corey was waiting for her to save him. Getting into conflict with Timothy was the last thing that should happen and she must not get injured. Dealing with her worthless parents required her to be in the best shape.

Samantha endured the pain and pleaded weakly, "Okay, Mr. Barker, okay. I understand... I won't request for a couple of hours off, alright? I won't go out tomorrow. I'll just stay in the villa to take care of you and serve you until you're happy, okay?"

She planned to find a way to sneak out as soon as there was no longer any immediate danger.

When she finally rescued Corey and helped him to settle down, she was willing to let Timothy do whatever he wanted to her, even if it meant she would die or be skinned alive!

"You understand?" Timothy's voice became inexplicably deep, as if he was suppressing certain emotions. He curled up his lips in a sarcastic manner and said, "You don't understand anything, Samantha!"

Timothy did not know whether that mocking remark was directed at Samantha or himself.

Was Timothy still unsatisfied even though she had humbled herself to such a point? Why was he so hard to please?

At that moment, Samantha was not only puzzled and annoyed, but felt an intense bitterness in her heart as well.

She really had no idea what else she could do. How much lower should she position herself so he would not constantly find fault with her, hurt her, and treat her as an eyesore?

Samantha opened her mouth and wanted to ask Timothy what he wanted her to understand, but before she could make a sound, Timothy had flung her hand away. She was thrown back as a result and her words remained inside her throat.

He had exerted so much strength that she staggered back and bumped into the coffee table behind her.

She gritted her teeth and did not let out a sound despite the pain.

Timothy had already gotten up and walked out. He slammed the door shut, causing the loud bang to echo for some time in the quiet and empty villa.

Samantha remained in the same position for some time after bumping into the coffee table. Her hair had fallen over and obscured her face, preventing anyone from seeing the expression on her face at the time.

About half a minute later, she straightened herself up nonchalantly, wiped her face, then went upstairs as if nothing had happened.

She took a shower and immediately covered herself in the blanket after laying on the bed.

It was important for her to retain her energy for the tough battle that was to commence the day after. She was adamant not to let that scumbag, Timothy, affect her mood.

She held in her inner sadness, tried her best to remove Timothy's figure from her brain, and forced herself to close her eyes.

...

Timothy drove his convertible and practically circled the entire Capital City. The wind blew against him, covering his entire body with a layer of cold air.

However, not even half the anger in his heart could successfully be eliminated. On the contrary, it continued to burn even more.

Had he been a step slower earlier, he could not guarantee that he would be able to keep his cool and avoid hurting Samantha again.

His anger increased when he thought of how he could not bring himself to do anything to her and even continued to exercise care and restraint around an ingrate like her.

He was angry at Samantha, but the anger he directed to himself was much more than his anger toward her.

Timothy narrowed his eyes slightly when his phone rang all of a sudden. He reached for it and glanced at the screen.

The caller ID was Zachary.

He clenched his hands subconsciously and only answered when the caller tone was about to end. "Yes."

Zachary could tell that something was wrong as soon as he heard that voice. He made sure to speak cautiously when he asked, "What's the situation on your side, Timmy?"

Timothy's voice was colder than the cold wind. "I helped an ingrate."

Samantha had either feigned ignorance despite guessing that he deliberately gave the money to her, or it never crossed her mind that he would help her.

Whatever the answer was, she was nothing but an ingrate.

What was supposed to be the perfect plot to boost emotional development between the two protagonists ended up with Timothy being oppressive, much to Zachary's chagrin.

God was always fair.

That was why Timothy—for all his invincibility and near-mythical status in the business world—was far worse than an elementary school kid when it came to love and relationships!

Timothy was still upset and added another vicious statement, “I’m never going to help Samantha again. I don’t care if she’s beaten up, kidnapped, and sold off!”

The call ended with a beep.

Zachary was speechless, but after hearing the cold beeping tone, he could not help but blurt out, “I hope you’ll be able to hold on to your word past tomorrow, Timmy!”

Timothy tossed his phone aside, leaned back in his chair, and looked at the dark sky. A deep sorrow surfaced in his eyes again.

Despite knowing that Samantha was not worth the trouble and that he should not repeat the same mistakes, he still held on to hope...

How ridiculous!

...

The next day.

Samantha carried a black leather suitcase and walked into the Larssons’ residence.

Simon and Cynthia had already been waiting on the sofa in the living room. As soon as they saw her walk in, Simon asked impatiently, “Where’s the money?”

Samantha did not answer him. She walked over, sat on the sofa opposite them, and placed the black leather suitcase on the coffee table. She opened the lid to reveal the one million dollars in cash that she had withdrawn from the bank.

Simon rubbed his hands excitedly. “I knew you had a way to get money, Sammy.”

He stretched out his hand and wanted to touch the money, but before his fingers could reach the cash, Samantha snapped the lid shut.

Simon’s hand was nearly caught in between and he shrank back subconsciously before lashing out at her. “What are you doing, Samantha?”

After closing the suitcase, Samantha placed her hand gently on it and looked up at Simon and Cynthia. She said coldly, “I can give you the money, but...”

