

A Shotgun Marriage

Chapter 26

The meal was not as tense as Tia had imagined it to be since the atmosphere was even a little lively.

Lewis' uncle was called Aloysius Luther, who was also Lewis' mentor in the division that he was in. Aloysius was not as strict as she expected him to be; rather, he was even more loquacious than Lewis himself.

On the other hand, Lewis' aunt was quiet as she only sat aside and smiled in silence. However, Tia could see that Aloysius and his wife were on good terms with each other. Whenever Aloysius spoke, she would always look him in the eye and laugh at his jokes as well. Not only that, she would also constantly place food onto his plate. He also seemed to love his wife very much. When Lewis said that Aloysius liked to collect paintings, it was not because Aloysius himself liked paintings but it was his wife who loved them.

After the meal, Aloysius dragged Lewis away for a game of chess, so Tia helped Wendy to clean up.

Tia was in charge of taking the newly washed dishes, wiping them with a dry towel, then placing them aside. The process was then repeated all over again.

As Wendy washed the dishes, she looked at Tia beside her and smiled as she said, "Dear me, look at how I am treating my guests! I actually allowed you to help me clean up and do the dishes!"

Hearing that, Tia smiled and simply replied, "It's what I should do."

"Do tell me how you got to know Lewis," she initiated the topic.

"It was a blind date," Tia confessed as she took over a washed plate.

Wendy was stunned for a bit, then she chuckled. "That does sound like him."

After putting all the dishes in the disinfection cabinet, Tia was about to turn and leave when Wendy held her back by the hand.

She turned and looked at Wendy in puzzlement. "Ms. Wendy?"

Wendy smiled and turned to look through the window that separated the kitchen and the living room, where her husband was playing chess with Lewis. Then, she turned back to look at Tia and said, "Aloysius and I never had children of our own, so we treat Lewis like our own son."

Tia simply listened without responding. She did not quite understand what Wendy was getting at.

Wendy gazed at Lewis with an empathetic look in her eyes. "Lewis has never been happy. Be it at home in the past or getting married to Jennie later on, he has never experienced happiness before."

Tia did not quite understand those words, so she just looked in a daze at the direction Wendy was gazing at—the man who was playing chess.

"Tia." Averting her gaze, Wendy turned to look at her. The look in her eyes was sincere as she held Tia's hands tightly. "My dear, would you make him happy?"

Tia was stunned, unable to fully recover her senses as she looked at Wendy's face. She did not know how to reply.

There had been no love in her marriage with Lewis at all!

Seeing Tia's lack of response, Wendy smiled and let go of her hands. "Sorry, I must have startled you."

Tia shook her head, still unsure of what to say.

Wendy reached out and patted her head. "Lewis has a rather cold personality and he is a man of few words. He won't always say things out loud, but he expresses his feelings and thoughts through his actions. He is actually warm at heart, very considerate and caring; sometimes he's also stubborn and when he has acknowledged a person or some other matter, he will persevere no matter how difficult things get. He's not obsessed; he just has his own principles."

Tia did not understand why Wendy would tell her these things.

On the way home, she was still pondering about Wendy's words. Wendy mentioned that Lewis did not have a happy life and in fact, he had never been happy before.

Tia turned to look at the person beside her. He was staring attentively at the road ahead, his face impassive.

Wendy described him as a stubborn person who insisted on the things and people he acknowledged. If so, what could have caused him to let go of the marriage he once stood up so hard for? Was it simply because his ex-wife said he never had time for her?

As she stared at him while thinking of what Wendy had said to her, Lewis interrupted her thoughts, "Is there something on my face?"

Tia returned to her senses and blinked before she shook her head and denied, "No, nothing."

Since he was unsatisfied with her answer, he turned to glance at her. "But you've been staring at me all night."

"Um." She averted her gaze awkwardly by looking out the window on purpose.

Lewis gave her a look with a faint smile on his lips as he asked, "What did Aunt Wendy say to you?"

"N-Nothing. We just chatted." Tia thought she should not tell him that his aunt told her about his unhappy life.

He did not prod further. As they were nearing their home, he pulled up at a grocery store near their community.

She looked at him in confusion. "Are you buying something?"

Glancing at Tia, Lewis replied, "A towel. Or do you want me to use your towel again tonight?"

Hearing his answer, Tia could not help but feel exasperated as she hastily undid her safety belt and got out of the car. "Then, let's hurry and buy one," she commanded and walked straight toward the grocery store.

He watched as she walked into the supermarket, the corners of his mouth turning up ever so slightly.

They were originally going to buy just a towel, but in the end, Tia grabbed way more items than that. She purchased a towel, a toothbrush as well as a cup for rinsing and also some toothpaste. Before she left, she even grabbed a large bath towel and placed it in the cart.

Lewis stared at the basket and laughed. "You don't have to buy so many things. I have all of those at my place."

She was stunned as she turned to look at him. She almost forgot that she was married

to him and that she would be moving to his place sooner or later..

A blushing and embarrassed Tia awkwardly said, "T-Then... I'll put them back."

Right when she reached out to remove the large bath towel from the cart, he grabbed her hand to stop her.

"It's okay, we'll keep both places stocked." With that, Lewis took Tia's hand and led her to the escalator near the cashier.

Since she was trying hard to be accustomed to her identity as his wife, Tia allowed him to take her hand.

When they were almost at the escalator, Lewis suddenly stopped and stared at some underpants on display. With her hand still in his, he headed right toward the shelves with boxes of underpants.

Tagging along as he searched for the underwear brand he usually wore, Tia felt her face burning and she was confident that it was so red where it would start bleeding at any moment.

Lewis glanced at her and noticed her reddened face. Then, he looked down at the pair of underpants in his hands and realized something as he asked smilingly, "Feeling awkward?"

She nodded; of course she felt awkward as she had never accompanied a man to buy such private things before.

Lewis returned the underwear in his hands onto the shelf and looked at her as he said suddenly, "Let's go."

He pulled Tia along while he retraced his steps.

She was puzzled as she looked up at him and asked, "Where are we going?"

Lewis turned to look at her and explained, "To help you pick yours too. It's only fair that I feel awkward as well."

As if her face was not red enough, her ticking time bomb was about to go off. "Not in a million years," she grumbled.

Pushing him aside, Tia turned around and walked toward the exit of the grocery store. Lewis looked at her, the slight smile on his lips widening as he let out a chuckle.

Chapter 27

When the two of them arrived home, Elizabeth was still in the living room chatting with Cynthia. They seemed to get along quite well after an entire day of interacting.

It was only after Cynthia saw them returning that she prepared to leave.

When Tia and Lewis were entering the house, Elizabeth noticed the towel, toothbrush and the like in Lewis' hands. As he carried the things into the bathroom, Elizabeth pulled Tia aside and complained, "Tia, didn't you listen to what I said last night?"

Of course Tia knew what her grandmother was talking about. She looked at Elizabeth and replied, "Then, move in with me! I asked Lewis about it last night and he agreed."

"Bless this child! Who would bring their grandma with them when they marry into a family? If word of this gets out, we'll be the joke of the town!" Elizabeth feigned anger as she poked Tia with her finger.

"Why does it matter?" Tia pouted in reluctance. She had only married to appease her grandmother's concern and see the older woman happy, but Tia never thought about abandoning her family.

Elizabeth knew that they would not come to an agreement, so she said, "All right, let's

not talk about this anymore. I'll just-"

Behind her was Lewis who emerged from the bathroom and interrupted her words.

"Grandma, both Tia and I hope that you can move in with us."

Following the source of the sound, both Elizabeth and Tia turned around at the same time to see him walking toward them.

"Grandma, my parents have rarely been with me since I was young. They've always had so many things to do and I've been attending boarding schools from grade school all the way to college. After graduating from college, I entered a research institute thereafter, so I've been living on my own all this while. People may think I'm used to it, but more often than not, I wish that I could have my family with me. I hope for a lamp left on, waiting for my return at night and I wish I won't have an

empty house to keep me company while I eat. On the weekends, I wish I don't have to go out just to have someone to talk to." Lewis looked at Elizabeth firmly, sincerity filling his eyes as he reached out and took her hand. Then, he sat down beside her and continued, "I know that loneliness all too well, so I don't want Tia to be faced with the same empty house when I'm away on my missions. I also don't want you to feel the same loneliness at home, so Grandma, please come over and move in with us. Just think of it as keeping us company."

As Lewis finished his 'monologue, Elizabeth became speechless. She stared at him in shock, then looked at Tia beside her, not knowing what to say.

Tia was also stunned for a while. She thought that Lewis would never say more than twenty words at a time, but he had actually given a solid speech. Moreover, his expression was also truly sincere.

Despite her initial shock, Tia quickly recovered her senses and added, "Grandma, Lewis is right. Just think of it as keeping us company. The more the merrier, right? It's kind of lonely with just us two. Also, if Lewis is away, I'll be so lonely on my own."

Elizabeth was a little moved by the couple's words. In truth, she wanted to live with Tia too since they had depended on each other for so many years and she had single handedly raised her. If they were to be separated, Elizabeth would be reluctant to let Tia go, but she did not want to be a burden to Tia either. Now that Tia was married, she should have her own life and family. As her elder, Elizabeth did not want to become an additional burden for her granddaughter.

"Grandma." Noticing that Elizabeth had not said anything, Tia reached out and nudged her. "Come move in with us."

Elizabeth looked at her, then at Lewis. Then, she sighed and shook her head in exasperation. "What will I do with you? Don't blame me if I get in the way in the future." From the way she replied, Tia knew that Elizabeth had said yes. She spread her arms open to hug Elizabeth in elation. "Never."

Lewis looked at her, a faint smile blooming on his face.

Tia helped Elizabeth back to her room and grabbed a basin of water to help wash her face. After putting her to bed, Tia went out of her grandmother's room to return to her own.

When she returned to the bedroom, Lewis had already showered and was wearing her grandfather's pajamas as he dried his wet hair with a towel. Noticing her return, he looked up and asked, "Has she gone to sleep?"

"Yes." Tia nodded. "She has. She was so excited to move in with us that she started

planning the move with me.”

He smiled lightly, then turned around and picked up something from the desk, to pass it to her as he said, “This is for you. The password is your birthday.”

She reached out to take it while asking, “What is it?”

A bank card and a bankbook were in her hand as she looked down.

A stunned Tia looked up at him in confusion. “W-What...”

Knowing what she was about to say, Lewis took the initiative to explain, “Here are my wages and bonus from my missions from all my years of working. I’m leaving them in your care. Use the money in this card to pay for daily expenses in the family.” As he explained, he was still drying his hair with the towel.

Tia looked at him with the intention to decline. She passed the card back to him. “It’s okay, I can deal with the-” Halfway through her declination, he frowned and disagreed. “I am a man. It’s my responsibility to provide for my family and my wife.”

She was about to say more. “But I-”

Lewis did not even give her a chance to speak as he interrupted, “Come on, just keep it.”

With that, he turned around and left the room.

She watched him leave, then stared at the bank card and bankbook in her hand. As she recalled the scene when they met for the first time, he promised he would do everything he should as a husband, but it was just that he was unable to sufficiently make time for her.

Truly, Lewis had fulfilled all his duties. From his care toward Elizabeth to the rings he bought when they got married and now to his wages and savings, there was nothing to complain about his behavior as a husband.

When Tia returned to her room after her shower, he was already back and his wet hair was now completely dry. He leaned against the headboard as he flipped through a sketchbook she had placed on the bookshelf.

At the door, she still hesitated for a bit. Even though they had slept together last night, she was still reluctant to be so close with him.

Lewis looked up from the sketchbook and gazed calmly at her. He did not say anything as he simply looked at her.

Embarrassed by his gaze, Tia scratched her head and hastily walked in, closing the door behind her.

She got onto the bed from the other side, unaware of the slight smile on the other person’s lips.

As he watched her lie down with her back to him, Lewis closed the sketchbook and placed it on the bedside table. Then, he reached out and turned off the lights.

In the dark, Tia could feel the person next to her edging closer, then, large arms wrapping around her waist and pulling her into an embrace. She felt her body stiffen, but she did not push him away.

His voice sounded above her head. “I booked seats at the Mellow Hotel for tomorrow. I’ll pick you up when you get off work.”

Tia did not quite get his words, so she asked as she leaned into him, “Why did you book seats at a hotel?”

“When you got off work today, we agreed to treat your colleagues to a meal tomorrow, remember?” Lewis spoke in a low tone, his low voice filled with certain allure.

It was only then that Tia remembered Ysabel leeching a meal off them after work earlier. She nodded in his arms. "Oh."
As she leaned into his embrace, she could somehow get a whiff of faint cigarettes.

Chapter 28

When Tia woke up the next day, Lewis was already gone once again. She washed up and walked out to see that he had already prepared breakfast for her and Elizabeth. As she ate breakfast with Elizabeth, Elizabeth talked about how fortunate Tia was to have encountered Lewis.

Tia thought the same as well. At least even till now, she had never regretted marrying a stranger just like that. She would sometimes also wonder what would happen to her if she married a weirdo or something.

Cynthia arrived at 8.00 AM, which was right on the dot. Tia told Cynthia that she might be coming home late tonight and asked Cynthia to stay until both she and Lewis returned. Of course, it would be counted as her working overtime.

Cynthia readily agreed and told Tia to be rest assured, for she would take good care of Elizabeth.

After her talk with Cynthia, Tia took her bag and went out. As she was waiting for the bus, she received a call from Shannon asking her whether she had time for dinner together tonight.

Tia thought for a moment before she invited Shannon to the dinner that she would be hosting tonight at Mellow Hotel instead.

Actually, Shannon was no stranger to Tia's colleagues at work because she would always come over to visit Tia or Lance. She had a generous attitude, so as time passed, she began to make friends with the other colleagues in the office as well.

On the other end of the line, Shannon was silent for a while, before she spoke up. "Tia, do you really have to do this?" Her tone was a little heavy; it was almost like interrogating Tia.

Tia was stunned as she could not quite understand what Shannon meant, so she asked, "What are you talking about? I don't get it."

"You not only got married, but now you're treating people to dinner! Fine, it's alright if you want to treat people, but why did you invite Lance too? What are you doing, showing off your marriage to him? Don't you know how much that silly Lance still loves and adores you? You're just rubbing salt in his wound! That's very cruel of you!" Every word of hers was an accusation as she voiced out her injustice toward Lance.

".." Tia was stunned once again and she did not know what to say for a while.

"Did you know that Lance made me go on a drinking spree with him last night? He threw up after drinking, then he went on to drink even more. For the entire night, I sat beside him to keep him company. I feel bad for him." As Shannon spoke, there was a hint of a sob in her voice. "He said he loved you for ten years, but you never so much as even looked at him. You could get married to a man you just met once, but you refused to accept his decade worth of love."

Tia closed her eyes and asserted, "Shannon, I always thought of him as my brother. You know that."

She avoided Lance as best as she could because she feared that he might get ahead of himself. She did not want him to waste time on her, so she at times even talked cruelly

to him. She thought that she had never done anything to leave space for speculation, but she and Shannon had completely underestimated Lance's insistence and stubbornness.

"He never wanted to be a brother to you!" On the other end of the line, Shannon was getting worked up as she shouted into the receiver. "Is your heart made of steel or something? Don't you see how good he was to you all these years? Don't you acknowledge them one bit? Ten freaking years! No man in his right mind would be willing to wait 10 years just for a woman. Even if you've never loved him, are you not moved in the very least?"

Holding the phone, Tia noticed that something was wrong with her and she was concerned. "Shannon, did something happen?"

Shannon was fairly sensitive as she yelled after being overcome with emotion, "No, nothing happened at all!"

Before Tia could say anything more, Shannon hung up.

She stared at her phone, pondering what Shannon just said. Were the accusations really aimed at her? While Lance was waiting a decade for Tia, Shannon had waited more than ten years for him.

After thinking for a while, she called Shannon again. The phone rang for a long while before she picked up. "Hello..."

Tia could hear her crying voice over the phone. Worried, she asked, "Shannon, what happened?"

"Don't ask, Tia. Just leave me alone." Shannon sobbed as she spoke..

Tia sighed inaudibly. She knew that Lance must have been involved, but she could not do anything if Shannon refused to share. "Well, if you need me, just call me."

Shannon did not say anything more and only replied with an 'okay' before hanging up.

After ending the call, Tia looked at the phone in her hand for a long time. She shook her head before keeping her phone away.

By the time she came into the office, nearly everyone had arrived. When Wallace saw her walking in, he walked up to her mischievously and questioned, "Tia, are you really treating everyone to dinner tonight?"

She nodded, placing her bag into a drawer. "Yes."

Then, she turned around and clapped her hands, telling everyone present, "We've already booked a room at Mellow Hotel for 6.00PM tonight. Do come, everyone."

Once she said that, the entire office was sent into an uproar. Someone shouted to her, "Tia, did you get married to a rich guy? Mellow Hotel is quite the posh place."

Mellow Hotel was indeed a five-star hotel with an excellent service and environment. Of course, it was the hotel that hosted the most banquets held by most of the upper class society in the city.

Tia simply smiled and declared, "No, just a normal guy."

"Hey, Ysabel, you saw him yesterday, didn't you? What's he like? What car is he driving? Is he handsome?" Everyone was a little curious about Tia's husband. After all, it was an open secret in the entire office that Lance liked her.

"Oh, Tia's husband? He's really something." Ysabel said while flicking her hair.

Tia rolled her eyes and went back to her seat, reaching out to turn on the computer.

Everyone in the office was even more curious because of what Ysabel said, so they asked gushingly, "Come on, tell us. In what way?"

“As for that...” Ysabel lengthened the suspense on purpose as she looked around her, then smiled and said, “You’ll find out when you go for dinner tonight.”

“Boooo...” Everyone was unamused at her.

At the side, Lydia—who was in her seat—smiled and shook her head. She turned around and caught sight of Lance at the door. He did not enter. He merely looked at Tia, clenched his fists and turned to leave.

Lydia turned to look at Tia and she could only give a light sigh while shaking her head in exasperation...

When the night came, Lewis was punctual as usual. Tia had just gotten off work on time when she received a call from him, telling her that he was on the ground floor of the company and asking whether she was ready.

She looked at her watch, then put away the work she had yet to finish. She reached out to turn off the computer while she told him she would be there right away.

Chapter 29

When Lance and Yvette walked in, other colleagues were chatting and laughing as they gathered their things and prepared to go downstairs. Some of them were even plotting how to get Tia’s husband drunk.

With an instinctive upset frown on his face, Lance stood at the door and said with a bitter expression, “Why, everyone’s so eager to leave as soon as work is over.”

Hearing that, everyone in the office fell silent and stopped halfway through their process of gathering their things. They were now stuck between leaving and staying behind while Ysabel pouted and gave Tia a hint.

Tia sighed, then recalled her phone call with Shannon this morning.

“Mr. Garrett, Tia’s husband is treating the entire office to dinner tonight,” Wallace said with a grin.

A silent Lance glanced at him and turned to look Tia in the eyes.

Tia was at a loss. She had no idea what Ysabel told him yesterday, but now that it had come to this, no matter his position as her colleague in the company or an upperclassman in life, she was obliged to invite him.

With that in mind, Tia turned around and smiled at him as she said, “Mr. Garrett, do come along. The more, the merrier, right?” |

Lance looked at her with a stern gaze, the look in his eyes as sharp as the blade of a knife.

Noticing that he hadn’t said a word, she gave a smile out of the blue. “If you’re busy tonight, then—”

Before she could finish, Lance, who was standing right opposite her, interrupted her and said, “Sure.”

His words did take her by surprise because she was stunned for a while, taking some time to wrap her head around the situation. “W-What?”

“I said, sure. I’m free tonight.” He looked at her and spoke slowly, enunciating every word.

Left with no choice, Tia nodded and smiled a little awkwardly. “Okay.”

At the side, when Yvette heard that Lance would be going, she looked at Tia expectantly and asked, “Then, Tia, can I come along?” Her excessively pitiful look made it impossible for anyone to decline.

Tia simply smiled and nodded as she answered, "Of course you can." However, Ysabel looked at Yvette in disdain, followed by a light humph escaping her lips.

When Tia went downstairs, it had already been over 10 minutes since her phone call with Lewis. However, Lewis still opened the door and got out of the car as soon as she walked out of the building.

She jogged over to him and said sheepishly, "Sorry for making you wait."

"It's okay." He shook his head and looked behind her. Several people were walking toward them, and he nodded at them as a way of greeting.

The people in the office were all adept at socializing. They've been mingling around for long enough to understand unwritten social cues. After some casual exchanges, they began discussing how they should carpool.

Ysabel was the first to stand next to Tia and hold her hand, announcing that she would go with Tia with plans to enter Lewis' car.

Wallace had his own car and there were five people without rides, but they could fit with a little squeezing. Looking at Yvette, he said enthusiastically, "Yvette, you can come in my car."

Yvette smiled, but she didn't nod or shake her head and merely looked behind her.

As if on cue, Lance drove over to them in his black Benz and slowly pulled up next to them.

She hastily went up to him and knocked on his car window. When the window was rolled down, she bent over and asked Lance, "Mr. Garrett, can you give me a ride?"

Lance gave her a look, then nodded calmly.

He turned and looked over at Tia but coincidentally met Lewis' gaze. The man nodded at him before turning to look at Tia. "Let's go."

Tia also nodded and followed him to his ride. Rumor had it that private rooms in Mellow Hotel were difficult to book. Tia didn't know what methods Lewis employed or what strings he pulled to be able to get them an enormous room so quickly.

The decoration in a 5-star hotel was, of course, much better than a normal one. The place had lavish designs that resembled a palace, proving to everyone that they were leagues ahead of the others.

Lewis had ordered the food beforehand, so after they settled in, he told the servers to serve the dishes as soon as possible.

Lance sat right opposite Lewis and Tia. As he stared at the two bottles of wine on the table, he sneered and said to Lewis in a challenging voice, "So, you're serving us wine like this?"

As soon as he finished speaking, a hush fell over the entire room as everyone turned to look at Lance.

Lewis looked at the wine on the table before turning to Lance while clearly taking his time to form a reply. "What wine would you like to have, Mr. Garrett?" His voice was calm and unwavering.

Lance looked back at him, a half-smile on his lips as he answered, "Since you chose to come to Mellow Hotel, Mr. Harvey, it must mean that you're quite generous. What about something from Domaine Leroy?"

"What?"

Someone inhaled sharply because any wine produced by Domaine Leroy would cost up

to tens of thousands.

However, Lewis wasn't angered, and the expression on his face remained unchanged. With his usual indifferent tone, he turned and addressed the waiter who hadn't left, "Bring us two les beaux monts."

"Understood." The waiter nodded in response.

Wallace and Billie couldn't help but gape in awe as they exchanged glances.

The 5-star hotel truly deserved its grade with a high-class environment and excellent service. The food was served quickly, and it was also prepared exquisitely. Wallace, who had a strict wife at home, rarely had the chance to eat out, so when he saw the mouth-watering delicacies served on the table, he couldn't help gulping.

Lance looked at the table full of food, then frowned as he glared at Lewis and said, "They're all common dishes. Come on, not even crabs?"

With that, he turned and called over a waitress at the entrance. Then, he looked back at everyone present and said, "The king crabs are the freshest this season, and the meat is tender."

The waitress walked up to him and asked in a professional tone, "How may I help you, sir?"

Lance didn't even look at Lewis or anyone else as he turned to face the waitress. "Give every one of us a stewed king crab. The freshest ones you have."

"Of course. I'll pass the order along." The waitress nodded and smilingly left the room.

After the waitress had left, Lance turned back to Lewis and looked at him with a half smile, saying, "You won't mind if I give orders here, will you, Mr. Harvey?"

Hearing that, everyone turned to look at Lewis. At this stage, even a blind person could see that Lance wasn't there to eat; he was there to cause trouble!

Lewis maintained the calm expression on his face, and not a single trace of emotion could be gleaned from him as he looked back at Lance and answered calmly, "No, I don't."

However, Tia, who was seated beside him, began to feel uneasy. She looked at Lewis, slight worry written on her face.

Lewis seemed to have sensed her uneasiness, so he turned and looked at her. He patted her hand under the table, then took some wine and poured it into his glass.

Picking up his glass, he rose to his feet and said to everyone present, "Come, here's a toast to everyone. Thank you all for coming."

Hearing that, everyone raised their wine glasses. Some of them were wise enough to say a few words out of courtesy, but not for Lance. The man merely raised his wine glass and drank, his attitude so cold that he didn't even seem to regard anyone else.

Chapter 30

Everyone could feel the eeriness and awkwardness in the atmosphere, but no one dared to say anything as they focused on eating and drinking instead. Tia was a lightweight, so she only drank a little before her face reddened like a tomato. Instantly, she felt a little hot as she kept fanning her face with her hand.

Lewis turned to look at her, then asked quietly in her ear, "Are you drunk?"

Tia smiled and shook her head. "Just stuffy."

She was sober, but every time she drank alcohol, her face would redden at an alarming rate. Actually, she felt alright, save for the heat.

Lewis smiled as well, then reached out and patted her head before whispering, "It's okay if you don't drink. I can drink on your behalf." His breaths that smelled faintly of alcohol reached Tia's face, but she didn't hate it.

Seated next to them, Ysabel saw them interacting. Ah, they look kind of cute. I wonder if what Tia told me was true.

Tia had said before that she and her husband weren't in love, but now, the two were interacting so intimately, like it was the most natural thing in the world. They didn't seem to be faking it, nor did it look like there was nothing between them. Any outsider would think that they were getting along very well.

Of course, Ysabel wasn't the only one who noticed Tia's interactions with Lewis. Lance, who was seated opposite them, watched their every move, and the fury inside his eyes burned ever brighter.

The more Lance thought about it, the angrier he became. He grabbed the wine bottle and poured more wine into his glass. Then, with a loud thud, he slammed it back on the table, staring daggers right at Lewis.

The others who were eating and chatting away were all startled as they turned to look at Lance. Lewis, who was talking to Tia, also looked up upon hearing the sound. When he saw Lance's stance, he knew right away what Lance was going to do next. Before Lance could say anything, Lewis spoke up. "What's wrong? Do you not like the wine, Mr. Garrett?"

In comparison to Lance's sudden challenges throughout the night, Lewis' attitude that night was too calm. He was so calm that it seemed as if he were watching Lance monkeying around, and he was no more than a part of the audience. In fact, he even looked like he found it boring.

"Oh, I like it very much. I just want to have a drink with you, Mr. Harvey. I just don't know if you'll comply." Lance glared at him, his gaze menacing as he seemed to speak through gritted teeth.

"Of course." Lewis stood up and took the wine bottle, pouring out some wine for himself. Then, he looked at Lance and said, "You're my guest today, Mr. Garrett. If you'd like to drink, Tia and I will humor you to the end." With his words, he had made himself clear. Lance tightened his grip on the wine glass, gnashing his teeth as he raised the glass and toasted. "Cheers." He threw his head back and downed the glass in one gulp. Lewis didn't hold back either. He, too, raised the glass and finished the wine in one go. Oh, Lewis, Lewis, Lewis. You seem worthy of an opponent. After finishing his glass, Lance poured another right before he gestured toward Lewis, then raised his head and drank.

Likewise, Lewis poured more wine into his glass after looking at him.

Just like that, the two downed six glasses of wine. They didn't touch the food, and since they were drinking wine with high levels of alcohol in them, they almost couldn't keep their eyes open from the sheer strength of the drink. With a few gulps, Lance began to develop reddened rings around his eyes. Even though Lewis didn't show a reaction as obvious as Lance's, sweat began to form on the tip of his nose.

Tia was worried that something bad might happen to the two if they kept at it, so she reached out and tugged at Lewis, mumbling, "Lewis, stop drinking."

In reality, Lewis was a heavyweight. Lance could hold his liquor too, but he usually drank beer during business gatherings and banquets. He wasn't quite a wine drinker,

and even when he did, he only took a few sips and stopped quickly. He had never drunk it like he did today, so even if he could handle alcohol, he was still dizzy from this sudden large intake.

Lance was giddy from the wine, but he was still sober. When he saw Tia looking at Lewis with worry on her face, he felt even worse.

He grabbed the wine and was about to pour more into his glass, but his vision was so wobbly that he couldn't keep himself upright. The wine from the bottle missed its mark in the glass, and a large portion of the wine spilled onto the table.

Seeing that, Yvette, who was seated beside him, supported him and patted his back gently, saying in a tiny voice, "Mr. Garrett, are you okay? Please stop drinking."

Lance could hardly deal with the aftereffects of the alcohol, so he didn't even have enough energy to push Yvette away.

Noticing that, Lydia, who was older than them, hastily said, "Billie, help Yvette sit Mr. Garrett down. I'm afraid he had too much to drink."

"Okay." Billie nodded and helped Yvette as she supported Lance, letting him sit back in his seat.

Seeing Lance drunk to that extent, Tia was also worried about Lewis. She pulled him down to sit, then asked in concern, "Are you really okay? You drank quite a lot."

Lewis smiled and shook his head. "I'm fine."

Tia stared at him for a long while. When she saw that there really was nothing wrong with him, she finally relaxed. Before the meal ended, Yvette supported Lance as she announced that they would be leaving early.

Without Lance, the atmosphere finally grew livelier. The people put down their guards that existed while Lance was around, and the atmosphere relaxed considerably. However, when they watched Lewis' drinking competition with Lance just now, everyone could more or less figure out Lewis' tolerance to alcohol. Just now, at noon, some people had been plotting ways to get him drunk, but now they were beginning to fear. The meal lasted for more than 3 hours before they went their separate ways in the end.

On the other hand, Lewis and Tia saw them off before returning to the hotel to get the bill. When she saw the bill, she couldn't help but widen her eyes. Sixty thousand...

That's equivalent to roughly half a year of my income.

Lewis reached out and took the bill from her hand, then passed his card to the cashier so it could be swiped.

After paying the bill, the two walked out of the hotel, but Tia was still staring at the bill in her hands. It seemed as if she were trying to find some error in the bill so that she could go and ask for some of their money back.

So much money was spent on just one meal! She felt something hurting inside her just at that thought. As she looked at the bill in her hands, she couldn't help but complain a little to Lewis, saying, "You knew that Lance was here to cause trouble, so why did you play along with him? One bottle cost more than 20,000, and you even ordered two!"

What sort of wine is this? It's all a scam!

Lewis didn't retort. Instead, a faint smile appeared on his lips, after which he reached out and took the bill from her, then tossed it into a garbage can at the side of the road.

"Hey." Tia even wanted to go get it back, but Lewis took her hand and simply said, "Let's go."

